THE MEN WE SELL OURSELVES:
The Communication of Masculinities Folklore through the Medium of Television
Advertising
by Stephen E. Wall, A Doctoral Thesis submitted
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Abstract

This work explicates the vernacular interpretive practices of audience members as they view masculinities images conveyed through the medium of television advertising. Founded in a theoretical framework of gender studies, media studies, the folkloristic approach to popular culture, and the subtle performances of everyday life, this dissertation aims to better understand both what people see when they are shown an image like Old Spice's "Man Your Man Could Smell Like" or Dos Equis' "Most Interesting Man in the World" and how they assimilate these images into their larger understandings of manliness and masculinity. The evidence interpreted herein will point to a disconnect between the displays of manliness in advertisements collected from the informants' locally available television networks and the depth and breadth of the informants personal experiences to which the notion of "masculinity" applies in their everyday lives. Based on consultation of advertising literature and interview work with advertising professionals undertaken as part of this project, it is clear that this hegemonic approach to masculinity is something advertisers are seeking to perpetuate as a means of making messages available to a wider audience in an effort to achieve profit. This dissertation concludes on the note of problematizing this approach to masculinities in advertising and identifies examples of advertisings' lack of impact when it comes health, education, and not-for-profit efforts in the field of advocacy that centers on North American men.

Acknowledgements

As I look back upon the people and organizations that played a role in bringing me to this point in my scholarly efforts, I picture a list 7,300 km long—which is roughly the distance from Springville, California, where I spent my childhood, to St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, where I find myself writing the last sentences of this thesis. I want to start by thanking my parents, Helen and Michael Wall, whose examples, motivation, and confidence in me have been a guiding light. I also need to thank the teachers and professors who shaped my education with their efforts. Your guidance has been a daily gift to me. In particular I want to acknowledge my committee members, as well two critical mentors: Dr. Sabina Magliocco of California State University Northridge, and the late Dr. C. Scott Littleton of Occidental College. Finally, I want to thank my daughter Brighid. Up until she was born, the construction of gender was something I read about in books, now I am living it every moment we are together.

Over a hundred people served as informants of one kind or another for this project. The majority I will not be able to thank by name, as they participated in anonymous surveys. Most of them were students, and I can only hope they enjoyed the guest lectures and the chance to laugh at some humorous advertisements as much as I enjoyed presenting it all to them. My collaborators were the handful people I got to know during this project, or got to know better in a lot of cases, as they were already friends and acquaintances. I would like to say thank you for taking the time to share in this project with me. Thank you for all the fascinating stories, the insights, and for letting me dig into the minutia of your lives. You did more than tell me what you thought about television commercials, you shared childhood memories, you talked about your parents,

school, work, and your home lives with your partners. You let me into your private space, and I want you all to know how grateful I am that you shared yourselves with me.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge all the people who stood beside me and offered me encouragement as I put this project together, collected my data, and then sat down to write and rewrite it. You are friends, family, lovers, colleagues, co-workers, and passers by who saw me staring forlornly at my computer screen. I do not recall a single detractor among you. You were all so supportive and encouraging offering me everything from, "That sounds interesting," to, "Good luck with that," to, "Don't worry, you'll get it done." The path has been a long one, but it was your kind words, smiles, interest, and insights that kept me putting one foot in front of the other.

Cheers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

It is the goal of this thesis to address the ways in which masculine discourses are framed and packaged by the medium of television advertising, determining what changes in communication and interpretation occur when vernacular constructions of gender move from face-to-face narrative and performance (i.e., folklore) (Bronner 2005a) and into a space of popular culture driven by technology and consumer-based economics. Obviously, the aforementioned technology and its accompanying economic systems have a lasting impact on the viewer by transposing the discourses of manliness from their everyday folk, bottom-up, and/or vernacular positions in social construction to a top-down, imposed, and/or heavily mediated position. I seek to explore the complexities and conflicts that occur for viewers when that which is silently and/or unconsciously learned, performed, and communicated to others becomes a tool for encouraging socially facilitated economic consumption.

A Parody of a Parody of a Parody

In the early months of 2010 actor Isaiah Mustafa debuted in a career-changing role that catapulted him into the public eye. He did not land the starring role in a television drama or a blockbuster action film, rather the mantle he assumed was *The Man Your Man Could Smell Like*, a smug and smooth-talking character breaking the proverbial fourth wall to speak directly to his audience on the merits of Old Spice Body Wash. From a sales perspective, the initial advertisement and those that followed it in a series did not do much to move the product in question (Neff 2010). By twelve weeks into the campaign, Old Spice was no longer gaining market share against its competitors. Mustafa and the advertising agency behind his commercial, Wieden & Kennedy, had put

Old Spice's body wash on the map in a market that was oversaturated with shower soaps targeting men, but the bulk of sales were not driven by the campaign or on the character Mustafa had come to embody.

Despite lackluster sales, Mustafa's character developed a cult following online, where his commercials were viewed millions of times on video upload sites like Vimeo and YouTube. Such was the lasting impact of the character that Mustafa became an internet presence and appeared in uploaded videos as *The Man Your Man Could Smell Like* in order to answer questions posed by fans through various social media. Fan backlash occurred when Old Spice replaced Mustafa as the brand's spokesman, a rather out-of-sync reaction given the typical strategy employed by companies sold at a national or international level: constantly cycling new advertisements to draw in new consumers, reinvigorating or even reinventing the brand. Then again, it was clear Mustafa was not moving the product with his performance; he was creating an audience for his character (Neff 2010).

This raises the question, what was it about *The Man Your Man Could Smell Like* that kept the audience coming back? Mustafa's character was unusual in that while the product was meant for men, he spoke to women, specifically women with men in their lives with whom they were unsatisfied. He would frequently ask these women to "look at your man," and then, "look at me," suggesting they compare what they had with what they really wanted and note where their partners were lacking. In each of his advertisements *The Man Your Man Could Smell Like* shifted from scene to scene, transitioning in a comedic manner that was dreamlike (Figure 1.1). One moment he would be remodeling a house, the next he would be baking a cake, all with the certitude that every action he took was precisely what women living heteronormative lives

desired but could never have for themselves, the punchline being that if the fictive audience of women could not have a man like the one Mustafa portrayed, they could at least have a man that smelled like him.

Online reactions would seem to suggest that laughter was the most common response to Mustafa's over-the-top romantic masculine character, but plenty of scholars have shown that laughter is not an end unto itself, but often a reaction that guards against other emotions (Brottman 2004, Mehu and Dunbar 2008). There are actually three layers of parody in Mustafa's character, if we use Linda Hutcheon's broad definition of parody as "repetition with critical distance," (Hutcheon 1985, 185), that guard against conscious recognition of the cultural information he presents. Working backwards, Mustafa is making a sales pitch, that sales pitch is based on the folk and popular traditions of poking fun at the suave, muscle-bound male leads of popular romantic literature, and that literature is, according to Janice Radway, an example of culture producing culture which both conforms to and subverts patriarchal context given how it is employed in the everyday reading practices of women (Radway 1983, 72-73). This is a parody of a parody of a parody.

This thesis asks why viewers are laughing at *The Man Your Man Could Smell Like* and, more importantly, what information is he imparting to us while we are laughing? Like so many other elements that make up contemporary society, the discourse of masculinity bombards us constantly as we move through social life, teaching us what it is to be manly and to know manliness in other people, places, things, and ideas.

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The Man Your Man Could Smell Like identifies voids within the heteronormative relationships of Mustafa's audience, both fictive and real. He is stating emphatically that the men on the other side of the television screen are not as desirable to women as he is, and the fact that this evokes laughter is worthy of problematization. Beginning with the first major surge of television commercials focused on branded goods and household appliances in the 1920s, Western advertising has focused on presenting a viewer with attractive spokespersons and characters who possess something the viewer does not, with the logical off-set being to buy the product shown in order to no longer feel the sensation of lacking something. (Currell 2009, 174-175; Mintz and McNeil 2013). Masculinity is particularly vulnerable to this thesis as it does not possess the philosophical and political support network that contemporary feminism has achieved. The strategies of feminism are such that the portrayal of women in advertising is now regularly scrutinized and, given the appropriate information and circumstance for its transmission, it can be understood that authentic femininity contains more variation than that portrayed in advertising (Kilbourne 1979; 1987; 1999; 2010). Moreover, the strategies of support within contemporary feminism aim to make alternative femininities worthy in comparison to the mainstream portrayal of women in advertising. Men, in their efforts to flee the feminine and downplay the importance of feminist advocacy to all genders (Nardi 1992, 4), leave themselves vulnerable to what should be outdated methods of turning audiences into customers and, more importantly, are equally vulnerable to the masculine messages embedded in those capitalist efforts. It is clear that there is room for theoretical growth in the emerging field of masculinities studies to support and contextualize the experiences of men, and this is where folklore studies, in its expanding, post-modern incarnation, can be of central benefit.

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Alan Dundes, in his somewhat controversial 2004 plenary address to the American Folklore Society, noted that the discipline was in "decline" due to a lack of "grand theory" that was not wholly its own. Thus, folklore departments were being folded into larger interdisciplinary programs across North America and Europe (Dundes 2005). While I agree with Dundes' opinion that folkloristics struggles from a, "lack of new grand theory," I do not think this spells an end or decline for the discipline. Rather, I accept Steven Zeitlin's interpretation that, "Folklore is too small a discipline to be talking only to itself," and, "There is an argument to be made that folklorists will become increasingly central and valued as the virtual world and the effects of media become increasing pronounced" (2000, 16-17). I have been invigorated by the efforts of my fellow folklore graduate students to create novel, productive intellectual shortcuts—"life hacks" to use a contemporary turn of phrase—with regard to the relationship between folklore and theory in the arts and social sciences (Augustus 2013; Learning 2012; Staple 2013; 2014), building additional connections based on complementary ways of thinking and interpretation across disciplines.

I think that one unspoken result of the post-modern critique of folkloristics is the expectation that folklorists will seek out theory beyond the borders of their discipline. When I say "unspoken" I am not attempting to say interdisciplinary—or as I prefer to see it "transdisciplinary"—theory is a shameful or dirty secret among folklore scholars or that post-modern folkloristics has no theory wholly of its own design. Rather, post-modern folklorists are so driven to expand the definition of what *is* or *is not* folklore that they cannot help but consume and make use of new sources of theory to support the endeavor. I say this not as a member of a folkloristics subprogram seated within a larger

department such as anthropology or english, but as scholar trained by one of a shrinking handful of genuine folklore departments in North America.

As much as Memorial University of Newfoundland's Department of Folklore has its pool of post-secondary scholars dedicated to folktale, legends, and vernacular architecture, each year more and more of these soon-to-be professionals take up interests in contested academic spaces such as stand-up comedy, film-derived narrative, and the internet (Brodie 2014; Augustus 2013; Staple 2013). As we do this work, we are pulled by two distinct sets voices—a mixture our own and those of our academic advisors—to meet two mutually exclusive needs: to explore new materials that test the boundaries of the discipline and to make sure we explicate clearly and consistently that we are still pursuing traditions. While changing technologies drive communication, the ideas being communicated remain largely unchanged. This experience is oftentimes compounded by the fact that so many of us are not entering our folklore program as folklorists, but dragging cross-disciplinary baggage with us from a variety of sources.

Advertising and folklore need not be seen as mutually exclusive, even when the two are viewed historically. Let us consider for a moment the place of the broadside ballad in English society. A tool of artistic expression that, "…invites a very inclusive public to participate in an economy of decryption, textual circulation, and display of knowledge." (Wilson-Lee 2011, 228). A television advertisement such as Mustafa's *Man Your Man Could Smell Like* is little different, especially as one considers the amount of digital interest and parody it generated despite selling only a mediocre amount of the product to which it was dedicated. The comparison itself is not even wholly theoretical, as broadside ballad sheets would often incorporate advertisements into their rhyming and singing format (Sherman 2008). To expand further we need only consider Roger

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Abrahams' reflections upon the markets of Trinidad and Brazil as spaces where pre- and post-slavery African song and word play traditions thrive (1992, 110) or Dargan and Zeitlin's folkloristic approach to the rhythms and rhymes of side show talkers and street peddlers (1983).

To offer a brief, anecdotal aside: I had occasion to mention this project to my physician during a routine check-up. My general practitioner sees numerous patients, mostly undergraduates, and so he rarely remembers without prompting what department I am with or what degree I am pursuing. On this particular day the conversation grew deeper almost by accident. I told him I was pursuing a study of masculinities communications in television advertising and he stood still for a moment, perhaps processing the information at a different pace than he might the usual check-up conversation.

"We're all women now, you know," he said calmly, as though offering me sage advice.

"What?" I said, more surprised that he had stopped to consider my project rather than moving on to the next typical topic of discussion after school: family life.

"They're doing the same things to us now that they've been doing to women for years," he said. He was talking about advertisers, about a trend he had noticed in the array of beauty products available to men. He went on to explain that he had reached this conclusion rather recently after learning of an upcoming group therapy session run by his colleagues at the MUN Counseling Centre focusing on media and men's body image.

Problematizing Hegemonic Masculinity

I am making an effort to problematize two things that an individual can easily live her or his whole life and never question: hegemonic masculinity and television advertising. Efforts to deconstruct these concepts individually have been made by a number of talented scholars (e.g. James Twitchell 1996, John Story 2009 [1997], R.W. Connell 2005 [1995], Stanley Brandes 1980, and Simon Bronner 2005 to name a few), but I am of the mind that something as yet unobserved makes itself available when we consider them simultaneously. To this end, I seek to unravel the relationship between television advertising and the masculinities information contained within it, how that information makes its way to the viewer, and what the audience learns each time figures like Mustafa's *Man Your Man Could Smell Like* are spotlighted for thirty seconds between segments of popular television shows.

It is widely understood among gender scholars that R. W. Connell deserves primary credit for the development of "hegemonic masculinity" which, "confirmed the plurality of masculinities and the complexities of gender construction for men, and gave evidence of the active struggle for dominance that is implicit in the Gramscian concept of hegemony," (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832). However I think there are other works critical to rounding out one's understanding of the concept. I rely on Pierre Bourdieu's *Masculine Domination* for my primary picture of masculine hegemony. Moreover, Judith Butler's interpretation of all gender as drag is essential in helping to flesh out the limits of that picture. Finally, I draw upon the contributions of folkloristics to my scholarly construction of the concept, therefore the interpretations of Simon Bronner, Alan Dundes, and Michael Robidoux are all critical to my work.

The chapter that follows this introduction might best be seen as a literature review in two parts as well as a narrative account of how I connect the disparate elements of literature that are meaningful to this project. The first part of the review focuses on the origins of masculinities studies in the discipline of folklore. This takes into account both developments within the discipline and critical transformations that affected scholarship across the humanities and social sciences. The scholarly critiques of feminism, LGBTQ studies, and queer theory, all had bearing on the formation of contemporary masculinities research in folklore. This first review section concludes on the historical readings of the changes that occurred in Western perceptions of men and manliness between the end of the Victorian and the beginning of the post-Victorian eras. This historical cusp, the advent of consumerism, and the rise of middle-class buying power sets up the second part of the literature review: an assessment of critical literature on commodification, popular culture, and the dynamics of parody and nostalgia. We end with some thoughts on contemporary masculinity by Michael Robidoux, a folklorist, and Michael Kimmel, a sociologist with curiously folkloristic methodology.

Chapter Three focuses both on methodology and an explication of my data. I begin with discussing collection methods for obtaining the television commercials used in the study, justifying why some were chosen and others were discarded. I follow this with a detailed account of my first round of informant data collection: the distribution of over one hundred surveys across half a dozen university classrooms for a survey project accompanied by a guest lecture on contemporary masculinities theory. My second round of informant research is discussed in a walkthrough of my interview protocol as well as a demonstration of how this project mirrors certain aspects of collaborative ethnography.

Chapter Four is a detailed explication of my gathered primary source material, commercials collected from local television and online sources, and the thoughts and opinions of my two informant groups when it comes to each example. Each commercial advertisement I have employed in the study is reviewed, though I recommend viewing the accompanying digital appendix (http://tiny.cc/6gsgiy) for a more complete understanding of what my informants saw and analyzed. Following the review of the advertisements the reader will have an opportunity to review the conversations I had with my collaborators.

Chapter Five uses the insights of my individual collaborators to generate a more complete understanding of the masculinity circulated in locally accessible television advertising. Each of these collaborators brings her/his unique background to bear in analyzing a variety of advertisements and providing insights both from informants' personal experience and vernacular criticism. These collaborator insights are capped off with the acknowledgements of "Kim"[1], an insider to the world of television advertising who offers a deeper understanding regarding the practices of her profession's creative experts, not the least of which is that advertisers do not make use of folklore the way scholars of folklore and popular culture surmise most such professionals do. I end this chapter with a short discussion that attempts to understand why we are seeing what we expect to see in any event, the controlling influence of hegemonic masculinity, but what also makes it worth our time to highlight and regard that controlling influence through television advertising.

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[1] "Kim" was my first and only case of an interviewee seeking to use a pseudonym to protect her/his identity. As an advertising professional working in a small city like St. John's, Kim thought there was a remote possibility a client or another industry professional familiar with her might read my work and guess at her identity, thus she asked for a pseudonym to keep her work with me separate from her professional career.

My concluding remarks will step outside the boundaries of social science and

humanities research and into the realm of advocacy. Based on previous partnerships

between folklorists and formal structures attempting to transform public knowledge and

policy-making, I will argue that masculinities scholarship can bring about dynamic

change by employing folkloristics to make men more aware of their gendered identities

and the social spaces and restrictions those identities create. Because of the way

traditional masculinity impacts the lives of boys during their formative years, gaps in

information regarding health, violence, and risk-taking behaviors have the capacity to

follow men throughout their lives even if they break with hegemony's key constructions

of manliness and adopt an alternative way of knowing their gendered identity. As this

hegemonic information is delivered primarily through unconscious and vernacular

channels, folkloristics is a excellent resource for helping men understand themselves as

men, as participants in cultural groups that incorporate notions—veiled and unveiled—

of gender, ethnic, and economic power, and as human organisms with all the advantages

and faults such a condition entails.

The Lens of Television Advertising

In the early days of September, 2013, an article on the website of *Business Insider*

hailed the arrival of a Guinness commercial created by the agency Batten, Barton,

Durstine, and Osborn (BBDO) that expressed different ideas about manliness than were

typical of most models for beer advertising:

> Beer commercials are generally pretty juvenile. For the most part, they depict
> men as unfeeling doofuses who only want to hook up with hot women and
> watch sports without being bothered by their wives. But a poignant new ad
> from Guinness flips the switch by presenting a group of athletic, beer-drinking

men who are defined as much by their kindness as their physical strength (Taube, 2013).

The commercial features a group of wheelchair-bound men playing a friendly, but very aggressive game of basketball. Classical music plays as they move about the court pushing one another, passing the ball, attempting shots, and even knocking each other down. As the game concludes, all but one man un-buckle the belts of their chairs and stand up. The man remaining in the chair remarks that the group around him is, "getting better," (Figure 1.2). As the men rise up out of their chairs, the scene shifts to a bar where the product is featured prominently among the players, who have swapped their sweaty gym clothes for middle-class dressy-casual attire, and a somber voice offers the following thought: "Dedication. Friendship.

Figure 1.2. Guinness. (BBDO 2013)

Loyalty. The choices we make reveal the nature of our character."

Obviously, the advertisement seeks to conflate social choices and choice of beer brand, but reading deeper there is something of a political appeal petitioning a growing contemporary audience that favors inclusion of differently-abled individuals in everyday life. The commercial attempts to sell the brand as a conscientious, compassionate, yet masculine choice befitting physically active consumers. What is curious is that this use of an outlying social group to appeal to a wider audience is not new. US department store JC Penney made a similar solicitation in 2012 with its use of a male same-sex couple in a Father's Day advertisement that was widely distributed across print media and on the internet. The ad was not aimed at enticing the LGBTQ community to shop at

JC Penney, but to appeal to individuals practicing inclusive politics. A JC Penney

spokeperson stated on behalf of the company, "In celebration of Father's Day, we're proud that our June book honors men from diverse backgrounds who all share the joy of fatherhood," (Ellin 2012) (Figure 1.3). The

text of the ad read, "What makes Dad so cool? He's the swim coach, tent maker, best

friend, bike fixer and hug giver—all rolled into one. Or two." Industry website *Adweek*

Figure 1.3. JC Penney. (Ellin 2012).   suggested that the company was acting in a

very anti-corporate fashion by "trolling" anti-gay groups that had recently called for a

boycott of the company due to catalogue pictures that featured another same-sex couple

(Cullers 2014). This act of "trolling" was more in line with siding against anti-gay

sentiments to draw attention to one's self, a popular internet pastime in the US and

Canada, rather than seeking the LGBTQ community as a customer base. I am convinced

that events such as this demonstrate that contemporary popular culture has created a

space for the discussion of gender and sexuality and it is curiosity about this space and

the messages it is used to convey that has led me to my current course of research.

Before delving into my research it is important to answer one question: "Why

look at the concept of hegemonic masculinity?" Hegemonic masculinity, was defined first

by sociologist R.W. Connell as, "…a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces

that extends beyond contests of brute power in the organization of private life and

cultural processes." This ascendancy is, "achieved within a balance of forces, that is, a

state of play. Other patterns and groups are subordinated rather than eliminated."

Furthermore, "the cultural ideal (or ideals) of masculinity need not correspond at all

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close to the actual personalities of the majority of men. Indeed the winning hegemony often involves the creation of models of masculinity which are quite specifically fantasy figures," such as those found in film, television, and other entertainment media (Connell 1987, 184-185). I intend to show the reader that hegemonic masculinity is not a passive cultural entity that allows other forms of masculinity to overrule it. Each effort on the part of cultural groups to make changes comes with enormous effort and risk, as traditional masculinity is a dynamic force, both "viral" in its means of communication and cooperative in its effort to overcome conscious and unconscious change alongside forces such as economics, ethnicity, and sexual identity.

Throughout this thesis I use the terms hegemonic masculinity and traditional masculinity. Though the terms cover much of the same intellectual ground, it is worth considering their differences. Hegemonic masculinity is a term attributed to R.W. Connell, is a socio-cultural construct related to gender that sublimates other notions of gender without the application of overt force. It is very much like the doxic quality of masculine domination described by Pierre Bourdieu (1998). Traditional masculinity is hegemonic masculinity or masculine domination, but understood within the frame of folkloristics. I would be more inclined to attribute this latter construction to scholars such Stanley Brandes (1980), Simon Bronner (2005), Michael Robidoux (2001), whose works support the arguments in favor of hegemonic masculinity even though they do not reference the concept directly.

I am not attempting to create a new discussion or raise the alarm about a new social threat facing contemporary Westerners as they attempt to know themselves in the post-modern era. I am attempting to raise concern over seeing traditional masculinity as a societal blind alley. This in itself is an intellectual danger as it allows a controlling

cultural phenomenon to simultaneously appear insurmountable and hide in plain sight—

hegemony in action. It becomes a barrier that everyone knows about, yet no one

contemplates transcending even though what lies on the other side is beneficial for

everything from feminist activism, to education, to men's health and longevity. What I

seek to achieve in the following pages is a new way of viewing and understanding the

barrier or blind alley so that it can be incorporated into future programs of research,

especially those working with what Martin Laba identifies as fitting into the fluid

continuum of folklore and popular culture, "The essential connection between folklore

and popular culture is in the social sphere—the impulse to, and way in which meaning is

made by people in to the more or less determining material conditions of life in modern

society," (Laba 1986, 16-17). The making of meaning is central to Laba's definition. It is

an idea supported both by Elliot Oring's perception of folklore as situated within the

realm of identity (1994) and John Story's definition of popular culture as a cultural space

created as a reaction to the pressures of industrial revolution, urbanization, and political

anxieties (2009[1997], 12-13). It is critical that this new way of viewing masculinity be

made accessible in the classroom and, ultimately, translated for the non-academic

audience so that it might be of benefit to parties within and without the scholarly frame.

What follows is also critical in that this may be one of the last opportunities to

clearly observe and evaluate masculinities being presented to audiences via television

advertising. I refer here to the changing landscape of entertainment media, not

suggesting that it has been static for any period of time since its inception and the days of

television hosts providing live endorsements for products amidst segments of music,

comedy, and other diversions. Rather, a major revolution amidst the day-to-day

transformations in televised entertainment is being enacted as I write these words.

"…with the invention of digital recording systems and online streaming, 'appointment television' is increasingly outmoded," (Gorton 2009, 33). Technology is moving toward what Sheila Murphy identifies as "media convergence," with, "perpetual opportunities to consume and remix media," (Murphy 2011, 66-67). Media scholar and popular author Douglas Rushkoff refers to a coming "posthistoric eternal present" brought on by advancing digital technology. Despite the benefits of this "singularity" Rushkoff argues that it has the potential to damage human agency and create cultural patterns akin to religious extremism surrounding social upheaval and change (Rushkoff 2013, 8 &13).

So often as I began interviews for this project or caught remarks after my focus groups I would hear, "When I used to watch TV," or "Before I started downloading shows," as caveats or asides in participant commentary. All of this led me to conclude that the way we are watching television is changing, and indeed, one of my key informants who facilitates the creation of advertisements for companies seeking to market their products stated as much: "[T]hings have shifted so much. People don't watch TV the way they used to. It's kind of a tumultuous time for advertising. People are having to come up with a new way of doing things if you want to reach anybody these days."

As media technology undergoes this dynamic shift, so does theory, on both the academic and vernacular fronts. What follows is an effort to contextualize these changes in theory as scholars inside the academy and television viewers outside it attempt to understand masculinity in its hegemonic and traditional frames. I will begin by focusing on the scholarly understanding of masculinities and how this has come about through a combination of feminist critique, LGBTQ studies, and queer theory. My informants will provide a vernacular perspective that, through my interpretation, seems to eschew much

of what academia has to say on the subject and move toward the folklore sub-field of

psychoanalytics where, "there is patterning and system in folklore, so that the symbol

employed in any one given folkloric (con)text may be related to a general system of

symbols," (Dundes 1980, 275). This is not to say my participants and collaborators are

wrong, rather there is a disconnect between how scholars and popular audiences view

the masculinities information available in examples of contemporary television

advertising. I will conclude this thesis on the note of looking at ways to reconcile this

gap between academic and vernacular theory, bringing scholars and popular audiences

closer together for the purposes of serving both groups.

Chapter 2, Part 1
Literature Review: Development of Contemporary Masculinities Theory

This section will explicate the complex and multi-part academic history that has brought folklore scholarship from a discussion of jokes and obscenities perpetrated by traditional Western masculine discourse to a dialogue of ideas on the topic of gender that incorporates the feminist critique, LGBT studies, queer theory, and a variety of masculinities. While the focus of this explication is folklore, it is difficult to deny that what we are seeing here is the impact of several critiques across a wide range of academic disciplines. Thus, it is necessary at times to gauge what is taking place in terms of these critiques and to look at the literature that is inspiring and embodying them.

This accounting begins with the establishment of a means by which to converse openly about sex and sexuality within the confines of folklore scholarship. This was achieved through the first major works on the topic of obscenities and sexual humor (Brandes 1980, Hickerson and Dundes 1962, Legman 1962). Feminism later entered into this series of events as part of a larger critique of the social sciences and humanities, giving folklorists (Thomas 2003, Radner and Lasner 1993), along with the members of other academic disciplines, the tools they needed to discuss sexual biology and gender identity, and differentiating between the two. Feminism did a further service by opening the door for the discussion of LGBT folklore (Goodwin 1989, Greenhill 1995, Primiano 1993) and framing a wider collection of gender identity categories to be explicated. Queer theory would eventually move to oppose the categorization of gender identity all together (Borland 2006, Butler 1990, Greenhill 2001), instead suggesting a continuum in

which identities flow into one another without borders and the notion that a person could have more than one experience to gender in her/his lifetime. With these issues in the open, there was now a space cleared for masculinities scholarship in folklore, so that it could be brought down from its silent, dominating, and monolithic intellectual space and enter into dialogue and negotiation with other experiences gender.

As a discipline contextualizing the informal and unofficial qualities of people's lives, folklore studies is in a unique position to unpack and explicate the expressive elements that make up the inequalities, borders, barriers, and liminal spaces of gender. For all its unofficial and invisible qualities, gender is clearly a vital underlying theme in the construction of culture. Dorothy Noyes shows, in her essay on the subject of "group", that gender is a foundational element of social networking, the division of labor expanding outward from it in Western culture also forms a division of power (Noyes 2003, 20). This is why gender performance is rigorously policed and deviance from the understood norm is dealt with harshly, as individual performances collect to repeat and reproduce the construct across cultural space and time (Noyes 2003, 28). Folklore is not so much concerned with the latter part of that process, but the former, and so folklorists are able to witness the individual performances that make up gender. These individual performances code the message of gender and move it through cultural space. With the breakdown of gender inequalities through political movements, the messages have become more diverse, making the work of folklore ever more complex and interesting.

Obscenity and Eroticism: The Dirty Secrets of Folklore

Gershon Legman and Alan Dundes were central to the production of the seventy-fifth volume of the *Journal of American Folklore*, which focused on obscenity and the folklore of eroticism. For Legman's part, the work was coming too little, and too late, as European scholars had long made an effort to integrate the erotic into all aspects of the social sciences and the humanities. He argued that people in the post-Victorian West were still fleeing from the erotic for the very same reason that Europeans gravitated toward it—it involved sex. North American scholars were only beginning to approach these notions of the sexual in subjects such as folklore because they believed they had run out of material in all other areas. Not only was this untrue, but it established false reasoning that all things sexual needed to have their own genres rather than be represented alongside the non-sexual. "The idea that there is a special kind of folklore that is sexual, as differentiated from all other kinds, is an optical illusion caused by the operation of a purely literary censorship," (Legman 1962, 200-201).

For Dundes, the opportunity to work on the special obscenities issue of the *JAF* allowed him to take some of the first steps towards establishing a school of psychoanalytic thought within the discipline of folklore, as he and Joseph Hickerson detailed the way innocence was married with vulgarity to produce shock in parody nursery rhymes that end with sexual or vice-laden twists (e.g. "Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard, to get her poor dog some bread; When she bent over, Rover drove her And she got bred instead," and, "Yankee Doodle went to town, Ridin' on a turtle; He Turned a corner just in time To see a lady's girdle,") (Hickerson and

Dundes 1962, 250-257). This represented "a reality thoroughly human," suggesting that childhood and growing up is not all sweetness and niceties, but there are confusing and uncomfortable moments which are suppressed and reappear in the form of humor later in life. What is more, Dundes and Georges proposed that sexual humor, long seen as a vice that promoted poor thinking habits and polluted the human mind, required a great deal of intelligence as it frequently involved complex word-play, symbolism, and abstract thinking (Dundes and Georges 1962, 221-222). This obscenity-signifying-intelligence approach would be echoed in the 1970s by works such as Frank Hoffman's survey of American erotica and Reinhold Aman's journal *Maledicta*. Evidence in favor of the theory can also be seen in some of the visual humorous materials collected by the Kinsey Institute. Sexual allegory encourages the viewer of a humorous cartoon, sketch, or painting, to seek out the telltale signs that make the picture different from others and/or match these signs with a caption that reveals the punch-line of the joke. Such examples might include an exaggerated phallus employed in an unusual function such as a ship's mast, a plow, or dressed in courtly finery (Johnson et al 2002, 112, 119, 123-125).

I would be remiss at this point if I did not mention that the initial pursuit of erotic and obscene folklore struggles from oversimplifications and an armchair approach appropriate to its time, and that it does not fully contextualize this material. Though Legman's depiction of European sexuality in the eighteenth through twentieth centuries may be considered accurate (1962), as engravings depicted in the Kinsey Institutes' 2002 collection *Sex and Humor* would certainly indicate, evidence to the contrary situates much of this sexuality in Germany and

France (Johnson et al 2002, 54-135) as opposed to the whole of Europe. Stanley Brandes' work with traditional masculinity among Andalusian men would also seem to indicate careful coding of sexuality was a cultural norm as recently as a middle twentieth century in at least some parts of the European continent. Brandes' decodes this masculine humor in Andalusia with the same psychoanalytic techniques used by Dundes in the seventy-fifth issue of *JAF* when dealing with vulgarities of the puritanical New World (Brandes 1980, 9-10). If the same conflicts are appearing in Andalusia as were occurring in North America, it may be safe to say that some parts of European society have more in common with the New World in terms of sexuality and sexual talk than individuals such as Gershon Legman would have liked to have believed. Legman may have oversold his depiction in an effort to prove his correct understanding of the North American approach to the topic. Alternatively, we may be able to reflect back upon the work in seventy-fifth issue of *JAF* and read in it the obfuscating discourse of monolithic Western masculinity, which would only be revealed years later through scholarly critiques on the subject of gender.

As an afterthought on the matter, it is worth pointing out the early rounds of research into North American sexuality and sexual culture were not a unified effort and disagreements between scholars did occur. Gershon Legman and Alfred Kinsey did not see eye to eye on a number of issues, most notably non-heteronormative behavior in human beings. Legman was decidedly anti-homosexual in his writings whereas Kinsey and his disciples embraced the growing LGBTQ community of their time as an aspect of human diversity (Brottman 2002, 43; 47-49). The inclusion of

Mikita Brottman's biography of Legman in *Sex and Humor* arguably represents a

healing of that rift that occurred between the two scholars in the 1940s, as the

decidedly anti-academic folklorist is, in the end, lauded for, "imbuing his scholarship

with his own erratic consciousness," (2002, 51).

Feminist Critique: A World of Competing Codes

Feminist readings of folklore and material culture have granted scholars

access to some of the deep-seated codes of patriarchy. Jeannie Banks Thomas

approaches this coding from the frame of human statues displayed publicly and

played with privately. In looking at the former, Thomas notes that male figures

depicted at gravesites function as fairly accurate representations of those entombed.

Memorialized men are displayed with detail, each is an individual and they often

retain aspects of the professions or events for which they are known. That is to say,

men remembered as soldiers and statesmen will be depicted as such through details

of clothing and items held. Women, when portrayed at gravesites, are often just the

opposite; such statues are not associated with a specific person but serve to

represent an angelic or mourning figure with a plain face and a passive posture.

Overall they present a submissive, erotic, and interchangeable appearance that is

overshadowed by the uniqueness and strength of the masculine figures around

them (Thomas 2003, 54-55).

Thomas also argues that mass-produced dolls and action-figures define

stark gender roles in popular culture (Thomas 2003, 174). This same principle that

the doll is the maker's model of the world works for women who privately make,

collect, and/or customize dolls. Such hobbyists and craftspersons are theorized to practice two things: a miniaturization of the world that, "typifies the structure of memory," and creates an "authentic" subject through imitation (Stewart 1984, 171-172). In the case of the latter, doll folklore stands in for the needs, wants, and desires of a person and values can be expressed through the way the doll is dressed and how it is used: given to a child, put on display, or auctioned to raise money for a specific charity. At the same time, miniaturization is an attempt to capture a text in the form of a smaller representation that expands to all edges of the miniaturizer's worldview—a, "hermetic universe," (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989, 335). A tiny sculpture or doll can contain in it everything that the owner thinks and feels about multiple subjects represented by its appearance, clothing, or accessories; all of which contain gendered messages (Yocom 1993, 148-153).

Humor is frequently utilized as a vehicle for gendered folklore (Preston 1994, 32-33; Seizer 1997, 64; Thomas 1997, 278-292), both because it can mask direct aggression toward inequality and because it pads such aggression with pleasant feelings. In the same way as Thomas locates patriarchal codes in burial ground art and architecture, we can locate feminist codes in humorous media familiar to us such as cartoons. Psychologist Leonore Tiefer, in considering different genres of feminist cartoons in the Kinsey collection, states that the medium can display humor that removes power from traditional masculinity by reducing it to something laughable; an example would be depicting anti-suffragists collectively as an old tortoise-like creature not long for the world. Alternatively, a cartoonist can provoke the bearers of those same traditions to anger by exaggeration; depicting a depressed

woman, "naked but unsexy," lamenting the "myth of the vaginal orgasm," (Tieffer 2002, 25-29). Both situations require different forms of coding to convey the message, which is the case with much feminist knowledge coded in folklore. For folklorists, the feminist critique created opportunities to read traditional culture and performance with new eyes, locating within it the power dynamics that existed between men and women. Joan Radner and Susan Lanser argue that coding is necessary to carry out subversion of the dominant masculine paradigm, so coding is something women do frequently to pass information to each other. The downside of this is that coding is necessarily ambiguous, so a message risks reinforcing the paradigm by being shrouded in an aspect of it (Radner & Lanser 1993, 23).

For further examples of women's coding, we can consider the ways in which mothers' dreams, anxieties, and desperation over parental responsibility come through in motherhood folklore, such as legends of poor parents and lullabies that foreground graphic imagery incongruent with the peaceful and melodious tones of the songs instill in the would-be sleeper. The difficulty is really the degree of insight and unconscious thought to which one wants to go in her/his feminist reading of such folklore. We might simply say a song like "Rock-a-Bye Baby" is about concerns over a generalized separation, the exact fear of infant death, or we could say that the mother is actually wishing the infant dead in order to be free of the burden. All three coded messages are reasonable to assume, however it depends on the sort of theory to which one ascribes and the frame in which the song is employed (Langlois 1993, 92-94). Although it is critical we understand the depth and breadth of coding, persuasion, and political philosophy available in feminist readings of folklore

(Jordan and de Caro 1986, Mills 1993, Saltzman 1987), what is important for the
purposes of this literature review, are the efforts to interpret suppressed anxieties
that manifest themselves in other facets of culture surrounding the place of
suppression. This indicates use of the psychoanalytic model. Simon Bronner argues
that feminism has been in dialogue with psychoanalysis since its inception and this
is a major step in the development of masculinities theory (Bronner 2005b, 47).

LGBT Scholarship: Risky Communications, Mutual Transformations

It is important now to step back again and consider what has happened
across the intellectual space of the Western humanities and social sciences before
returning the focus to folklore. The feminist critique has given scholars the idea of
"gender" and with it the notion that inequalities between genders are not inborn but
rather benefits, stresses, and disadvantages placed upon groups by larger cultural
constructions. Into this is interjected a discussion of the inequalities experienced by
lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender individuals.

> Inscribed both in objectivity, in the form of instituted divisions, and in
> bodies, in the form of an internalized relation of domination (revealed
> in shame), the parallel oppositions which are constitutive of this
> mythology structure the perception of one's own body and the uses,
> especially the sexual ones, that are made of it, i.e. the sexual division
> of labour and the division of sexual labour. And it is perhaps because
> it recalls in a particularly acute way the link between sexuality and
> power, and therefore politics…that analysis of homosexuality can lead
> to a *politics* (or a *utopia*) *of sexuality* aimed at radically differentiating
> the sexual relation from the power relation (Bourdieu 2001 [1998],
> 120).

Scholars of gender and sexuality employing the tactic of "cross-reading" the
arguments of at-risk groups encourage the argument that movements seeking to

promote women's rights, gay rights, lesbian rights, and transgender rights all have overlapping motives of "concerns about equality, discrimination, stereotyping, and sexual harassment," (Holmberg 1998, 87-88). With the progression of the LGBT rights movement in North America came the notion that gender categories could be applied to groups outside the heteronormative, and also heterocentric, frame. Indeed, a critical understanding emerged among gender and sexualities scholars that humankind and exclusive heterosexuality were mutually exclusive concepts (Weems 2008, xiv-xv).

Folklorists sought to explicate the complexities of "gay culture" beginning in the 1970s. This meant in-depth studies and collection projects that mirrored heteronormative ethnographic and collection efforts. Folklorists with interests in LGBT scholarship sought to show that a wide array of folklore was available for study within this collection of communities (Goodwin 1993, 23-24). Furthermore, the process of gay acculturation—a strongly folkloric experience—was a complex one. It did not necessarily have to do with sexual behavior and it garnered attention as the liberation movement begun in North America in the 1960s made gay culture more accessible (Goodwin 1989, 3-4).

Participants in the LGBT community frequently find their authentic sexuality obstructed by the status quo, and consequently it becomes necessary to seek communication and recognition through avenues such as cooperative conversation and body rhetoric that can hide or reveal one's status as familiar with LGBT culture. William Leap's 1993 work on "Gay English" and Elizabeth Adams' 1993 article on cooperative talk showed that the verbal play of gay and lesbian individuals

possesses two salient features: the language of risk and a cooperative discourse. The language of risk is the careful building and movement of conversation to state and offer support for coded messages without outright revealing interest or sexual orientation. Cooperative discourse means that the men who practice "Gay English" work together toward a common goal in a conversation that exists outside their worlds (Leap 1993, 64-67). Adams showed a similar strategy of cooperative talk allows lesbians to share landscapes, such as the sprawl of Los Angeles, while carefully coding their language to identify with other members of "at risk" groups (Adams 1999, 179-180). This is particularly critical when we consider that a normal course of dominant masculine talk is to create a linguistic community through the perpetuation of verbal violence, which is built on sexual aggression that may or may not be fully understood by the speakers (Robidoux 2001 132-133). What is more, Jan Laude found that lesbians in the United States use "butch/femme" body rhetoric as a way of altering their behavior between lesbian and non-lesbian contexts. As well as protecting the group, this strategy provides for group cohesion (Laude 1993, 119). Finally, playing with the texts such as "hard" and "soft," through the mixing of clothing styles allows for the rewriting of the text of "woman" and the development of a lesbian epistemology. However, this new epistemology is not a philosophy written in a vacuum, but an act bounded by the notions of what feels "right" for a given lesbian community (Lawless 1998, 17-18).

Just as it is under the conditions of the feminist critique, humor is a folkloric tool used to establish cohesion and preserve the sense of group. Along with entertainment, group-tailored jokes, anecdotes, and word-play can be used to frame

secret knowledge, provide stress relief, and garner attention in the negotiation of a

social environment (Goodwin 1989, 29). The need for cohesion is understood as

resulting from conflict, as with the feminist humor referenced above. Gay humor can

be employed to take power away from dominant and obstructing traditions, as well

as to focus attention on conflict through embarrassment and the flouting of social

standards (Goodwin 1989, 59-60).

LGBT folklore studies also offers the opportunity to read previously collected

materials in a different light, much like with feminist readings of motherhood lore.

Post-modernists argue that the performer, reader, and consumer of a text can all

place their meanings upon it, informing the text through their own experience of

identity. However, Pauline Greenhill reminds us that identity is not deterministic of

the ideas imposed upon a text. One need not read a text like a non-heteronormative

individual in order to have a "non-heteronormative" understanding of a text. Thus,

ballads depicting cross-dressing and gender bending can be informed by the

identities of women as much as by men—gay or otherwise (Greenhill 1995, 157-

158).

Leonard Primiano shows that ideas of gender can also transform traditional

practices such as religious belief. The gay Catholic group Dignity does this through

the notion that men invested in this organization draw upon their sexuality as a

source of Christian power. They suggest that they can love Jesus better, because

they love men. They encourage each other that they are deserving of the love of

God, also a masculine figure. However, Dignity is a challenging environment for

women who want to participate as Catholic lesbians. This is because there is such

an investiture of masculine sexuality into the Catholic ideals, such as love of God.
Because women, heterosexual, lesbian, or otherwise, experience sexuality
differently from men, they find themselves overwhelmed among the Dignity
parishioners (Primiano 1993, 94-99).

Groups like Dignity allow us, as scholars, to see that alternative ways of
approaching subjects like belief widen boundaries of gender and sexuality,
improving inclusion and ease inequalities. However, they do not fulfill this aim
entirely. For this reason, new and more aggressive approaches to the topic of
gender make themselves known to folklorists and others amidst the post-modern
critique. This eventually comes to benefit forays into the study of masculinities. As
ethnography is employed as a tool to break up long-held notions of rigid gender
categories (Jaffrey 1996, Borland 2006) so does it show that masculinities are
fragmented by space, time, and tradition (Bronner 2005b, 6-7).

Queer Theory: Category to Continuum, By Any Means Necessary

The post-modern critique had a significant impact upon the humanities and
social sciences in that it taught that the real could not be accurately described. Only
the simulacrum, the representation of the real, was accessible (Motz 1998, 343).
What is more, the notion of discourse suggested that everything in culture projected
one or more messages foregrounding its own representation (Foucault 1990 [1976],
33). Thus, that which was dominant cast its self-representation far and wide, for its
own benefit. Things that might be seen as part of a cultural construction began to
feel permanent and natural. "*It goes without saying because it comes without saying*:

the tradition is silent," existing in this state because there was no other alternative asserting itself (Bourdieu 2006 [1977], 163).

It is not surprising then that individuals who find themselves slipping between these "natural" categories are without power. The categorical representation that marks people as "straight," "gay," "lesbian," "bisexual," "transgendered," and so on does not mark everyone equally and honestly. For those who fall in between, queer theory offers a solution in the form of an alternative representation of sexuality. Works like Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* can be found at the center of such arguments, wherein Butler suggests that all gender is "drag," a costume donned lastingly for the purpose of negotiating cultural interactions (Butler 1990, 176-180). Brian Pronger makes a similar comment about "gay muscles," arguing that there is an ironic and playful awareness that gender can be deconstructed and manipulated for the purpose of entertainment amongst gay men who admire the aesthetics of hypermasculine physique (Pronger 1990, 275-276). This new rendering of the simulacrum, according to those who give it support, provides a continuum upon which all are placed, all are mobile, and less emphasis is placed upon categorization.

Representation is not a polite effort, however, and aggression has trickled into the process begun by the feminist critique.

> Queer theorists' disenchantment with some aspects of gay and lesbian politics is not simply a rejection of the normativity of those particular categories, but rather derives from a different understanding of identity and power. If queer culture has reclaimed 'queer' as an adjective that contrasts with the relative respectability of 'gay' and 'lesbian', then queer theory could be seen as mobilizing 'queer' as a verb that unsettles assumptions about sex and sexual being and doing.

> In theory, queer is perpetually at odds with the normal, the norm,
> whether hetereosexuality or gay/lesbian identity (Spargo 1999, 40).

This can especially be seen in the language employed by queer theorists, who recognize that previous representations must be torn down if new ones are to replace them. Shock is cultivated as a tool of transformation.

In the early 1990s, at a city-wide cultural festival staged in Winnipeg intended to celebrate Canadian ethnic diversity, a group of queer artists and performers under the name "Plug In Gallery" attempted to organize a "Multi-Culti-Queer Pavilion" that endeavored to parody the place—or placeless-ness—of the queer community in Canada. Folklorist Pauline Greenhill examined this political conflict, along with similar examples, to demonstrate the limited range of movement and freedom for the queer community within this cultural/political space (Greenhill 2001, 107-109). To associate with larger cultural organizations, such as those facilitating government-funded cultural events, queer groups must be taken in as "the same" as other cultural groups seeking to participate. To do otherwise is, of course, homophobic; however this does not stop these larger facilitating bodies from using the law to deny access to queer cultural arts and works, based on the notion that they are different from, and disruptive to, the festival atmosphere (Greenhill 2001, 112). Greenhill asserts that the problem is one of identity politics: the freedom or lack thereof to build a public identity based on a cultural reality, despite whether that cultural reality fits with other, larger public—and perhaps less overtly confrontational—frameworks (Greenhill 2001, 115).

Maria Fowler offers similar thoughts comparable to Greenhill's in discussing the community atmosphere of Winnipeg's 1995 Womyn's Music Festival, stating

that, "As with the boundary strategies invoked and deployed in constructions and performances of nation and citizenship, sets of inclusions and exclusions created by claims of collective self are continually challenged and transfigured by the inherent diversity of the constituents in any imagined community." This means that when people decide to "escape," they don't just come together and automatically produce something through mutual need for "escape," they bring all their cultural baggage with them, and so the festival community is complex, like the societies everyone is leaving behind, only in different ways. The "us" of a festival setting needs to be sorted out through a struggle of political wills (Fowler 2001, 58).

Zia Jaffery's work on the hijra tradition in India is an example the ways in which gender boundaries can trap individuals who do not fit the appropriate definitions, making them powerless. Even though they are marked as "eunuchs"—individuals who have mutilated their genitalia for personal or religious purposes—by outsiders, many hijras describe their experience as similar to that of Western transgendered individuals; that is, feeling as though one is born into a body in which one does not belong (Jaffrey 1996, 249). As one hijra puts it, "We are ascetics…We have given ourselves to God," (Jaffrey 1996, 52). This is made clear as well in the hijra tradition of celibacy, as insiders point out that to prostitute one's self, or to be a "zenana," is to fulfill needs apart from one's own; thus imitating a hijra for profit rather than being bound to the laws of the group for its emotional and intellectual benefits (Jaffrey 1996, 256-257). The folklore perpetuated about the hijra subculture by the dominant Indian culture is in keeping with other examples of misunderstood or uncategorized groups. The prostitution, kidnapping, and

mutilation rumors that surround the hijra (Jaffrey 1996, 37-39) are examples of the fear and social distancing one would recognize in the rumor panics regarding Satanic cults in the 1980s in the United States.

Both Katharine Borland and Leslie Feinberg note at different points in their works that "woman" is a notion that is shared among different communities: biological females, biological males identifying as female, and male-identifying female-actors, for example (Borland 2006, 182; Feinberg 1997, 113). Feinberg also suggests, through ideas including rape, incest, and brutality, that "woman" is both a shared experience based on oppression and a tool for negotiating men's power (Feinberg 1997, 113). Borland argues that there are times when gay men's efforts to carve out a place for themselves in the realm of "woman" infringe upon the equality of biological females. Carnival in Nicaragua is about the licentious qualities of gender, an artful niche often filled by gay men. With their gender-role so limited and circumscribed, it is often the preference of women to cover up during masquerade performances in an effort to hide their gender beneath a costume, or more recently to perform in anti-carnival endeavors that strip gender from players and present an ideal abstract of elegance and romance through androgyny (Borland 2006, 183-184).

This same striving for androgyny is found in a post-feminist rereading of American Boy Scout traditions where leaders sought to teach boys that "a workable and satisfying alternative existed to the masculinist institutional structures that young people encountered elsewhere in their everyday lives," (Mechling 1987, 57). Thus, both women and men in different cultural contexts may find gender roles

restrictive enough to seek out a space of ambiguous gender for the purpose of growth and expression. Men are deconstructing and reevaluating the Western monolithic masculine worldview in an effort to find more fluid social tactics for negotiating a complex human environment. In doing so they are, whether knowingly or unknowingly, benefiting from the deconstruction of gendered behavior that has been taking place through the feminist critique, the advancement of LGBT studies, and the further critique of queer theory.

The Diversity of Manhood and Manliness

Carl Holmberg argues for two approaches to the subject of masculinities. Once we recognize that gender is a cultural construction and not a natural phenomenon, thus removing the idea of monolithic masculinity from the intellectual foreground, we can either treat masculinities from a "mythopoetic" perspective or from a "feminist/gay affirmative" frame. While the mythopoetic approach has seen some support in the form of men's spiritual movements, academically speaking this option moves scholars dangerously close to the modern romanticism that post-modernism sought to break down. Even Alan Dundes arguably one of most modern romantic voices in folklore—at least in terms of his armchair scholarship approach to various folk groups—shies away from the mythopoetic theories of Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, saying that their approaches are rampant with "racism and ethnocentrism" and that they fail to sustain their "universality" with "the necessary cross-cultural supporting data" (Dundes 1997 16-17). Meanwhile both Jung and Campbell are foundational scholars for literature such as Robert Bly's *Iron John*,

which has served to encourage the formation of numerous mythopoetic men's spirituality groups. Therefore it is unreasonable to suggest that post-modern masculinities scholarship can be separated from the critiques of feminism, LGBT studies, and queer theory. Indeed, the mythopoetic approach to masculinity, as a religious subcultural phenomenon, can be explicated via the feminist/gay affirmative theoretical framework, as in the case of my own efforts to study Neo-Pagan masculinities (Wall 2009, 93-96).

Masculinities scholarship is a post-feminist endeavor that has benefited from years of gender studies research and "forced reflection upon identity," (Bronner 2005a, xxiii). Feminism has been in dialogue with psychoanalysis since its ideas became available to scholars and this gives scholars the opportunity to ask questions about how male groups generate gender identity within the process of creating culture. Folklore is critical, because it provides a means for symbolic expression of often-overlooked concepts like manliness (Bronner 2005b, 47). Folklore often identifies itself—and other aspects of folklore—as being gendered. Traditions emerge face-to-face, over the internet, and in other ways that teach us about gendered behavior. Upon finding evidence of men's folkways, folklorists approaching masculinities scholarship seek to locate the folk roots of Western masculinities. Practices, lifeways, images, and metaphors identify masculinities and gendered symbols create identity within and without groups (Bronner 2005b, 48-49).

This does not mean that folklorists have restricted themselves from theorizing about dominant masculinity as a whole. Alan Dundes certainly made the

effort to explicate the male experience in total. He argued that young males are raised in a female-dominated environment in the home, surrounded by the authority of women while the male influences in their lives are away at work and/or war. In order to counteract the above, young males are sent into the world and pressured to find or form gangs, where ritual competition occurs between groups and individuals, as masculinity must be proven over and over with the victor assuming masculine sexual dominance and the loser assuming the feminine submissive role. Ritual competition may be compounded and reinforced by the nature of male sexuality; the phallus is not permanently erect, but the state of hardness must be achieved again and again and a man is at risk of losing his hardness after his prime has passed. In order to counteract the violence of young males, the superego of parents and authorities imposes religion and law to stifle this behavior. Athletics then appear as an alternative to ritual combat, and the rules and guidelines allow young males to express their aggression in a constructive manner. Dundes does not ignore the fact that his analysis does not have any direct evidence attached to it, but he insists there are studies across folklore and anthropology scholarship that indirectly support his argument: "Bits and pieces of it do exist, e.g. an analysis of one sport, or one aspect of differential child care, but to my knowledge, the overall thesis I have proposed…is a new argument." (Dundes 1997, 41-42).

In a more concrete example, Michael Robidoux's work with professional hockey shows that the sports that connect so many Western men to each other through fan and youth experience allow for the foregrounding of a singular notion of

masculinity, discriminating against gender, ethnicity, and ideology that does not fit that masculinity. Consequently, there is no room for creativity or individuality and the workers are assembled into a single masculine body. As scholars we must ask ourselves why men would intentionally limit themselves in this way. Robidoux determines it is because the same monolithic construct provides an equally monolithic setting—the very hockey arena seen by the men on the ice and the fans watching the game—where everything these men do in unison is approved of in unison as fans and other players recognize the borders of the space in their own experiences. In the hockey arena nothing a player does is wrong and not lauded in some way (Robidoux 2001, 127-129).

This singular masculinity does, however, have intricacies of its own. There are two sides to the masculinity exhibited in professional sports: on the field there is a bravado exuded and often more understood by observers than by the players. The players themselves play down the masculinity and intensity, almost suggesting that their work is more about boyhood than manhood, going so far as to say professional sport "stunts growth" because of joking and playing games. Aggressive, sexist, and homophobic language is used playfully and without a clear understanding of its long-term impact. The players wind up being more risky and aggressive in their manly behavior than they would in any situation where they clearly understand what is at stake and how words and actions can permanently harm social relationships (Robidoux 2001, 136-137).

Professional hockey players are taught to be brothers, and spend more time with each other than they do with anybody else. They work, live, and play as a team.

However, what would be an opportunity for meaningful homosocial intimacy and support is largely cut short and stunted by an "every man for himself" capitalist system that pits these "brothers" against each other and constantly seeks to define and redefine a pecking order of who is best; who "wins," and who "loses." Players understand that the capitalist interests of professional sport overrule the aspects of brotherhood, thus brotherhood is not just secondary but ultimately an unnecessary value—or perhaps a veneer that can be dropped at any time for the sake of earning more money. In the end, the mask is as meaningless as it is dangerous (Robidoux 2001, 144-145).

Pierre Bourdieu describes masculinity and masculine dominance as an "androcentric vision" that imposes itself upon the world without justification. (Bourdieu 2001 [1998], 9). It is a doxic quality: there because it is there and seemingly natural because there is little in the way of alternative knowledge. Doxa sits in opposition to orthodoxy, where one viewpoint is held above understood alternatives to which a cultural group does not adhere and heterodoxy in which an idea is framed in multiple ways without opposition or conflict (Bourdieu 1994, 159-166). As we have seen above however, the monolithic vision of masculinity, and indeed the binary oppositional vision of the masculine and the feminine, are exposed as false fronts by feminist critique, scholarship of LGBT culture, and queer theory. Through these intellectual efforts a new understanding of *masculinities* emerges, showing disparate and conflicting notions of manliness. This is particularly evident in men's folklore, made invisible for decades by the obfuscating politics of monolithic, hegemonic, and traditional masculinity.

For example, in the border region of southern Texas, Latino boys are taught manliness using both American and Mexican traditions. The qualities of machismo, or manliness, taught have thus been contested in varying generations. Curiously, a man may be marked as displaying "*machismo*," a word representing both positive and negative qualities of manly courage and violent aggression, or being a "*mandilon*," a man who is beleaguered by the strength of his wife, without fulfilling all requirements of either definition. Manliness is thus a contested spectrum, representing overlapping definitions (Cantú 2005, 130-131).

Men's ideas about manliness can also become coded messages transformed from one kind of folklore to another. Bronner notes that a folk art medium such as carving wood can be used for masculine play, the alleviation of anxieties, and confronting the reality of life coming to an end. The elderly carver can play jokes on the young and uninitiated by making a cane out of a bull's penis the same way he can make a wooden chain or puzzle—demonstrating his years of sexual experience despite his waning libido. Vulgar barrel-men carved from wood also provide amusement and opportunities to deal with anxieties. Jokes about Viagra being used for things other than sex suggest a reality that when sex ends life is soon to follow. However, as life slows down crafters can use folk art mediums to continue to participate in the dialogue surrounding manliness (Bronner 2005c, 309-312).

The wider frame of post-feminist scholarship on manliness allows scholars to see that masculinities are far more fluid and transferable than previously understood. Jacqueline Fulmer's 2002 folkloristic assessment of the anti-black-sploitation horror film *Tales from the Hood* shows how a filmmaker uses folklore to

reconcile the disconnect between modern American lifeways based on individuality and unequal sharing of power, with traditional Eastern African values of the community as power-center (Fulmer 2002, 434). Fulmer demonstrates that the filmmaker's use of African folklore transfers the protective qualities of masculinity from the individual to the community, allowing figures not normally associated with strength and protection—such as soft-spoken elderly women—to take on supernatural horrors (Fulmer 2002, 435-436). Meanwhile, African-American characters who maintain a sense of traditional Eurocentric masculinity fall victim to monsters when they betray the community for the sake of individual gain (Fulmer 2002, 435-436).

Another context in which the fluidity of masculinities is evident is Daniel Boyarin's discussion of traditional Jewish manhood. There is an intense level of difference between the behaviors of Jewish and non-Jewish Westerners such that the traditional manly hand-clasp greeting of the "Yeshiva-Bokhur," is considered limp and effeminate by outsiders. Boyarin sees this as an extension of Bourdieu's ideas of habitus as determined by the Torah and the Talmud (Boyarin 1997, 151). Furthermore, there is a reversal of roles from that of traditional Western gender constructs in traditional Rabbinic sexual contract. Instead of the woman giving her body to the man who protects her from rape, as Boyarin describes this pattern of behavior for most of the West, the Jewish woman is constructed as needy of sexual contact and the kindly, gentle husband is understood as servicing her needs (Boyarin 1997, 169-170).

What we must also realize, and perhaps help people outside the academic community realize, is that as much as we are deconstructing and problematizing traditional masculinity for the purpose of exposing gender inequalities that oppress and harm the members of other groups, the participants in traditional masculinity are at risk of harm themselves. Masculine discourse seeks to preserve itself across, not necessarily the men who are a part of it, often doing so by convincing men to harm each other in order to remove any trace of femininity (Bourdieu 2001 [1998], 52-53). We can see this both in terms of the comparison of male and female life expectancies in Western nations, as well as in the volume of men's traditional activities and entertainments, which encourage aggression, stress, violence, and physical harm as part of competition. In order to gain power and influence over other groups, a traditional man must harm himself and/or put himself in harm's way.

Traditional masculinity exacts a price for the advantages it offers to its adherents. In exchange for predominant authority in matters of business and politics, men are the primary targets of arrest, imprisonment, and criminal and military violence. In return for higher incomes, men are more likely to work longer hours and at more dangerous occupations with the social burden of being "breadwinners." The heteronormative favoritism of men's pleasure comes at the price of men's emotional needs—particularly vulnerability and desire to nurture— which cannot be discussed in an open manner. The high-return/high resource areas of education men such as schools of business, law, medicine, and physical science, gain special access to, leaves them under-represented in the arts and social sciences

(Connell 2005 [1995], 246-247). The end result of traditional masculinity in its contemporary form is a minority of men achieve wealth and power while the remainder are exposed to extra stressors and a shrinking field of opportunities in order to maintain the tradition that keeps their more powerful brethren in a place of cultural dominance. Men's privileges, according to traditional masculinity, are the responsibility of all men to protect and maintain, whether they actually benefit from those rights or not (Connell 2005 [1995], 248-249).

Evidence for this reality of masculine discourse is clear in the men's folklore of Monteros, Spain. As Brandes indicates, jokes, tricks, and symbols among these traditional men represent a struggle between being domineering—and thus free to do what one wants—and being restrained and restricted by self-control. Men want these positive qualities for themselves, but they recognize that to benefit from them it is necessary to restrict other men and women as a whole from possessing them. The compromise, seen through folklore, is that men must restrain and limit themselves (Brandes 1980, 205-207).

Sexualized humorous recitations serve as a means of sorting out and dealing with the complex layers of anxieties associated with male-female sexual interaction. The sexualized women mentioned in such recitations can only be sexually satisfied by a foreigner or machine that violently assaults their genitals—which implies that a normal man would fail in the task and be disgraced:

> 'Round and 'round went the big fucking wheel.
> In and out went the big prick of steel.
> Tore that poor maiden from twat to tit,
> And covered the walls with shit (Baker and Bronner 2005, 343).

The sexual man is challenged by separating himself from his boyhood of playing in the dirt and being fascinated by his own fecal matter. The whore, schoolmarm, and mother are part of the same multifaceted feminine continuum, and this is why mothers and schoolmarms become whores in jokes and dirty boys are born of whores in recitations (Baker and Bronner 2005, 343-346).

A more contemporary, and perhaps physically and socially dangerous, example of this phenomenon of limitation and restraint among men involves the business of professional athletics. Robidoux, as previously mentioned, argues that the business of professional hockey takes advantage of players' labor as those same players attempt to meet the social expectations of fans, showing those who observe them for entertainment purposes that they play "for the love of the game." The consequences for making decisions based on financial interests are that fans and fan media socially punish players. As well, the anti-labor gaze of hockey fans does not consider the kinds of injuries these men experience; romanticizing them in many ways, and limiting players by forcing them to play along with romantic notions of harm that may limit or end their careers (Robidoux 2001, 155-156).

Concluding Thoughts: Laughing at the Last "Real" Man

In reviewing the life and works of Gershon Legman, Mikita Brottman argues:

One of the notable hallmarks of contemporary Western culture is the denial of the human condition is regarded as necessary to sustain mental health, rather than being a symptom of psychopathology. The acceptance of denial under the guise of 'humour' not only makes regression possible, but hides the underlying censored impulse (Brottman 2004, 150).

She offers evidence for this analysis of the disconnect between humor and mental health by noting that medical patients deemed psychologically unstable will often

react poorly to culturally constructed jokes "because they see too clearly [their] tragic aggression and undisguised pain," and stand-up comedians, who make their living telling jokes and acting humorously in social environments, show deep despair and hostility in their need to seek attention through forcing entertainment upon audiences (Brottman 2004, 151-152).

Bronner remarks that many of the invisible values of manliness are concealed within outrageous characters that are made light of in popular culture. He cites specifically "Archie Bunker" as a character who teaches traditional manliness by assuming the role of a living punch-line (Bronner 2005b, 13), I would add to this "Al Bundy," and "Homer Simpson," "Hank Hill," "Red Green," and the anti-heroes of the "Trailer Park Boys" as examples from more recent television and film productions that demonstrate the continuing motif of the last "real" man holding out against feminism and the counter-culture. In the same way that folklore is often understood as "dead" or "dying" by those not privy to the academic study of such matters so traditional masculinity frames itself this way as a tool of preservation.

Gail Bederman ties hegemonic masculinity, defined herein as per R.W. Connell, "...is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women," (Connell 1987, 183-186) as it exists today to the emergence of a post-Victorian masculine identity centered on the middle class, rather than the aristocratic notion of "manliness" ascribed to gentlemen of the Victorian period. The association of middle-class men with the violence, aggression, and muscularity the Victorians shunned is challenged by the sense that these same white men have weakened themselves through many centuries of civilization

(Bederman 1995, 1-44). This perception of wealthy, aristocratic men as weak and effeminate ultimately became a threat to the narrative of racial inequality deeply ingrained in both Victorian and post-Victorian Western societies. To counteract the threat, post-Victorian professional sporting events, speculative and fantasy fiction, and journalistic accounts of exploration were all geared toward showing white men reacquainting themselves with and reconquering the savage roots of humankind. This trope set figures of both fact and fiction such as boxer Jim Jeffries, politician Theodore Roosevelt, and Tarzan of the Apes against a primitive and black world from which masculinity must be taken as a prize (Bederman 1995, 217-232). Bederman ultimately concludes that masculinity is inexorably tied to both notions of race and civilization, an argument backed by Ailsa Craig's assessment of white Canadian masculinity in a decade of recent Molson beer advertisements (Craig 2015). As we move forward to a discussion of critical theory and popular culture, it will become clear that capitalism, too, shares many of the same strategies and often combines its efforts with the cultural undercurrents that allow men to dominate Western society.

The transition of gender power from Victorian manliness to Post-Victorian masculinity would seem to follow on the heels of what Jürgen Habermas calls the rise of the "public sphere," a transition of authority from individual representative agents (e.g. feudal lords) to organs of the state (e.g. parliamentary bodies) endowed—ideally "for" the public—with monopolies of power over concepts such as justice and law-making (Habermas 1989 [1974], 136-137). Habermas points out that Western society established the model of the public sphere in the 18th century

(Habermas 1989 [1974], 138). Given that, historically, gender has been obscured in a manner that conceals its identity as a social construction behind the rhetoric of biological imperative (Butler 1990) the further century or two required for it to "catch-up" with the public sphere is not at all surprising. In the section that follows, I will thoroughly explore Western masculinities in the public sphere, focusing on the role popular culture takes in framing messages of manliness: what is allowed within the borders of advertising and mass commodification and what is left out for the sake of appealing to a popular audience.

Chapter 2, Part 2
Literature Review: Commodification and Popular Culture

It is the goal of this section is to establish a transdisciplinary theoretical model comprised of selected elements of Marxian folkloristics that easily merge with the continuum of folklore and popular culture, and intellectual tools of social construction such as parody, nostalgia, and anti-intellectualism. After identifying an initial need for generalized theory to make folklore communicable to the greater academic community (Fine 2008), thus allowing it to be informed by that community, arguments will detail the use of Marxian theory as my specific bridge between folklore and the greater collective of social sciences and humanities (Craig 2012, Story 1997[2009], Appadurai 1996, Limón 1983). Once this is achieved, it will become obvious that academic discussions of popular culture, whatever their discipline of origin, can be informed by folkloristic theory (Narváez and Laba 1986, Smith 1991). Finally, anti-intellectualism, nostalgia, and parody will serve as examples of extra-disciplinary information that is meaningful to folkloristic analysis (Wilson 2000, Hutcheon 2000 [1985], Rigney 1991).

These patterns of social construction will be served by examples from television and print advertising, demonstrating the means by which masculine folklore is communicated through popular culture (Santino 1996, Cantwell 2002, Hebdige 1997 [2006]). Concluding thoughts will show how the literature review and, ultimately, the methods of this project are rooted in folklore but necessarily inclusive of knowledge outside the discipline. What is more, parallels will be drawn between the dominant form of traditional masculinity in North America and the practice of consumer capitalism. These parallels will come to demonstrate a

mutually-supportive relationship, active since the years immediately following the

Victorian era (Bederman 1996) and up to the present day (Dworkin and Wachs

2009).

Seeking an Interdisciplinary Common Ground

As recently as 2008, Gary Alan Fine suggested that folklorists maintain a

practice of generalized theory to facilitate both communication within the discipline

and as a means of transmitting knowledge to other fields. The scholarly

underpinnings of this project are meant to take Fine's conception of folklore theory

a step further. I intend not only to make folklore knowledge available to other fields

through this project, but to use the theory available in those fields to inform folklore.

This is not, however, a unique approach to folkloristics. Efforts to associate folklore

with interdisciplinary critiques extend as far back as the 1980s and possibly beyond

that point.[1]

In his introduction to the study of folklore with the aid of a Marxist lens, José

Limón asserts that, almost without exception, Western Marxists point to

industrialization as the harbinger of "disenchantment" for societies with strong

folkloric traditions reorganizing themselves within capitalist frameworks. Instead

of the storyteller performing the intellectual property of a given folk group,

entertainment shifts to intermediaries motivated by profit and the performance

traditions fall by the wayside. This is not at all surprising as, at the time Limón's

article was written, folklorists were just coming to terms with the relationship

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[1] This later point hinges largely on my own interpretation of Alan Dundes pre-1980s collection-style works, specifically the assumption that they contain elements of the psychoanalytic approach that defined his work from 1980 until his death in 2005.

between their area of expertise and the growing understanding of what is now termed "popular culture." However, Limón does make reference to extremely valuable insights by Western Marxist thinkers for the purposes of this study. The notion of new entertainments promoting an industrial/capitalist hegemony, as per Gramsci's notion of cultural norms formed and supported through coercion, persuasion, and consent, (Forgacs 199, 195 and 422) does offer the impetus to how discuss men's gendered behaviors related to viewers through television advertising.

Arjun Appadurai demonstrates the loss of the traditional vernacular system—though without using the terminology—as a result of the twin principals of production and consumer fetishism. Production fetishism masks the transnational sources of money, resources, and workers, which produce products; hiding the true means of production from the consumer and denying the vernacular system. Under the practice of consumer fetishism the consumer is transformed into a sign. The "consumer" becomes a projected idea, the outline or construct standing in for something more real that cannot be as easily defined. The "consumer" is a mask for the agent of capitalism, the producer who decides what it is that will be bought (Appadurai 1988, 41-42). In the industrial revolution a key to mass production was interchangeable parts. Now, in the post-industrial era, a key to production is interchangeable consumers. Advertisers cast their nets as wide as possible, appealing to as vast an audience as they can by making the consumers feel a part of the popular culture they are shown. The everyman pictured in a beer commercial is a creation of hegemony and heteronormativity, supported by the popular frame. The focus of the message is not to entice beer drinkers with the product, but to

allow the men in the audience to see themselves filling the everyman's shoes through his generalized vision of masculinity. The "hard sell" notions of the product's attributes are set aside in favor of "soft sell" issues that show the consumer how the product will make life better, thus the everyman is understood not only to consume the product itself but the resources—wealth, social success, sexual attention from attractive women—granted to him by virtue of the masculinity intimately tied to the product (Craig 2015).

Popular Culture: the Ubiquitous and the Universal

While few disciplines outside of folklore itself deal with the material of folklore studies on a regular basis, treating it as "folklore" as opposed to identifying it in a way that fits the lens of another field of study, popular culture is accessible to all manner of academic frames. More importantly, popular culture is treated as *popular culture* no matter where it is analyzed. Folklore scholarship has a good deal to say on the subject of popular culture and can use the subject as a conduit to inform other disciplines. At the same time it is not unreasonable to suggest that folklorists can learn a good deal from the ways other disciplines discuss popular culture. This thesis will offer the former in exchange for the latter: a means by which to bring folklore to the wider academic community while using the resources of that community to discuss a topic that is inter-disciplinarily relevant.

In the mid-1980s Peter Narváez and Martin Laba, while working as a co-editor with Peter Narváez on *Media Sense*, identified a process by which expressive culture moves into the social space of popular culture, where some of it is picked out

by media entities within popular culture and commodified based on audience reaction—excitement leads to commodities, whereas boredom leads to further attempts to elicit excitement through new material. People take action to move expressive culture into the popular arena by calling radio talk shows, writing letters to the editor, and being interviewed by local news outlets (Laba 1986, 12). Popular culture signifies Goffman's "ground rules" for social interaction, focusing on how human beings stage basic interactions with one another at a societal level rather than on the community-oriented values attributed to folk-groups by some foundational folklorists. Socialization within a folkgroup requires a vernacular system of communication that is accepted by members of the group, so the folkgroup produces very specific expressive culture understood as its traditions. However, since popular culture is a distilled generalization of folkgroup interactions from everywhere within its purview, its expressive culture is equally generalized and based on Goffman's "ground rules" (Laba 1986, 16-17).

Paul Smith, in his work with the relationship between folklore and popular culture, argues that,"…a highly complex set of direct and indirect interactions, transformations, and simulations are in constant and simultaneous operation. By *interactions* I mean the *act* of exchange of information; *transformations* and *simulations*, on the other hand, are *types of change* which take place during any given interaction," (Smith 1991, 123-124). An excellent example showing that this is not a new phenomenon might be the association of Paul Bunyan with the Red River Logging company, wherein Canadian folklore created a Californian advertising campaign that then became a folkloric tradition when the associated business entity

ceased to be (Dorson 1956). Just as contemporary folklorists no longer consider

this form of tradition artificial, or "fakelore" as Richard Dorson named it in the

1950s, those who follow Limón's example and approach folklore from a Marxist

perspective do so with the understanding that the "disenchantment" identified by

Western Marxists is another example of the "folklore is dying" tradition that

sustains familiar traditions in new ways. As mentioned in the previous section of

this literature review, the adherents to traditions of dominant masculinity do much

the same by surrounding themselves with terms like "crisis," "war on men," and

"dying tradition" (Bronner 2005b, 11). It is also necessary to point out that the

thinkers to which Limón refers regard folklore as traditional manifestations of rural

art and performance rather than the notion of "informal culture" employed by

contemporary scholars. As we expand the definition of folklore to incorporate the

"informal" and the "vernacular" we can observe masculinities outside of frameworks

that limit our scholarly access. A thriving, yet nearly invisible cultural construct like

hegemonic masculinity offers us far more opportunities to actively engage with it

than an idealized image of a "dying" masculine tradition.

Masculinities as Targets of Consumer Appeal Strategies

Jack Nachbar and Kevin Lause identify advertising as one of the most obvious

means by which we can understand the "Funhouse Mirror" effect of popular culture

as it, "instructs and molds audience beliefs to one degree or another simply because

the very values being reflected are necessarily being communicated as well," (1992,

7). What is more, they frame popular culture as an ideal candidate for the

communication of dominant masculinity as it, "reflects and molds beliefs and values that are so deeply embedded that their truth is assumed rather than proven," (1992, 9). This might as well serve as a simplified definition of Bourdieu's doxa concept, only the specific term is missing. As commercials are reflection of culture, so Nachbar and Lause's reasoning is a reflection of Bourdieu. With these mirror images so aligned we see that advertisements incorporating masculine imagery are communicating and teaching masculinity. As a result, we can examine what they say not just as commentary on men but as *what* men know about being masculine.

Humorous advertisements featuring men and masculinities frequently appeal to the anti-intellectual undercurrents in Western culture. A stunningly clear example of what sociologist Daniel Rigney termed "unreflective instrumentalism" in his 1991 article on the depth and breadth of American anti-intellectual values. This particular brand of anti-intellectualism is perhaps the least offensive as it does not so much accuse intellectuals of harming society as it ignores the questions asked by scholars and experts on a myriad of subjects. The thought process, as detailed by Rigney, is that if there is no immediate material value in questioning a particular lifeway or way of knowing the world, then it should not be questioned. Humorous advertisements that depict men as lazy, slovenly, homophobic, or sexist show us these men matter-of-factly, thus preventing the audience from questioning their behavior. The strategy dovetails with Bourdieu's androcentric vision, specifically the notion that it, "dispenses with justification," and does not require supportive discourse. Through the work Bourdieu completed near the end of his life we learn *what* masculine dominance is capable of doing, as opposed to *how* this capacity is

achieved. Rigney identifies the strategy employed and we observe the silent argument that contemplation of dominant masculinity serves no immediate purpose for the men employing it in their daily lives.

At the same time, humorous commercials regarding men and products aimed at men create nostalgia as a means retooling the viewer's frame of mind, such that the product becomes necessary. At its core, nostalgia is a strategy to establish a dynamic and continuous identity; one that, in the case of these advertisements, effectively circumvents the effects of the feminist critique by rewriting history in a comedic fashion that depicts men who once were but no longer are. For the purposes of this thesis I will define nostalgia using both Wilson's "intra-personal expression of self…derived from the experience of a particular age-cohort," (2000, 19) and Abrahams' "burden" and "on-going dramatization" (Feintuch 2003) models. It is an ideal tool for the advertising industry, which relies heavily on grouping its audiences into age-related demographics.

An additional use for nostalgia is the predication of fear. The "soft sell" advertising technique centers on evoking an emotional response to a product in the potential consumer. Once the emotion is elicited the understanding is the viewer will buy the product in order to sustain the emotional experience or alleviate it (Lee and Johnson 2005). The latter is referred to as the "fear appeal," and it is employed in two ways when men are targeted as a product's relevant audience: individually, the fear appeal works upon the dominant tradition of Western masculinity's flight from all things feminine. If a man witnesses even a comedic display of nostalgic masculinity, the information symbolically concealed within that image is, "You are

not like this man. You do not measure up. This man is more deserving of the rewards of traditional masculinity than you." The second use of the fear appeal focuses on men viewing advertisements in social groups. In this case, men are more likely to display a homophobic reaction to sexually ambiguous or non-heteronormative content when in the company of other men, the underlying message to the viewer being, "Your peers will emasculate you if you do not react negatively to what you are seeing." Reasonably, if the threat of emasculation assists in the sale of the product, then the advertisement would most likely appear surrounding programming men can watch in a social setting, such as sporting events. Conversely, advertisers seeking to avoid a homophobic reaction to their products would ideally run advertisements that risk such a reaction surrounding programs that men are likely to watch outside of any social context (Martin and Gnoth 2009).

Comedic portrayals of men and manliness also access hegemonic constructions, allowing audience laughter to cushion the reconstruction and romanticization of history. For Linda Hutcheon, parody is, "repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity," and it is ultimately a tool of historical agency (1985, 185). Peter Narváez observed that, "The essence of folk parody is that, as an artistic form of communication, it is built upon a pre-existing aesthetic structure and that in this building process the content or meaning of the initial structure is substantively but not substantially altered," (Narváez 1977, 33). Parody gives one control over the construction of tradition, even the capacity to romanticize it as something handed down across generations.

These commercials then have the capacity to fabricate an idealized form of masculinity even as they appear to mock the same concept.

Furthermore, we can consider the writings of Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, and James Twitchell on the subject of cultural connections with images and advertising to confirm the process. Barthes argues that sight is a magical sense through which objects are prostituted, as advertising creates a desire to go from seeing to touching (2009 [1972], 88-90). Sontag noted that images have been slowly taking the place of reality since the invention of still photography, giving power to those who can manipulate an image ([2001] 1978). Twitchell, focusing on modern advertising suggests that advertisements have so saturated and inundated Western culture that they *are* culture (Twitchell, 1996, 46-52); constructing, deconstructing, and communicating societal information across space and time.

We need only examine the Althusserian interpretation of advertising to relate our understanding of strategies back to Marxian theory. Althusserian scholars suggest a symptomatic approach wherein one reads for silently posed questions that are answered through content-based efforts to change the subject. A well-documented example of this interpretation shows that automobile manufacturers avoid questions about traffic congestion and pollution by displaying their wares in pristine natural environments bereft of other vehicles (Story 2009 [1997], 73-76). Althusserian scholar Rastko Močnik describes such imagery as a "trap" wherein the speaking party and interpretive party are forced into "communicative solidarity." (Močnik, 141, 1993) In the same way, if a lazy, slovenly, or sexist man is portrayed in a humorous light, any effort on the part of the audience to ask, "Why is this so?" is

erased by the comedy of the situation. Here again, Mikita Brottman's theory holds

true as comedic efforts derail the exposure of an underlying anxiety or bias

(Brottman 2004, 150). This is why television characters such as Archie Bunker, Al

Bundy, and Homer Simpson do not appear threatening despite their frequent use of

sexist, racist, and homophobic rhetoric. Comedy acts as a diversion to distract from

the political violence of their speech. Meanwhile, when sexist, racist, and

homophobic values make themselves known in the drama or action genres of

television entertainment, the characters making use of such ideologies are

invariably villains.

The Social Construction of Popular Culture

There is no longer a "body politic" in post-industrial society. Classes do not

take political action, instead the self is a political landscape and political action can

amount to what is put into the physical self. (Lau 2000, 134) Consumption is also

class-based action, available only to those with leisure time and discretionary

income. Thus this kind of political action is constrained to the leisure classes.

Masculinity, as an expression of political power, was handed down quietly from man

to man in a vernacular, and Victorian, fashion as wives and daughters were closed

out of conversations about money, war, and honor (Chodorow 1989, 23-26, 34-36).

Even without a conception of the distinctions between sex and gender, it is clear

that Victorian and post-Victorian men knew their hold over power was tenuous.

Two instructive examples are that of Lois Schwich, a woman who convincingly

posed as a fifteen-year-old errand boy and openly caroused with male companions

(Hindmarch-Watson 2008) and the sexually ambiguous performance of Marlene Dietrich in Sternberg's film *Morocco* (Russo 1996)*.* In both cases, clothes alone held the capacity to place masculine power in the hands of women, and it makes sense that the communication of masculinity from one generation to the next was a closely guarded process, particularly where it also came with strong ties to economic power among the upper classes. Therefore, we must carefully consider what it means that this traditionally guarded information is now available for public inspection at most drugstores, liquor stores, and car dealerships.

While at first glance post-industrial consumer culture appears to lay open the substance of hegemonic masculinity, allowing it to be scrutinized, critiqued, and perhaps ridiculed for the of benefit of the periphery—the assumed negation of gender-based inequality does not materialize. This would mean then that the passive post-industrial observer is privy to a sensation of cultural competence associated with understanding hegemonic masculinity, but that cultural competence has no benefits. Folklorists, anthropologists, and members of other social and humanities-driven disciplines have agreed for some time now that traditions do not move through space and time as wholes but are reengineered by each generation that inherits them. Henry Glassie makes plain in his discussion of how history is remembered, "Tradition, a key to historical knowledge, is to be understood as a process of cultural construction," (2003, 179). Jack Santino argues that tradition is a form of human behavior. Tradition is enacted in the present by people with a common script. Even when tradition seems nostalgic it is taking place in the present, it is always contemporary. Tradition is always being reinvented, and so it is

not unusual for something to appear "old fashioned" when it's only a few decades old—the placement of something within the context of tradition seems to bend time around it (Santino 1996, 24-25). The net effect is that massive cultural changes may occur while tradition bearers and observers see and feel only continuity.

Agreement with Santino can be found in Robert Cantwell's effort to define culture as "ethnomimesis"; the imitation of culture, such that it is learned and perpetuated from one person to the next. All imitation performed by human beings, or mimesis, is culture, in that it is imaginative, despite what traditions, materials, and other "concrete" objects of human creation imply (Cantwell 1993, 5-7). Cantwell argues further that human beings build traditions around particularly meaningful behaviors as a way of maintaining them and protecting them from change. The metaphor he uses to illustrate this is that of a noble lord or aristocrat building a large structure around the gold or other valuable commodity that represents her/his effort and power. Interestingly, traditions, the stuff of cultural power, are as ephemeral and vulnerable to divestiture as modern currency, the stuff of economic power (Cantwell 1993, 80-81). Perhaps this would explain why traditions are so easily commodified for consumption in the contemporary West and why the strategy of exposure now benefits hegemonic masculinity in a way it never would have in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries.

Finally, Dick Hebdige's approach to subculture can demonstrate further how the dominant tradition of masculinity influences the various folkgroup masculinities it contacts. Hebdige describes subcultural styles as "mutations" of the cultural styles they seek to oppose. This ultimately transmutes the "high fetishistic power" back

into a cultural norm that can be consumed in a more public and non-oppositional fashion (Hebdige 2006 [1979], 130-131). When a folkgroup breaks with traditional masculinity, its members never fully divorce themselves from those dominating practices. I saw this quite clearly as I studied Neo-Pagan men seeking a new perspective on manliness, but allowing the pressures of cultural homophobia to push them away from their intended goal (Wall 2009). Both subcultural style and non-dominant masculine traditions suffer from the same apparent limitations: they are made up of the same materials which they oppose, so they can only move so far out of line with dominant traditions before they are pulled back toward their source.[2]

Consumerism & Masculinity: A Pact of Mutual Aid

Traditional masculinity and consumer culture share enough qualities to make them supportive of each other in the cultural constructions of which they are a part. When a man practices the fundamental attributes of traditional masculinity, he is supporting consumer-based capitalism, and anyone supporting that form of capitalism automatically bolsters the power and position of the dominant masculine tradition.

Like dominant masculine tradition, consumer capitalism demands vigilant defense from all its adherents, despite providing the majority of benefits to a

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[2] I would add here my own argument that subculture appears to be a tool for those who benefit from consumer culture to curb revolutionary thought. Having researched on the edges of several "fan" subcultures (Wall 2013), I conclude that participants think differently enough to oppose some of the major societal structures supported by capitalism. However, these "fans," "nerds," "freaks," etc. are also forced to work within those capitalist structures to build and maintain their interest in a given subculture. Ultimately the revolutionary thoughts achieved by subcultural adherents are swept aside in the effort to the "buy in" to fandom.

handful. Consumer capitalism also places stressors upon its adherents, with the bulk of those borne by individuals who benefit least. Anthropologists Marcus and Fischer find, in their discussion of working class ethnography, that the individual laborer disappears under the various class, local, national, and global systems laid atop her/him, meanwhile even acts as personal as the traditions of rebellious schoolyard behavior serve to galvanize the lack of class mobility the future worker will experience (Marcus and Fischer 1986, 86-107). David Brooks makes the argument that bourgeois-bohemian culture has elevated the greedy and dirty acts of consumption to an artistic and high-minded space as precious as philosophy and social action. Thus the flow of capital is necessary to maintain the flow of cultural aesthetic (Brooks 2000, 55-102). Both are systems of structural inequality inseparable from the dynamics of ethnicity, sexuality, and socio-economic status. While Bourdieu is inclined to treat masculine domination as nearly timeless, I think that Gail Bederman's assessment of the transition from Victorian manliness to Post-Victorian masculinity shows us that the contemporary narrative of masculine domination has been upgraded to trudge in lock step with the buying power of the rising Western middle class (Bederman 1995). The variable economic representations of Western women over time demonstrates this most clearly. In the Victorian era women were considered too pure to deal with financial matters and were effectively imprisoned by the reverence of men, who handled "dirty" things like money (Chodorow 1991, 1-36). In this Post-Victorian and Post-Feminist era, women, having equal access to finances become the targets of predatory men, who

embody the animalistic aggression and lack of sexual restraint Victorian gentlemen opposed.

Research into the cultural elements and practices understood to make up the "metrosexual" style suggests that this trend, too, is about the connections between masculinity and economic class. Metrosexual men are not so much breaking with the norms of dominant or traditional masculinity as they are using masculinity to reinforce the boundaries between the working and professional classes (Barber 2008, 473). Thomas notes this in her assessment of masculine cemetery statues. Displays of manliness are driven by "the manipulation of symbols," and vary according the social mores at work when they are created. Thus the rough, uncontoured hands and graying hair of the 1950s bank manager can signify the same meanings as the manicured nails and crisply gelled highlights of a contemporary executive. Commercials I have employed at various points in my student surveys, reflecting examples of men's knowledge about masculinity by way of Nachbar's "Funhouse" analysis of popular culture, reinforce this distinction by portraying expensive goods—or goods targeted to wealthy audiences—and their accompanying masculinities in more diverse ways. The nearly naked form of David Beckham is hairless, yet covered in tattoos. The men of the "Wiserhood" are well groomed, display some ethnic diversity, and are gentle in their mannerisms, yet they favor misogyny by means of subterfuge allowing their familiar handsome features to play off their more disreputable traits (Thomas 2003, 173-174).

This study is not original in connecting the issues of masculinity with those of consumer culture. Dworkin and Wachs (2009) devote a chapter to such an effort in

their work *Body Panic*. Under the auspices of health and fitness advertisements, the

masculine body of the 1980s and 1990s became the target of objectification due in

large part to the privileging of economic growth. What is more, the "lack" typically

assigned to the feminine body was transferred to men with the goal of creating

consumer anxiety over third wave feminism—a dynamic shift in feminist

philosophy influenced by postmodern and Third World feminism—an equality that

would end masculine advantage.   Third wave feminism uses a pluralistic approach

to critical analysis and is anti-essentialist in its efforts to challenge categories of

gender and sexuality. Proponents of the philosophy make frequent use of media

and popular culture to deliver their arguments and are often critiqued as having

turned away from the activism of previous feminist efforts (Arden McHugh, 2007).

Dworkin and Wachs reflect that such masculine anxieties or "panics" are not

unusual, and point to both the American women's suffrage movement and the

second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s as examples of times when Western

men attempted to reassert their dominance and separation through organizations

such as the Boy Scouts of America and the mythopoetic men's movement (Dworkin

and Wachs 2009, 101-105).

More evidence for the entanglement of masculinities and economic forces

can be located by reframing the discussion to include matters of race. Vershawn

Ashanti Young weaves these threads of group identity together in saying, "To

embrace…my manliness, I identify with men who represent the ghetto," (2007, xii).

Young's statement ties the experience of black masculinity to a limited range of

affluence. Young makes this all the more clear in relating how he is identified as a

"faggot" when he steps outside these economic boundaries in terms of his dress and mannerisms while attending an upscale dance-club. He attributes "bourgeois blackness" to a conflicted space that requires those benefiting from economic status to eschew the trappings of black culture and speech, allowing "the ghetto" to become a dumping ground for all that is feared and reviled by a middle-American population—Young's Iowa—that unapologetically fills 25% of its jail cells from among a racial group that makes up 2% of its population (2007, 68-71).

Vorris Nunley's assessment (2011) of *Divine Days*, Leon Forrest's 1995 novel chronicling the experiences of an African-American playwright in Chicago, demonstrates that black masculinity is complicated by the need to perform for both black and non-black audiences. "Coolness is a function of Black masculinity that functions as a form of social literacy…Like all forms of literacy, coolness is entangled in power, ideology, knowledge, subjectivity, and survival." Echoing Young's concern regarding "the ghetto" as a dumping ground for non-black fears and negative associations, Nunley adds, "In a society in which one false move can land a Black man in jail, in which one step on another's shoe could cost an African American man his life, in which assertion of Black male masculinity (and, of course, the assertion of masculine behavior by African American women) is seen as angry or uncivil, coolness and detachment can save one's life," (2011, 120). This is yet further indication that masculinity and economic power support each other. "The ghetto" is a lack of wealth, and masculine anxieties act to compensate for this lack by raising the stakes associated with displays of manliness. Coolness and detachment become a kind of cultural capital that provide an Althusserian distraction from violent

displays of masculinity, temporarily disarming those notions of manliness but still leaving room to communicate them.

I will add the all-too-important refrain that the arguments and interpretations contained herein are bounded by my own cultural biases and experiences and those of my participants and collaborators. This is most assuredly a study of traditional North American hegemonic masculinity and its entanglement with North American economic principles and values. This will become all the more clear as the reader reviews the commercial advertisements included in this study both in terms of textual description and in the accompanying digital appendix (http://tiny.cc/6gsgiy). It is my sincere hope that this work serves to encourage similar projects outside of the North American frame, especially as policies of open access and digital research may bring scholars in the social sciences and humanities together as a more global community.

Example: The Anxieties of Masculine Space

Both second and third wave feminism have served to subvert misogyny in the workplace and social settings by undermining assumptions about those spaces as "men's spaces." When women work alongside men, men must alter their public talk to reflect a more complex multi-gendered environment. When women reimagine feminine sexual behavior as a tool of power rather than a barrier aimed at making them the objects and prizes of men's social achievements, men must alter their communications in social environments to fit this new dynamic in order to facilitate relationships and sex. It is not at all surprising then that new men's spaces

began to develop concurrent with the advent of second wave feminism: the foundation of the modern "Women's Movement," where the body came to be seen as a site of political contest.   The consciousness-raising groups responsible for this shift in feminist philosophy were among the first to question Western notions of heteronormativity and sexuality (Arden McHugh 2007).   In the sixties and continued to expand the definition of men's space alongside the growth of contemporary feminist definitions and ideals. After all, misogyny through the use of the androcentric vision is at the core of both traditional masculine constructions of power and men's interpersonal communications with other men. Instead of doing away with these methods of social interaction in the face of the rising tide of feminist thought, men have found new spaces in which to employ misogyny and established new methods of intra-gender competition by transforming those spaces and the objects within them into commodities. A fitting explication of this connection between Western traditional masculinity and capitalism is the phenomenon of masculine space in the middle-class home. Three varieties of this phenomenon seem extant in popular culture: "the den," "the shed," and "the man cave."

        To seek out the origins of the den, shed, and man cave, and more specifically the division it creates, we can look to the historical data compiled by Roy Rosenzweig in the essay "The Rise of the Saloon." The establishment of set leisure times for factory workers, coupled with ordinances forbidding the crafting and sale of alcoholic beverages in the home kitchen transformed the urban landscape of the 19th century in a way that is now understood as a traditional division between men

and women, "when leisure was removed from the home or its immediate vicinity, it became predominantly a male privilege…In this way, the male saloon became a mirror image of the male factory," (Rosenzweig [1991] 1983, 131). We can then, perhaps, see the den, shed, and man cave as an effort on the part of middle-class men to both demonstrate their affluence and maintain the division of leisure that began in the Victorian era. Middle-class and upper-class men are pressed to establish a private leisure space that defines them as superior to their working class fellows, but the model for that leisure space is divided from both the home and the women in the home. I am not suggesting men are the driving force behind the "man cave" phenomenon, or that they are its sole users. Alternative interpretations using feminist coding might see a den, shed, or similar construction as a way of isolating or containing traditional masculinity within a home. At the same time, such a space could be co-opted as "adult space" rather than just men's space to facilitate separation of parents from children. Thus the den, shed, and man cave are cordoned off from the rest of the home space: attached, yet separated from it in a manner that maintains masculine privilege.

It would seem that practitioners of contemporary traditional masculinity are so keenly aware of the misogynistic qualities of the gendered behavior that they require a "men's space" to practice it openly. While one can achieve this open misogyny through the use of certain consumer spaces such as bars, pool halls, bowling alleys, and gentlemen's clubs, possessing this space in one's home yields a good deal of prestige. The dissatisfied masculine consumer cannot simply own a home, he must have a space within that home that is uniquely *his*. Traditional

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masculinity's strategy of isolation forces the consumer to pay for the same ground twice by adding a den, shed, or man cave to his habitation.

Fortunately, an entire niche market exists to support the building of these men's spaces and the stocking of them with food and beverages, technology, and even restored antiques. The North American hardware and building supply franchise The Home Depot offers paint colors with altered names to help men decorate in a traditionally masculine fashion. "Monterey Cliffs" is recoded "Wolfden," "Lexington Park" is interpreted "Dirty Socks," and "Classic Liberty Red" becomes "Rust on My Truck." We can easily critique this consumer tradition with the time-tested *Mythologies* of Roland Barthes. The semiotics are quite clear as the "masculine" names for these paint colors become secondary signs aimed at asserting a new set of values over the top of previously held aesthetics. Again, there is room for alternative interpretations. Looking at these paint colors from the perspective of feminist coding, it might be easier to paint a room "Monterey Cliffs" when one describes it as "Wolfden" to a man one knows to be easily influenced by the values of traditional hegemonic masculinity. The "masculine" transformation of these paint colors also brings to mind Berger and Luckman's assertion that reality is a "social construction" predicated on the values that human groups attribute to objects and ideas (1967[1966]).

I found during my own research on internet forums devoted to the construction, design, and use of mancaves that these are places a man can be alone or with his friends, surrounded by trophies and symbols of traditional masculinity, and be openly misogynistic without fear of reprisal from the post-feminist world he

clearly knows exists beyond the walls of his den, shed, or cave (Wall 2014). The "man cave" certainly evokes the notion of nostalgia, going so far as to reimagine the owner in the "good old days" of Neolithic tool culture. With such a space, the isolation of men in a capitalist frame comes full circle as they are cut off from family and non-men both during periods of work and periods of leisure. It is a curious example of Berger and Luckman's efforts to show that large-scale problems in society often appear to have incongruent solutions: men are isolated in these spaces but these spaces also allow for the appropriately nostalgic, yet ill-defined notion of "male bonding."

In his study of professional hockey players Michael Robidoux provides strong evidence that men can thrive through bonding, creating an egalitarian environment where they can support and even nurture each other (2001, 131). Michael Kimmel's ethnographic interview efforts show us that such "bros" are able to provide for each other emotionally in such a way as to smooth the difficult transitions of contemporary Western adolescence through the creation of a liminal space he terms "Guyland" (2008, 1-23). It is unfortunate[3] that the end result of both these ideal visions of community among men is a plunge into some of the most toxic aspects of economic and gender inequality. Robidoux's athletes become men with hardly an adolescent grasp on the violent language they employ with each other while the capitalist forces behind their brotherhood of sportsmen pit them against one another and commodify them before the gaze of critical fans (2001, 132). "Guyland"

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[3] Strong words here, muddying the waters between social science and activism, but I can think of few others that apply. When I see how contemporary Western men have the emotional tools available to create egalitarian relationships, but instead turn to abusing themselves, each other, and outsiders to achieve a semblance of that satisfaction it saddens me. I feel a kinship with environmentalists who look at the costs of fossil fuels and remark that efforts to drill deeper and extract more are a short-sighted waste.

teaches men to degrade and abuse women and men who are outsiders as a means of developing a sense of self and achieving happiness. Such caustic turns show that while men are motivated to seek out each other for emotional support, other cultural constructions are either pressuring them toward different goals or using those emotional needs to reinforce inequalities in other aspects of society. Above all, silence is the watchword. Men do not discuss the harm they do to each other and/or themselves for the sake of maintaining a masculine veneer (Kimmel 2008). This is either the result of ignorance, as Robidoux proposes, or an intentional effort to put aside that which causes psychological discomfort, as Kimmel suggests.

For my own part, I have noted a curious trend in both men's speech about themselves and in the popular culture that reflects masculinity: the idea of a dual or multiple identity. I think there is a strategy to speaking in such terms. It allows for the compartmentalization of masculine domination. Men seemingly isolate their favoring of gender inequality in order to avoid challenging it with knowledge learned from other traditions. At the same time, the isolation of the "beast," the "animal," or the "real man" is a tool to sublimate guilt and other negative emotions away from the harm men know they are causing themselves and others through the practice of the *androcentric vision*. I will explore this more in the forthcoming chapters as it is presented by my informant groups.

If men cannot or will not talk about the processes behind the creation, maintenance, and transmission of masculinities folklore on their own, one potential alternative is to discuss an artifact or idea in relation to those processes. The object, placed between the bearer of inaccessible knowledge and the researcher seeking to

elicit inaccessible information, bypasses the compulsion to remain silent. Through

this inert third party to the conversation the context of questions that often receive

little or nothing in the way of responses is changed. Interaction with the object

means words can form that explicate otherwise wordless constructions of gendered

behaviors. This then is how I approached the advertisements I presented to my two

groups of informants, framing them as accessible objects around which my study's

participants and collaborators could present their own ideas on the masculinities

that impacted their everyday lives.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Definitions: Informant, Participant, and Collaborator

As I commence the discussion of my methodology, I want to take a moment to provide some clear definitions of the roles my informants played in my work and how I refer to them in this thesis. There are two distinct groups of people involved in my research providing two distinct forms of information for my observations and analyses. When I speak of "participants" I refer to the larger group from whom I collected survey information, whereas my "collaborators" were a smaller group I interviewed individually. I will also occasionally refer to both groups collectively as my "informants."

Participants were a group of just over a hundred university students who took part in focus groups, making general observations about advertisements I presented to them using anonymous surveys. I utilized their survey responses primarily to test the internal consistency and external validity of my own analysis of the advertisements I collected. I wanted to be sure that other people, and perhaps more importantly, people without my specialized interest in the topic of communication of masculinities information through the medium of television advertising could see what I was seeing. As a secondary product of these surveys, I garnered new directions in analysis and was able to identify some symbolic representations of masculinities in the advertisements that I had initially overlooked.

My collaborators were a smaller group of a dozen informants with whom I sat down individually to view the advertisements and discuss them. These

interviews would typically include some background information on the collaborators perceptions of gender, television-viewing habits, and anecdotes from childhood regarding television and learning about gender norms in their homes. While my participants were students with whom I was not individually familiar, my collaborators included friends, neighbors, and members of their extended families. My collaborators were familiar with me on a social level, though the degree of familiarity would vary and on at least three occasions a collaborator I knew as a friend acted as a bridge to put me in touch with an intimate partner or family member who then also became a collaborator.

Overview

Rather than focusing on major national commercial campaigns that have garnered media attention for their portrayals of masculinity, such as the Dos Equis "Most Interesting Man in the World" and the Old Spice "Man Your Man Could Smell Like" I have endeavored to locate advertising material that could be regularly viewed in my adopted home of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. With a handful of exceptions, everything the participants and collaborators in this project have seen could be seen by anyone in the St. John's area with basic access to the non-premium channels CBC and NTV. This still provides a host of options, as these channels broadcast both commercials specific to Canadian businesses and brands, such as ScotiaBank, Dempsters Bread, and Molson Beer, and internationally recognized brands such as those found in the Superbowl advertisements—though the latter examples were viewable only through cable, satellite television, and online

streaming in Canada. In framing the sample I showed either products that were

geared specifically towards men or commercials that featured men as central

characters or pivot points of the typical thirty-second television advertisement

storyline. In many cases, I presented both of these criteria in the same

advertisement.

I began seeking out the advertisements I would use for this study in the fall of

2011, recording both the aforementioned channels in 24-hour blocks and reviewing

them. Over the course of three months, I saw what each channel offered its viewers

on each given day of the week and, from there, selected my core sample of

advertisements that I would present in my survey phase to undergraduates and

later to my individually interviewed collaborators. As stated above, the survey

sample expanded somewhat. Word of mouth about my project among friends and

colleagues and my own subjective viewing drew my attention to new

advertisements I felt needed to be shared with informants in both portions of the

research cycle.

The element of my research most at risk for personal bias was the choices I

made in terms of the masculinity images I would study. As I intended to bring these

masculinities motifs to others from the outset, I went with commercial

advertisements that I understood to center on ideas about masculinity. While the

degree to which masculinities information is present in a television commercial

varies, I tended to favor less subtle examples that were consistent throughout a

given advertisement. I would certainly agree that, for example, the image of a man

in a white lab coat discussing the benefits of a product aimed at protecting against

acid-reflux symptoms contains a message about masculinity. However, I suggest

that a man treating his female partner's handbag like dog waste when he is asked to

hold it is a much more accessible message. After all, it is essential not just that my

participants recognize that they are receiving masculinities information but that

they can explicate what that information is teaching them about men and manliness.

During the course of my pilot study I came to understand that, while shock

value was essential to inspiring the vernacular discourse of masculinity I required

as data for my study, different degrees of shock had different effects. For example, I

employed a commercial during my pilot research phase that centered on African-

American professional athlete and actor Terry Crews. While Crews' naked chest and

arms featured prominently throughout the advertisement in a way as to potentially

promote the discussion of race, sexuality, and hypermasculinity, only the latter

emerged in discussions as the performer's over-the-top voice and physical antics

took center stage. Even graduate students serving as volunteers in this first round

of data collection were reduced to hysterics and confusion as they watched the half-

naked man destroy a cityscape at the commercial's conclusion. Laughter is certainly

useful, but only in as far as the researcher can help the participant access *why* it is

they are laughing. Subtle humor at the end of an advertisement seemed to be more

practical than humor that had the audience paralyzed with laughter from beginning

to end.

Two things are abundantly clear about the masculinities accessible through

the advertisements on non-premium channels in St. John's: those masculinities are

largely white and heteronormative—even when non-white actors make a rare

appearance, their words and actions appeal to a generalized white audience. Evidence for this is easily seen in the physical appearance of the actors portraying the central characters in these commercials and in the actions that make up those characters' relationships with others. There is also an unfocused sense of affluence associated with these advertisements that can only be read through the application of Althussurian symptomatic assessment—asking the questions the commercial steers the viewer away from asking. Thus it would seem to the critical viewer that these comedic and dramatic vignettes take place in a world free of poverty and the restrictions of socio-economic class and that everyone in said world can afford the products and services being offered. All of these features are to be expected, as the primary purpose of these mass-mediated appeals is to attract as wide an audience as possible.

My methodology concerning individual interviews moves beyond my own previous endeavors in that I have invited informants to become my collaborators. That is to say I have attempted full transparency from the start by displaying my methodology and theoretical approach to each informant on a level with which she or he is comfortable. The nine men and three women who participated in this project as collaborators come from a variety of generational, ethnic, economic, educational, and occupational backgrounds. They each possessed the means to view CBC and/or NTV regularly, therefore they could have seen the commercials I was seeing when I collected my sample. Most also had the capacity, and advised they would at times, stream commercials online through websites like YouTube and Vimeo if they were sent a link by a friend or told a particular advertisement was

worth a look. Some of my collaborators even made a point of annually viewing Superbowl advertisements online after they were first broadcast.

My study centers on what is, to my knowledge, a non-traditional folklore methodology, but one that benefits from the successes ethnographers have experienced by collaborating with their informants. The ideas about masculinities proposed herein are largely my own interpretations. However to assure that these interpretations meet Gary Alan Fine's criteria of internal consistency and external validity (1992, 51-52), I invited informants to act as participants and collaborators so that I may test my assessments of these commercial advertisements against their personal experience of popular culture. The informant's voice becomes a sounding board against which my interpretations can be tested.

At present I have access to over one hundred different voices that have engaged the same material I have and offered commentary that agrees with my interpretations, made the same or a similar interpretations to my own, and/or offered new interpretive directions for me to explore. The bulk of my participants were students in first- and second-year folklore courses at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Rather than a format that relied solely on previous experience, I opted to embed my questions about the masculinities displayed in specific television advertisements within a guest lecture format. The result was a short introduction to masculinities theory followed by a practical exercise wherein students could use what they had learned to enhance prior knowledge.

The information I offered these folklore students was fairly fundamental: an overview of masculinities studies that centers on the doxa of traditional masculinity

coupled with folkloristic insights that show the characteristics of manliness as contingent upon other elements of identity such as ethnic background, sexuality, age, and economic status. From this presentation, students should have taken away a perspective that manliness is a fluid construct and that it is possible to identify with more than one "type" of manliness at the same time, but that there is also an elusive quality about manliness that keeps it just out of reach or in a psychological space that must be constantly defended. This concept is a "universal" in that even as men move toward ideas about masculinity that differ from it, the formative doxa follows them and influences their formation of identity.

In an effort to lead back into the discussion of television advertising, I followed up this simplified theoretical approach with Simon Bronner's comments on masculine figures in popular culture as mass-mediated examples of the ways in which men communicate through symbols and metaphors (2005b, 13). I also included a discussion of the layers of information Katherine Firth identifies as embedded in commercial advertising in her work *Undressing the Ad* (1997). In the case of purely introductory classes where one could not expect students to have prior knowledge of the distinction between folklore and popular culture, I used graphics to represent the filtration process as features of informal culture are selected and paired together for the purpose of selling a product to an artificially constructed "target audience."

Recognizing the tenet of contemporary pedagogical theory that there are a variety of approaches to learning and, in any given classroom, there will be students with different learning needs, I provided more than one way to learn each key

concept. By talking to the students and supporting my lecture with bullet-point

style notes as well as animated and non-animated visual examples, I attempted to

meet the needs of auditory, visual, and graphic learners. Moreover I made the effort

to incorporate both shock and humor to accentuate critical points and promote

student access to prior knowledge that would prove useful when I asked the focus

group participants to write on the subject in question.

In the case of my collaborators I was able to establish a more thorough

understanding of how television played a role in shaping their lives with

introductory questions that told me something about their television viewing habits

from childhood until the present day, as well as the experiences that shaped their

understanding of where the cultural borders of masculinities lie. While most of my

collaborators spent their childhoods seeking out certain television entertainments

and treating television viewing as an activity and end unto itself, those who do

watch television now as adults prefer to use the medium as "background noise" to

fill in periods of their day when they are isolated in their work or at some kind of

repetitive household task. As an aside, I noticed collaborators frequently spoke

about watching shows as they are broadcast in the past tense. Digital media has

allowed many of these individuals to construct new methods of watching media

through downloading, legally or otherwise, the episodes of a television series and

watching them in collective blocks without the interruption of advertisements

(Taylor 2013; Gillmore 2013). Thus advertisements are pushed to even more

marginal spaces such as doctors' waiting rooms, auto mechanics' lounges, and

restaurant bars where their messages become a removed form of background noise

associated with televisions viewers happen upon while at another task rather than appliances one sits down intending to utilize.

The notion of background noise also carries over to learning and reinforcing traditions of masculinity, as Bourdieu argues that we often "...fail to observe the actions of deep-rooted mechanisms, such as those which underlie the agreement between cognitive structures and social structures," when it comes to matters of gender, and masculinity in particular (2002, 9). There is certainly evidence for this practice in the way my collaborators responded to my questions about the masculine communications of advertisements or even about where they came to understand certain concepts. There were a number of long pauses in my interviews where my collaborators sat and thought about the words they would use to describe a common concept: indicating that while this concept was familiar and present in their daily lives it was not something they elaborated on or defended with any kind of regularity.

The doxic quality of traditional masculinity is such that conflicting notions can easily exist within the borders of the gendered construct: going unnoticed in everyday life. It became clear to me when the first collaborator I interviewed told me, "My masculine ideal is at odds with itself," that I was dealing with a common trope. Indeed, many of the commercials I used in my study reflected this duality, such as a Volkswagen advertisement that featured alternatively civil and reckless men driving the same car or the playfully emotional cat owner caught by a menacing corporate figure in a Whiskas advertisement.

Building Collaborative Research through Surveys and Interviews

My surveys (see Appendix B) consisted of a short demographic section where I asked participants to identify themselves according to gender, age range, and occupation. A separate sheet, featuring a recurring set of questions, was allocated for each television advertisement participants viewed. Groups would view between four and six commercials based on the time available following my guest lecture. The four questions I asked participants to answer repeatedly were, for the most part, a rephrasing of the same question. This was based on the assumption that participants would respond to and interpret the advertisements in different ways. I asked participants to consider the audience the advertisement was designed to reach noting that gender, age, sexuality, and ethnicity might be factors to consider. I went on to ask if the advertisements' settings, characters, or graphic effects expressed ideas about manliness. Calling upon the information presented minutes earlier in the guest lecture, I asked participants to consider whether the masculinities involved in the advertisement were of a dominant tradition or an alternative tradition. Finally, on the off chance that participants were having difficulty separating the doxic qualities of their own lives from what was taking place in the advertisement, I requested that they briefly think upon the commercial as though they were an alien life form seeing human beings for the first time and consider how they, as non-humans, might describe the qualities of masculinity or manliness based upon the advertisement.

As expected, different participants took to different approaches in cataloguing the elements of masculinities folklore present in each advertisement.

While answers were wide-ranging and variable, patterns did form in that the bulk of participants identified masculine motifs or tropes in the given advertisements when asked directly. Fewer were able to strongly distinguish between masculinities that support the hegemonic western tradition and those that presented an alternative— which is something of a trick question that I will endeavor to explore more in my conclusions. In cases where participants filled out the non-human alien question vigorously, data would often be missing from the other examples, indicating that for the one hundred and three individuals surveyed this question did its part: bringing in outliers who may not have absorbed the material from the lecture portion of the exercise and could be helped by a playful alternative question that couched the objective task in a metaphor.

All of this was an effort to establish a collaborative research project based on Lassiter's model of collaborative ethnography:

> Collaborative ethnography invites commentary from our consultants and seeks to make that commentary overtly part of the ethnographic text as it develops. In turn, this negotiation is reintegrated back into the fieldwork process itself. Importantly, the process yields texts that are co-conceived or cowritten with local communities of collaborators and consider multiple audiences outside the confines of academic discourse, including local constituencies (Lassiter 2005, 15).

I want to make plain the contributions these students made to my work in helping to reinforce my perspective on the masculinities information contained in the example advertisements. These surveys helped me to know when I had seen something worth following up on, identify new tropes and motifs I had not previously considered, and indicated when my ideas moved against their patterns of consensus.

The second phase of my research cycle centered on individual interviews. In each case I informed the nine men and three women I interviewed that I considered them more than participants in the project; they were collaborators. I sought the benefit of their personal experience regarding the advertising component of popular culture as well as their opinions and estimations regarding my academic insights into that popular culture. My primary goal in treating these participants as something more than nodes of folklore data was similar to my intentions to engage focus group participants: to ensure my observations were internally consistent and externally valid, as well as to avoid "armchair" theorization. I wanted to reflect the critiques of critical theory, and embrace a contemporary folkloristic practice of encouraging the telling of everyday narratives while analyzing the development of symbolic and metaphorical systems that account for vernacular theory (Noyes 2008, 42). Each collaborator would interact with my research methodology and conclusions, and I would be able to take something away from the experience to add to the next interview.

Lassiter's definition of collaborative ethnography was essential to the formation of this method and its goals, and while I do not consider my work fully fieldwork in the sense of participant observation, the method's major tenet of negotiations between research and collaborators being reintegrated back into the fieldwork is certainly present. The main reason for this distinction is the nature of the material I am studying: mass-mediated popular culture. As previously discussed, this is material that appears to be derived from informal cultural sources, but it is understood by scholars of popular culture that television advertisements

are created through the artificial selection of materials individuals with authority in the business of advertising deem generalized enough to meet the needs of an audience that extends beyond the borders of multiple groups.

Lassiter's notions of collaboration between informant and researcher were particularly crucial as I became aware of pauses and silence in the contexts of my individual interviews. It was clear that while my interviewees had an understanding of what they wanted to say about men and manliness, both in their own experience and in what they were seeing in the advertisements, they often struggled to summon the words through which their thoughts could be easily expressed. This is not the first time the "silent" tradition of masculinity first defined by Bourdieu (2002) had created a roadblock between myself and my informants. "It's as if we're supposed to know how to do these things without ever being taught," Jim, a collaborator in his 50s remarked. "It's been a part of our culture for so long that no one really questions it." It is worthwhile here to consider Jim's supposition in light of Robert Glenn Howard's approach to vernacular discourse, wherein, "what becomes vernacular can only be resolved when another layer of meaning marks that which is not vernacular, the institutional. While both emerge in vernacular discourse, that-which-is institutional emerges as an emic conception when that which-is-not-official is invoked," (2005, 330-331). Recalling times that he had been motivated to think about masculinities and their meaning in his life, Jim said he was met with criticism. "You think too much," a friend told him derisively while observing Jim having a late night conversation on the subject with a mutual acquaintance.

In my work with Neo-Pagan men I chose to rely heavily on the method of participant observation, but there was no real way to participate in the individual experience of seeing a television commercial. Moreover, I wanted my data to be rooted in the folkloristic mainstay of the informant's own words, not my impressions of their experience juxtaposed with my own. The experience and demands of mass media require a blended approach that foregrounds aspects of folklore methodology, but looks very little like other examples of folklore research.

To this end, I used a method similar to digital and face-to-face interviews I conducted with men on dites and legends related to men's sexual behavior (Wall 2008). I began with a series of questions designed to help the interviewee engage with her/his own experience as a gendered being and as a consumer of mass-mediated popular culture. I asked about current television viewing habits, about how those habits were different from their experience with television as children, and whether or not television was a source of tension within their family in terms of time spent watching and/or programming content. I inquired about prior experiences with television advertising, asking interviewees to recall the last commercial to which they responded positively, the last commercial to which they had an adverse reaction, and if there were any advertisements they remembered from when they were children.

My informants proved fairly diverse even in these opening moments of their interviews, but distinctive differences could be seen along the lines of age. By and large, my informants in their twenties and thirties clearly remembered television as a before and after school experience, as well and something to wake up early for on

Saturday mornings. Toy commercials were often well remembered by this group, especially those that appeared around the winter holiday season "As a kid, I'd get up early on Saturdays and watch a ton of TV," (Jeremy Bourque 2012) My informants in their forties, fifties, and sixties often talked of television as something that impacted their lives after their formative years. "I was in my teens before I was exposed to it. I can remember friends of mine who had television before we did," (Blake Cryderman 2012). Some talked about the significance of radio programming and others said that the television set in their homes only came on when their fathers wanted to watch the evening news after coming home from work.

After my first interview, which acted as a dress rehearsal for my methodology, I noted a difficulty in balancing the ideas of the personal experience of mass-mediated popular culture and one's sense of self and others as gendered entities. My informants understood that I wanted to discuss both subjects with them, but drawing connections between the two was not always an intuitive process. To this end I devised a pivot-point for the background portion of my interviews by asking informants to recall the experience of noting that some television commercials were obviously meant for specific gendered audiences (i.e. girls and/or women, and boys and/or men). To my surprise this realization, while it happened for each of my interviewees, happened in different ways and at different times in the lives of the men and women involved in the second phase of my research cycle. The men I spoke to were largely split, saying that they noticed the phenomenon of gendered advertising either through experience with toy commercials as children, or as they were becoming sexually-aware adolescents, "I

suppose it would've been around late elementary school, early junior high. . . I noticed these were ads for feminine hygiene products and stuff like that," (Ian Bryans 2012). The women who participated in the individual interview phase took notice of gendered advertising through toy commercials, "Even as a child I would notice they were targeted toward boys, the 'boy' toys as opposed to 'girl' toys. They would've been Barbies and things like that," (Denise Cornick 2012)

The fact that half my male informants could look back on their experience with mass-mediated popular culture and say that awareness of gender only occurred simultaneously with awareness of sex and sexuality is tangible evidence for Bourdieu's androcentric vision. Somehow, these men walked through much of their childhood unmindful of gender and even those who paid attention to it often stated this realization came from the understanding that they had sisters who were different *from them*. What was especially remarkable was that these men, as boys, seemed to "tune out" of the experience of advertisements aimed at a feminine audience. "I remember watching TV with my younger sister and being consciously bored waiting for *my* show and for *my* commercials and having to wait patiently," (Sam Swyer 2012). They did not see the Barbie commercial and think, "That's not for me." They simply did not see the Barbie commercial, as though it passed through their conscious mind without leaving so much as a footprint.

With the discussion smoothly and successfully re-framed, I asked my interviewees to examine their personal experience with masculinities. I began, as with the previous series of questions, with childhood, strategizing that it would ultimately help my collaborators access their prior knowledge when it came time for

them to evaluate the advertising material that would comprise the bulk of the interview. I wanted to approach the topic of masculinity as a learned behavior or part of the enculturation process from various directions, so I made a point of asking interviewees from whom they learned what was manly and what was unmanly while growing up. My first few interviews all suffered sustained silences at these questions, and it became obvious to me that even before individuals could draw upon their prior knowledge, they needed a specific experience to draw upon. I revised these questions in that I asked for specific incidents in which a parent or similar authority figure mentioned that something was either manly or unmanly. Common tropes or motifs emerged from this line of questioning such as taking out the garbage or not crying or shrinking from physical discomfort.

Denise, watching her brother grow up, remarked her father would periodically tell him to, "Stop crying, stop being such a baby." She also added that "I don't really recall [my brother] playing Barbies with me," (Denise Cornick). Sam remembers the words, "Toughen up!" being employed frequently. Jeremy learned that, "Boys are tough and boys don't cry, and to hide emotion and that sort of thing," and that, "There seemed to be his preserve of male labour that my father didn't want my mom to do. I remember calling him out on it, and him saying that's something that a man should do : 'A man should mow the lawn,'" (Sam Swyer 2012). He also elaborated that "I can't really say where it came from. I definitely remember getting the message loud and clear from somewhere. Displays of emotion are unmanly. Anything that would appear to make you vulnerable. Males were able to express emotion only where celebrating a victory or something likely that." And he recalled

playground discussions with peers, "If so-and-so wasn't manly enough or effeminate or talked about it in a bullying way or a gossipy way. I remember that particular slur 'fag' or 'faggot' being used a lot," (Sam Swyer 2012).

Finally, I discussed the notion of masculinities possessing "rules." Clear indicators as to what is or is not acceptable masculine behavior, particularly among groups adhering to traditional hegemonic masculinity, is often the subject of jokes and email lore (ex. Chuck Norris "facts," the MAN RULES list, the Overly Manly Man meme) (Figure 4-6) as well as popular advertising campaigns (ex. Miller Lite's "Man Law" and Wiser's "Wiserhood" commercial series). Such material meets the criteria for both Brottman's notion of humor as a method of denying the public display of social anxieties and Hutcheon's model of parody as "repetition with critical distance," and, further, allows discerning eyes to glimpse an element of frustration for insiders and outsiders to the tradition of masculine domination. In his book *Guyland*, Michael Kimmel lays out what amounts to a series of hegemonic masculine proverbial fragments that are well known among the university students he interviewed. Generalized statements such as "boys don't cry," and "size matters," that are commonly understood to be codes or standards for these young men. Other idioms include, "don't get mad—get even," and, "it's all good." (2008, 44-450) Kimmel himself codifies the hegemonic masculine behavior of these young men into

Figure 3.1. Examples of the "Man Law" meme. (Man Law Violation 2017) (Man Law 67 2017)
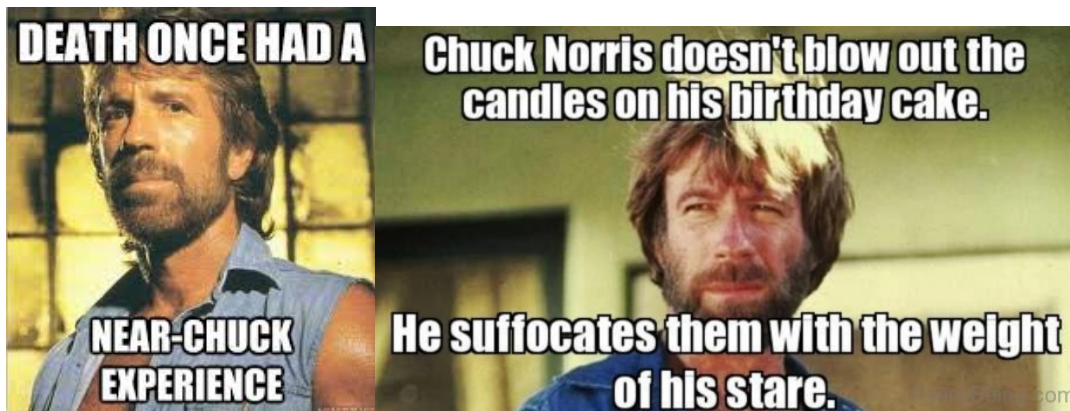
Figure 3.2. Examples of the "Chuck Norris Facts" Meme. (Near Chuck Experience 2017) (Weight of His Stare 2017)

Figure 3.3. Examples of the "Overly Manly Man" Meme. (Overly Manly Meme 2017)

three "cultures": "Culture of Silence," that encourages men to keep quiet about their emotions, "Culture of Privilege," that puts the needs and desires of *Guyland*'s heteronormative white male guys above those of women and ethnic minorities, and "Culture of Protection," that ensures that the culturally appropriate behaviors of an individual will be protected and positively reinforced by the whole (2008, 57-64).

Despite the profound impact of this tradition on everyone with which it has contact, no sense of what is "manly" is ever accompanied by certitude. Humorous fantasies about a circle of men passing judgment on manly and unmanly behavior belie a reality of men fearing their next act amongst their peers will be the unknowable social faux-pas that transforms them into a object of ridicule. My informant Jim, a St. John's local in his fifties, lamented, "I wish the world was more black and white, more cut and dry, but I'm smart enough to know it isn't. So you have to be adaptable. For a period of time now the stereotypical male, the way we're viewed has been changing, and it's 'adapt or die,' essentially," (Jim Ross 2012). A critical irony of the social frame of the inequality Western men have created for themselves is that the power of any one participant can be stripped away at any time for any reason and there is no means to prepare or preserve one's place in the gendered social system.

Making efforts to codify masculine or manly behavior into a framework of "rules" often led to nebulous answers on the part of my informants. My collaborator Blake suggested, "There are some [rules] that pertain to treatment of women, treatment of other people, appropriate behavior with respect to how you treat other individuals and how you react and respond, particularly with women," (Blake

Cryderman 2012), but he offered little beyond identifying that certain boundaries existed. Ian, an engineering student in his early twenties, attempted what could be considered a more comprehensive response that resulted in largely in mood-centered generalizations, "I think that in general, people think of certain things as more masculine. Generally, more aggressive behavior is thought of as masculine. More jocular behavior. Making more sexual-type of jokes…Generally things that are more blunt," (Ian Bryans 2012).

Personal measurements seem to be the most concrete answers to the notion of masculinities "rules" or even standard units of cultural measurement. My informant Andrew offered two such standards he used, saying first, "[At] church actually, when I was younger, there was this one fella. I used to shake his hand he had this big strong handshake and he was like this image of masculinity…to this day I measure handshakes by that handshake," (Andrew Knickle 2012). When I pressed him on what he thought of men with soft or timid handshakes, he said he would always ask himself what was behind such a gesture. He did not consciously assume such an individual was effeminate, but rather there was something "wrong" with him either in terms of his personal psychology or socialization.

Later, in the same interview, Andrew proposed another personal standard by which he measured masculinity, "A man should be able to build something. My dad, my uncle, my granddad they could always build stuff. They were pretty good with handy work. People I looked up to [as a child]," (Andrew Knickle 2012). In both cases, these "rules" of masculinity are distilled from Andrew's childhood and adolescent experiences. Andrew's assertions here certainly help to shed new light

upon Kristen Barber's discussion of metrosexuality. Whereas Barber's informants used their aesthetic treatments and practices to reinforce boundaries between themselves as upper class men and the working class men who could not afford the services of hair stylists and nail technicians (2008, 472-474), Andrew treats the means to build and repair in the service of one's family and friends and a boundary between himself as a working class man and upper class men who lack the knowledge and experience to undertake such projects.

Blake and Andrew were also examples of informants who tended to bring values such as "honesty" and "integrity" into their efforts to describe masculine behavior. While both acknowledged that their sisters were expected to be honest and show integrity as well, they still maintained that a lack of such values could make a man "unmanly" according their experiences of socialization. This would suggest that these men, as boys, would be penalized twice over by family members should they break with traditional morality.

Sidenote: Data from Industry Sources

Not all of my data have been accumulated through direct interaction with participants and collaborators. I have been fortunate to come upon a number of pieces of insider information originating within the advertising industry. I recall being shocked the first time I located a rather blunt explanation of the though process behind Euro RSCG Worldwide's "Most Interesting Man in the World" advertising campaign for Dos Equis Beer (see Digital Appendix: http://tiny.cc/6gsgiy). The advertisement focuses on the exploits of a globetrotting

adventurer, an elderly man with broad shoulders and chest, thick gray hair, and gray beard. His facial features seem to parallel an older Ernest Hemmingway or Sean Connery. Action sequences in black and white and aged color film show him performing acts such as recovering buried treasure on a South Pacific Island, releasing a grizzly bear from a metal trap, running from traditional English fox hunters with a wounded fox in his arms, holding up a large sword fish and laughing alongside a swim-suit clad model, and arm-wrestling what appears to be a Latin American military officer. The masculine voice-over behind these short action sequences relays a series of equally outlandish claims such as, " The often question him just because they find him interesting," and, "His blood smells like cologne," (Dos Equis 2010)

Rather than being a closely guarded secret, the symbolic meanings and inner workings of the Hemingway-style mascot were laid bare on the company's website under a link for targeting prospective customers wanting similar ad campaigns for their own products. The firm stated:

> We introduced the eccentric, swashbuckling, charismatic character of The Most Interesting Man in the World (MIM). Seasoned in years, deserving of respect and grey-haired enough not to be viewed as competition, the Most Interesting Man is a magnet rather than a mirror. He is a man rich in stories and experiences, much the way the audience hopes to be in the future. Rather than the embodiment of the brand, The Most Interesting Man is a voluntary brand spokesperson: he and Dos Equis share a point of view on life that it should be lived interestingly (Euro RSCG Worldwide 2011).

While the statement may seem benign at first glance, advertising textbook authors Monle Lee and Carla Johnson have a more dramatic name for the "magnet rather than a mirror," technique: the fear appeal (1999, 175). The example their text uses

is the peanut butter slogan, "Choosey moms choose Jif." Innocent sounding, much like the swashbuckling humor of the Most Interesting Man in the World, the words are a clarion call to the target audience not simply to consider their product choices but the quality of life they provide for their families.

Euro RSCG Worldwide is not suggesting that potential Dos Equis drinkers are interesting and adventurous men, but rather that their mascot is interesting and the men watching him are not. The Most Interesting Man in the World attempts to establish a sense of incompleteness in the men who observe him, which remains largely undetectable thanks to the humor embedded within the framework of his advertisements. It is then subtly suggested that consumers fill this void in their lives with the product, perhaps so that they may live vicariously through a man who is far more interesting than they could hope to be.

Abercrombie & Fitch CEO Mike Jeffries said that, "Candidly, we go after the cool kids. We go after the attractive all-American kid with a great attitude and a lot of friends. A lot of people don't belong [in our clothes], and they can't belong. Are we exclusionary? Absolutely," (Hennigan 2013). For Jeffries, a business like his must "alienate" in order to "excite" its audience. While the chief executive's controversial statements were primarily a digital rallying point for those concerned with their reflection upon young women's body images the same holds true for young men as well. "The chain, which has more than 300 outlets in the US, sells men's clothes in XL and XXL sizes, but these are designed solely to fit the muscle bulk of strapping sportsmen," (Walker 2013). Read through the lens of Lee and Johnson, Jeffries' efforts to "excite" are efforts to elicit "fear". If a brand or

advertisement alienates a certain segment of the population, the net effect is one of vulnerability both on the part of those who are marginalized and those who do not wish to experience feelings of being marginalized.

Key insights from one of my informants, a former sales representative for a company that produced energy drinks, gave me primary source material supporting the notion that gender is a driving force in the marketing of products other than those marketed outright as "for men" and "for women." "Gender came into it," he explained, through the use of "extreme sports" as a promotional tool. Associating the drink with risk went a step further, as it was strategically associated with consumption of alcohol in a festive atmosphere. My collaborator informed me that many of his regular customers were bars on St. John's famous "George Street"[1] and that this high-energy and risk-friendly brand, "was marketed way more towards men." This was because mixing the energy drink with alcohol was considered both exciting and dangerous in the vernacular frame of young revelers and club-goers. The company and its advertising professionals were aware of this and chose to indirectly promote the practice in order to avoid liability. Rules were put in place, "They tell you not to drink [brand of energy drink] with alcohol. We had to go out and specifically tell the bartenders, 'If someone orders a [brand of energy drink] and vodka you can't mix it for them. You have to give them their [brand of energy drink] and you have to give them their vodka and they have to do it,'" (Terry Ryan 2012). My collaborator made a point of saying his superiors favored spreading this aspect

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[1] The George Street promenade, located in downtown St. John's, is reputed to contain more bars per square foot than any other street in Canada. As such it is a gathering point for student and tourist revelers where the excessive use of alcohol is a common diversion.

of their brand by, "word of mouth," and the strategy was highly effective as, "George Street was…by far the main part of my account."

Overall I found my collaborators to be very forthcoming with interpretations of what they saw in the examples I presented. They often engaged in theorization, some presented in their own words and some utilizing terminology I offered them as part of the collaborative process. My interviews were rife with long pauses for thought and consideration but ultimately answers were yielded up, signifying that these men and women were familiar with the process of interpreting information they encountered regarding gender, but that this process was subtle and one of silent or reactive contemplation. Asking these individuals to speak on matters of gender and popular culture led to the exposition of a vernacular theory underlying their insights, which I will explore in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Data

This chapter details the advertisements shown to focus group participants

and collaborators and well as the data collected from these informant groups. The

reader is advised to review the accompanying digital appendix

(http://tiny.cc/6gsgiy) for a more complete understanding of each advertisement,

as only cursory descriptions of the contents are available below. Following my

discussion of the advertisements, the reader is invited to "meet" each of my

collaborators and gain a sense of what they individually brought to the project: how

their backgrounds played a role in their perceptions, salient themes that emerged

during our discussions, and how those themes encouraged me to explore specific

interpretations of the data they provided.

Example One: Scotiabank

I frequently began the viewing portions of focus groups and collaborator

interviews with a Scotiabank

advertisement from a series with the

tag-line "You're Richer than You

Think." In this particular example a

middle-aged heteronormative

Figure 4.1. Scotiabank. (Scotiabank 2011).   Caucasian couple sit in the office of a

financial adviser. The woman of the pair warns the adviser seated on the other side

of the desk that her husband has several unrealistic notions about investing for their

retirement while her partner sits silently. When the financial advisor judges the

man's actions to be favorable the formerly inert and almost oblivious character

suddenly leaps out of his chair and rips off his button-up shirt, revealing a t-shirt

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beneath that declares in bold print: I'm Right! (Figure 4.1). The man proceeds to whoop and raise his arms in triumph, not openly denigrating his wife but more absorbed in his own moment of success.

I chose to use this example for the study when it came up in the course of my television observations because it managed to promote traditional masculinity in spite of the glaring contrast of the masculine character with Bourdieu's vision of near-universal dominance. He illustrates the theme of parody on two levels: his gloating rightness is a dominance, but it is critically—and therefore safely—distant from the domineering androcentric vision proposed by Bourdieu, and his underdog-style victory parodies feminism and the changing roles of modern heteronormative women. The former sanitizes the image for consumption by varying audiences. The man appears put-upon from the beginning of the commercial, causing the viewer to sympathize in a way that speaks to the anti-intellectual barriers of traditional dominant masculinity. The latter is not so much a satire of women as it is a clandestine view of the gaze of traditional men falling upon women—especially those who act as their heteronormative intimates. This is disguised somewhat by the looks he receives from his spouse, the financial advisor and the other people in the bank during a concluding wide-angle shot. The body language of the characters highlights the fact that he is being overly dramatic rather than the fact he is celebrating a victory over his intimate partner.

Looking at this advertisement my collaborator Melissa, an education student in her twenties living with her male partner in suburban St. John's, said the ideas behind the outrageous examples in the advertisement were part of her personal experience and that of many others she knew. "I think anyone in a heterosexual

relationship can somehow relate… There's some sort of social-constructed idea that the woman's always right but when the man's right it's a big deal." She stated that while her partner had never been as over-the-top as the man in the commercial, when she dismisses his opinion and he later turns out to be correct, "He comes out with a bit of a fanfare…when a man is right he needs to flaunt it I think that that's very much ingrained in a traditional or dominant [context]." She also turned aside any suggestion that the experience is limited to younger generations of heteronormative couples saying, "I remember my grandparents even bickering about that sort of stuff."

Jeremy, a computer engineer and single father in his thirties, said that the advertisement uses a kind of transformative humor that looks at masculinity historically, "It's an ad that refers to a couple different cycles or views of masculinity. I think there was a time when, if you saw a male figure, you assumed he was the authority." This changes, "With the rise of feminism and equality there's…that sort-of 'man as buffoon,' or, 'man as the fool,' quality. The ad assumes an overriding consensus that you think he's going to be wrong," but ends on the note that, "If we've come to poke fun at that, we're moving back away."

Transcribing Jeremy's response now, I wish I had the perspective to ask him about how his parents dealt with domestic duties such as finances. Did his father have control of the checkbook and did this influence his feelings on the ad? I would also be curious to know if he and his ex-partner had what he would term a "traditional" arrangement for paying bills and retirement saving, but all I can do is speculate that we might see a different reaction from Jeremy here if the same joke was used to sell a cleaning product.

Example Two: Whiskas Cat Food

I followed up the viewing and interpretation of the heteronormative parody ad produced by Scotiabank with one of the few ads I found which, according to my interpretation, cultivated non-traditional masculinity by focusing on a main

character who was hyper-affectionate and somewhat subservient to his pet cat. It is part of the "Cat Love" series created to sell Whiskas Cat Food, a group of ads that portrays cat owners so

Figure 4.2. Whiskas. "Cat Love." (Whiskas 2011).   engrossed in doting on their feline companions that they forget other people are watching them. Each example resolves itself in a moment of embarrassed realization as the pet owner suddenly remembers she/he is in the presence of others.

The advertisement that ran on CBC television showed a casually dressed upper-middle class Caucasian man in his late twenties or early thirties playing affectionately with his cat while in his home office. He uses a low-pitched but highly inflected voice a viewer might conflate with "baby talk" as he refers to the animal as his "boss," tells the feline he is "snuggly," and asks, "Do you have a paycheck for me today, sir?" (Figure 4.2). In the midst of the cuddle with his animal, the man is suddenly reminded that there is someone on his speakerphone, a group of people in fact as he was engaged in a conference call when the cat jumped up on the desk. This context only makes itself known at the end of the commercial, a comedic technique shared by the rest of the "Cat Love" series.

The scene then shifts to a boardroom setting where another man, slightly older, balding, non-white, and wearing a suit and tie, appears confused and possibly panicked as he turns from the speakerphone to look at the rest of the people involved with the conference call, including an elderly Asian man wearing a suit and tie. His expression is one of both confusion and deep displeasure. The scene shifts back to the main character as the nervous man breaks into his moment of affection with his cat by saying, "John, we're still on the line." The main character has a moment of concerned realization and then the scene fades to the Whiskas logo and a picture of the product.

My interpretation, based upon the works of Dundes (1980), Kimmel (2008), and Nardi (1992) was that the main character was being caught publicly in what was supposed to be a private moment of non-traditional masculine, or even non-masculine, behavior. He was not being physically dominant or verbally aggressive, such as the firm petting or scratching one might find in mass-mediated images of men and dogs, but rather nurturing and even submissive with his animal. Such moments, according to the aforementioned sources, are socially harmful, as they allow others to feminize a man. The pivot point in the advertisement for this silent undercutting of traditional masculine power seems to be the older Asian man at the head of the boardroom table. His disapproval signals a loss of face that extends not just to the man with his cat, but to his partner present at the meeting who seems to be embarrassed by John's display rather than confused or displeased.

This was one of the few times where my initial interpretations were deflected or supplanted by some of my contributors. The focus group participants seemed to have no difficulty picking out elements of traditional and non-traditional

western masculinities from within the frame of the advertisement and stripping him of all access to masculine privilege (Pascoe 2007, 156-158). The man in question is left with the burden of maintaining the masculine status-quo for the sake of his fellow men (Connell 2005 [1995], 248-249), but he receives no benefits for his efforts to subvert the power of women and other men who are feminized like himself.

Many of my collaborators did not see this man as acting unmanly when it came to his cat, rather that his actions were incongruent when it came to the circumstances of a conference call. "I think it's defining a role that's not often seen," remarked Blake, who went on to add, "In the past twenty-five years there's been a change," in terms of what is socially acceptable when it comes to men expressing affection for their animals. In Blake's mind, the character at the center of the advertisement represents a new normal for Western manliness, which is in keeping with the opinions of my younger male collaborators who did not see the nurturing behavior as unmanly in a traditional sense. It is merely incongruent with the professional setting that is sprung on the viewer when she/he learns the main character is on a conference call.

Example Three: Wiser's Whiskey

I showed focus group participants and my collaborators an example from a series of Wiser's Canadian Whiskey commercials centering on the theme of the "Wiserhood," a fictitious brotherhood of men who appear at the end of each advertisement to praise the manly behavior of the main character (Figure 4.3). The product in question as well as its symbolic brand ambassadors appear at the end of

each commercial, a group of middle-aged men clad in slacks, tweed coats, and turtle-neck sweaters show them to be of the upper-class and to have discerning, if somewhat old-fashioned tastes. This group is seen applauding and toasting a man who has, in a comedic and clever fashion, outwitted his female spouse or partner, avoiding a traditionally understood challenge of the interpersonal relationships of men

Figure 4.3. Wiser's Whiskey. "Wiserhood." (Wiser's Whiskey 2011).

and women in the contemporary West. One example of the series shows a man morose because his partner has bought him a sweater that is uncomfortable and not aesthetically appealing to him. When his partner exits the scene while he is trying it on in front of a mirror, he surreptitiously tears a hole in the garment, calling his partner back into the room to inspect it and casually blaming her for not seeing the damage when she bought it for him. In another, a man is seen suffering from boredom at an art gallery as his female partner remarks she is enjoying their time there enough to "stay here all day." Spying a security guard, the man reaches out and runs his hand along the painting in front of him, poorly feigning to admire the "brush strokes" and forcing the security guard to order him out of the exhibit hall. His partner walks out briskly, showing signs of embarrassment and contempt while the bored man smiles quietly to himself and the on-looking mascots.

The example I used for the focus groups shows a traditional conflict between modern heteronormative couples and also embraces rebellion against the perceived tradition of emasculation referred to in the anti-feminist vernacular as "ball

busting." In the commercial, a heteronormative couple are walking through a shopping mall when the woman turns to her partner and thrusts her pink handbag into his hands while she runs out of the scene to admire or try on a dress (Figure 4.4). Left in the middle of the mall holding the handbag, the man notices other men passing by and appears embarrassed. He drops the purse

Figure 4.4. Wiser's Whiskey. "Wiserhood." (Wiser's Whiskey 2011).

disdainfully on the ground and produces a black plastic shopping bag to cover it before picking it up again. Accounting for the personal bias of having been a dog-owner, the element that overwhelmingly drew my attention to this advertisement was the way the man reverses the bag and picks up the purse without directly touching it, the same sort of action a person would take to handle a pet's excrement while walking in a public park. For my part, I can see a mixture of discomfort and annoyance I know from experience on this man's face as he collects this taboo piece of material from the floor of the shopping mall and attempts to secret it away. The purse is both an unwanted burden and a toxic feminine object that threatens to taint the holder as feminine himself if it is not quickly concealed.

The masculinities components of this advertisement, from the actions of the main character, to the attitudes of the mascots, to the tag line "Welcome to the society of uncompromising men," were not subtle. Therefore I was not at all surprised to receive focus group responses that verified these elements. Some students made simplistic observations, identifying the behavior of the central

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masculine character as, "Typical," or "Traditional." Other participantss made observations that included, "Traditional men don't want to be seen holding a purse," "Not 'manly' to hold a pink bag," and, "Men DO NOT like to be seen with women's belongings." Still, other answers engaged the topic at a somewhat deeper level, "Men don't like being seen doing anything feminine," and, "It shows how much men care about being seen as masculine to other men." As a result of these observations I entered conversations with my collaborators about this commercial wanting to better understand how this advertisement lives up to the Berger and Del Negro framework of reflexive intersubjective identity—a notion that identity is formed through a confluence of how one views one's self and how one is viewed by others (Berger and Del Negro, 2004).

As expected, the initial reaction of my collaborators echoed the observations of the focus group participants. Regarding the main character, Blake noted that, "[He is] very sensitive to his male role and not compromising that at all." Other collaborators brought a new level of understanding to this matter in that I could ask them directly about their personal experiences with this motif of traditional masculinity. "It is difficult to not put value on what anyone else thinks of you and I do occasionally feel uncomfortable. I know that there's no reason for me to feel uncomfortable but I do anyway…when occasionally I have to run down to the van and grab my mother's purse," Ian told me, "I do feel that I struggle between wanting other people to think I am manly and not really caring because there is a part of me that does want to be seen as manly, because being seen as manly usually…[is] synonymous with being attractive to women."

Denise, an employment counselor and mother in her early thirties in a long term heteronormative relationship, told me she became aware of this dynamic concerning men and women, "between ten to twelve...it's just kind of something you absorb," by watching her parents and television, "maybe I did kind of get it from TV because I know they're constantly making jokes on TV shows about men being embarrassed to hold their wives' purses out in public." She related that her partner, "doesn't like doing it, but he'll do it, begrudgingly," and from her perspective viewing other men holding purses, "My first thought would be he was holding it for his wife or girlfriend," (Denise Cornick 2012). Reflecting back on this interview and Ian's, I am convinced an unspoken element on the part of both collaborators was how a man holding a purse reflected the power dynamic in a heteronormative relationship. Both collaborators remarked that they never considered the men they saw holding purses in public to be the owners of the item in question, indicating that the object itself is not feminizing the man, either in his own mind or in the minds of others. The feminization then must come from a more intangible inference about the act of purse-holding, perhaps something to do with the power dynamics within heteronormative relationships.

As a homage to Alan Dundes and his infamous article "Into the Endzone for a Touchdown" (1978) I will mention that there are elements of English slang that touch phenomenologically on the subjects of *holding* and *purses* when it comes to symbolic emasculation. It might be said of a woman who dominates her heteronormative partner that, "She has his balls in her purse." Even if it cannot be attributed to every case, and my collaborators can certainly attest to such through personal experience, the idea that a man seen holding onto a purse in a public place

might—vis-à-vis Berger and Del Negro's concept of intersubjective identity with performance acting to both signal others and as a reflexive dimension of identity (2004,102)—be seen by himself or others as temporarily holding his own severed testicles identifies this act as a complex conflict between traditional and emerging alternative masculinities.

Example Four: Dempster's Bread

While the vast majority of the commercials in my sample endeavored to use a humorous approach to masculinity to sell their products and services, I did manage

to locate examples of commercials that attempted to use masculinity to evoke sentiment in the viewer. The first of these was an advertisement where a middle-aged farmer

Figure 4.5. Dempster's Bread. (Dempster's Bread 2011).

(Figure 4.5) is juxtaposed with Sidney Crosby (Figure 4.6), an acclaimed player in the world of professional hockey. My informant Terry was rather taken with Crosby's role in the advertisement as the narrative surrounding his professional career centers on his work ethic. "I use him as an example," he remarked when discussing his role as a coach encouraging young players to attend practice.

The advertisement is arranged aesthetically such that the pair simultaneously narrate their morning routines, effectively finishing each other's sentences despite the differences between the nameless farmer's world of barns, grain sacks, and tractors and Crosby's routine of weight-training, practicing solo in

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an indoor ice-rink, and maintaining his equipment. In the end, both the farmer and Crosby eat the same meal alone in their respective kitchens and the Dempster's Bread on which the commercial is centered is clearly identified. A

Figure 4.6. Sidney Crosby. Dempster's Bread. (Dempster's Bread 2011).

glossy wash over every shot leaves the background of each scene in a slight haze, evoking a sense of memory, timelessness, or perhaps nostalgia. The narration, set to the music of a single acoustic guitar to create a sense of intimacy and convey the character's emotions, evoking the politically-charged construction of authenticity Narváez refers to as "the myth of acousticity" (2001, 29), is full of references to hard work and doing difficult and demanding tasks out of love for the end results.

There is also an Althusserian element at work here, as both characters are seen to be isolated entities within their worlds. The anti-intellectual technique forbids questions related to the human-powered networks that support Crosby's training, health, and publicity and the industrial structures that coordinate farming so that mass-produced foods like Dempster's Bread are made available across Canada. Instead, the viewer sees the drive and determination of a single man as the wellspring from which a major professional sports career is born and a single man working tirelessly to put bread on tables across the country. It is not surprising that such techniques are used, given that it is likely easier for a given viewer to identify

with a single character or pair of characters rather than the vast socio-economic systems for which they act as stand-ins.

The twin traditional masculine loves of hard work and determination are false fronts for the purposes of this advertisement, showing the viewer a masculine reality where all efforts to achieve success belong to the self and no other. I say this because while it is a commercial and it is understood colloquially that one should not wholly trust advertisements, this sympathetic appeal lacks all the outrageous trappings of the humorous examples above that mark them as "unreal." Instead, two men talk about their work as though being interviewed or giving a joint presentation and there is no hint that the viewer should not trust their words or actions. The only clue the situations might be unreal is that they seem to be eating identical versions of the same homemade sandwich, and a stack of meat and vegetables between two pieces of bread can hardly be expected to vouch for itself— be it the genuine article or an idealized simulacrum.

Example Five: Ancestry.ca

Some advertisements seem to take a sentimental approach if only because they are marketing a sentimental product. Ancestry.ca markets the access to its online tools and database for the purpose of discovering unfamiliar aspects of one's family tree. It makes promises of pictures and documents related to either distant relatives the user never knew, or new knowledge about people the user thought she/he knew well. In the example that was part of my data collection from CBC and NTV, a casually dressed Caucasian man with gray hair and black-rimmed glasses is shown alternatively watching a computer screen in a state of deep contemplation

and speaking directly to the camera as though being interviewed about his

experience with the website (Figure 4.7). He discusses his grandfather's military

service in WWII, saying what he found online was meaningful. Moreover, he seems to experience a sense of pride when talking about how he tracked his family's history of

Figure 4.7. Ancestry.ca. (Ancestry.ca 2011).

military service back to the War of 1812.

The viewer is treated to a flood of military imagery in the form of black and white

photos and yellowing documents to signify the experience of discovery.

For my informants this was not as strong the statement of traditional

masculinity as I had suspected my collaborators would find it to be. My

collaborators significantly disagreed with my assessment of the reverence toward

military history in this advertisement as a marker of traditional masculinity. "If you

talk to any family in Newfoundland they'll have a story about losing someone in

World War I and World War II. It's a powerful symbol that's too easy to grab onto,"

(Sam Swyer 2012). It derailed interviews frequently enough that stopped using it

halfway through the collaborator discussion portion of my project. I found later that

there were other examples from the same series of advertisements that would likely

have worked better. In one commercial that did not fall within the window of my

data collection, a woman discusses learning that her grandfather had three different

wives over the course of his lifetime, and seems pleased when she implies that the

man she knew as elderly and static had an active sex life.

On one level I believe it is entirely possible I allowed my personal biases as an American to influence the choice I made to use this commercial in the study. It is my personal experience that Americans frequently conflate military service with traditional masculinity. On the other hand, my survey participants did cite "military service" and "war" among the masculine markers of this advertisement. Perhaps this is a case where collaborators sought to look deeper or look for something less "obvious" that the survey participants and it should be seen as instructive in terms of the differences between focus group survey and collaborative interview methodologies.

Example Six: Fiat

I included in my study a number of advertisements from the broadcast of the 2012 National Football League (NFL) Superbowl. I did this for three reasons: the game is televised in St. John's, the advertisements frequently contain images of masculinity, and the event itself has a history producing memorable big-budget advertisement for North American brands. Even in Canada, where there is a professional football league separate from the NFL of the United States, and the prevailing spectator sport of choice is professional hockey, there are still plenty of people who will admit to watching the Superbowl "just for the commercials."

One of Fiat's attempts to garner interest in its small, sporty line of autos in 2012 features the tag line "You'll never forget the first time you see one." It stars a meek-looking young man in a shirt and tie, but no jacket, suggesting he is an entry-level white-collar worker. He is walking along a busy street when he encounters a tall woman in a designer dress fixing her heel in a parking space just off the

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sidewalk. She is bent over and he is approaching her from behind, his body language suggests both fear and desire. When she notices him, he immediately averts his eyes, indicating either his actions or the feelings he was experiencing were somehow wrong. She interrogates him accusatively, speaking Italian without subtitles. With the aid of my colleague Laura Sanchini I was able to put together the following translation: She says, "[What are you looking at, eh? What are you looking at, eh? Are you undressing me with your eyes?]" She then approaches him and slaps him in the face and as he attempts to flee he finds his back is against a pole. At this point, the woman's anger reverses and becomes desire (Figure 14), as the hand that struck the voyeur seconds before now strokes his shoulder. She whispers in his ear, "[You can't even do that, poor baby. Is your heart beating? Is your head spinning? Are you lost in the thought of me being yours forever?]" Just as this sexually aggressive woman is about to kiss the tongue-tied young man (Figure 4.8), she suddenly vanishes from the frame, taking her seductive, burlesque-

style background music with her and leaving her bewildered would-be partner standing alone on the street staring at a glossy, black Fiat "Abarth" parked at the curb. One cannot help but recall Barthes' "The

Figure 4.8. Fiat. "Arbath." (Fiat, 2012).

New Citroen" in viewing the juxtaposition of woman and car in this advertisement, particularly his concluding insights that, "the car on show is explored with an intense, amorous studiousness: it is the great tactile phase of discovery, the moment

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when visual wonder is about to receive the reasoned assault of touch," and further

that, "The object here is totally prostituted, appropriated," (Barthes 1972, 89).

As Andrew pointed out, "This is something that a man would want. She's

dominating him, but he's totally okay with it." Andrew also suggested that, "This is

not traditional. This is something new," implying that the masculine character being

overwhelmed by the Abarth/woman's sexuality is outside the norm of what he

learned when growing up about how men and women behave in the midst of

courtship. "Traditionally, the man is supposed to be dominant. Women are

supposed to be submissive," (Andrew Knickle 2012) In the midst of our

conversation, I related this commercial to an experience I had at age sixteen, when I

was traveling with my family in Spain and found myself surrounded by a group

similar looking women to the actress in the advertisement, on a break during a

photo-shoot at a hotel pool, who approached me and asked if I had a lighter, which I

did not have at the time, for their cigarettes. I recall Andrew smiled as he mentally

put himself in my shoes, and intoned with mock-desperation and excitement, "I will

build one!" implying he would do whatever he could to appease a group of

swimwear models that approached him with unlit cigarettes. "I always carry a

lighter on me. Even though I don't smoke," (Andrew Knickle 2012). It was clear

then that while Andrew had not been raised to expect feminine sexual aggression as

part of the traditional masculine mindset, he was not in opposition to it and he could

picture such aggression fitting within his personal masculine frame.

Amy Best's ethnographic study of Chicano youth cruising and racing culture

shows us that there is an undercurrent of metaphorical language that runs between

the subjects of women and cars (Best 2006, 95-96). While modern cars are not

necessarily identified as feminine, the idea that a man's car can attract women and the participation of women in masculine car culture fuels its construction and reproduction across generations (Best 2006, 69-71). While the commercial is aimed at a monolingual audience, the imagery underscores the conflation of symbols (Turner 1975, 96), as the male lead is alternatively assaulted and then seduced by an exotic vehicle that he pictures as an exotic woman. This is in keeping with Fiat's entry into the North American auto market in 2009 after becoming a majority shareholder of the Chrysler LLC (Merced and Maynard 2009). Before this time the brand's market was primarily European. As we have seen in the literature review, the constructions of race and ethnicity are almost inseparable from the construction of gender. In his work on what he terms the "almost men" of American universities, Kimmel asserts that the racial images and themes in contemporary pornography, gangster rap music, and conservative and politically incorrect comedy talk radio are frequently used as tools of expression by boys practicing traditional hegemonic masculinity. I argue such a pattern reemerges here in the Fiat commercial as a means to an end: selling, first, an "exotic" woman to the viewer in order to then sell an "exotic" car.

Example Seven: Volkswagen Tiguan

Whereas Fiat's effort concealed the nature of the car until the end of the advertisement, Volkswagen foregrounds its product by showing a Caucasian middle or upper-middle class man calmly driving a clean gray car through a serene, rural landscape—the exact environment one would expect to find according to John Story's Althusserian assessment of car commercials (Story 2009 [1997], 73-76).

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The man is casually dressed in a sweater that covers a button-up shirt with a collar

and he plays classical music on the car's sound system as he calmly takes a turn,

backs up his car, and parallel parks

in a wide space, and then adjusts his

mirror (Figure 4.9). The camera

then pans out just in time to see

another Tiguan driver, this one in a

spotless white example of the vehicle,

Figure 4.9. Volkswagen. "Tiguan." (Volkswagen 2011).

pull off a stunt turn worthy of any action film that lands him directly across from the

first driver. The second man's stereo blares a thrashing rock-and-roll guitar riff as

the echoing voice of the lead singer intones, "Come on!" as though issuing a

challenge.

When the viewer gets a look at the interior of the vehicle, the second man

looks very much like the first: Caucasian with neat brown hair. Were it not for the

clothing he is wearing, a red and black plaid shirt worn open to reveal a white t-shirt

beneath, and a thin line of facial hair beneath the chin, he could easily be mistaken

for the first driver. There are also

passengers in this vehicle: an Asian

woman in the front seat and a

Caucasian woman sitting behind the

driver (Figure 4.10). Both women

Figure 4.10. Volkswagen. "Tiguan." (Volkswagen 2011).

are tall and slender, they have long

hair, and wear tops that reveal their shoulders and necklines. Sam, a graphic

designer with some film experience offered the critique that, "The two women are

almost supplemental. They accent the rugged male, they show a power imbalance,"

(Sam Swyer 2012) The first driver offers an annoyed glare, and the second returns

with a mocking two-fingered salute. At this point the Caucasian woman comes

around from behind the driver's seat and waves at the first driver, the first driver

returns the wave sheepishly, a gesture Sam thought was, "Definitely not a masculine

way to wave. They're showing him to be a limp-wristed effeminate male," (Sam

Swyer 2012). The image fades quickly to the Volkswagen logo and the tagline,

"Responsibly Wild." The heavy drums and guitar music continue and the wordless

wailings of the generic rock singer can be heard as the commercial concludes.

In reviewing this advertisement I was reminded of Pascoe's notion that,

"masculinity is not a homogenous quality," that cannot be possessed, "by virtue of

being male." Rather, it is a, "form of dominance expressed through sexualized

discourses," (Pascoe 2007, 5). Pascoe herself focuses on the rituals and practices of

adolescent males in a high school, where the patterns are exaggerated, but I think

this exaggeration fits the tone of a thirty-second advertisement, where cultural

information must be represented in an exaggerated fashion in order to be

communicated in a short series of symbols, gestures, and music. Clearly we have an

example here of one mode of masculine expression out pacing another and

establishing itself as a dominant representation.

Example Eight: Just for Men Autostop

The commercials to which I exposed my collaborators most often featured

products that could, ideally, be used by any member of the potential viewing

audience. A particular biological sex, sexuality, or gender identification is not

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prerequisite for setting up a retirement plan, driving a car, or feeding a cat. The hair

dyeing product "Just for Men Autostop" is an exception to this trend. Rather than

being an advertisement that uses signs and symbols of masculinity to pique interest

or establish a niche market, the masculinity is written into the product—perhaps as

a way of making the heteronormative male consumer feel safe in that he is not

buying a cosmetic product with threatening feminine qualities. What's more, the

masculinity signified by the product is that of a distinct type of man: one who is

experiencing the physical symptom of graying hair and with it, possibly other signs

of aging.

The advertisement I chose for the study was framed as a news broadcast

where an excited reporter announces, "the gray era is over." This is to say that in

this fantasy context that graying hair has been cured is the same way a vaccine or

cure might be developed for a disease. Individual men are seen smiling to

themselves, while groups of men are shown in bars and sport stadiums responding

to the news with a frenzy of elation—fist-pumping and high-fives are ubiquitous

(Figure 17). The ad ends on the note of

a lone man with a graying hair and

beard apparently lost at sea on an

uncharted island—complete with trope-

appropriate white sand, palm trees, and

coconuts littering the ground—who

Figure 4.11. Just for Men. "The Gray Era is Over" (Just for Men Autostop 2011).

raises his arms and cheers not at the

prospect of rescue but at the arrival of a box of the product from some unseen

airborne source.

The message of the advertisement: the celebration of an end to gray hair, a sign of aging indicating the absence of youth, echoes Simon Bronner's thoughts on jokes told regarding Viagra and similar medicines that induce erections. Sexual performance is tied to, "the special anxiety of old age for men." Rather than transforming this anxiety into work of humor and skill, as the carvers Bronner interviewed did, the advertisement encourages seeking happiness through concealing obvious signs of aging. Furthermore, the imagery of the advertisement presents men who are excited about the product as clean, healthy, and not engaged in any kind of sexual activity, most of the brief images show men celebrating alongside other men. This masculine camaraderie removes the presumed users of the product from the "profane category" or being "dirty old men," (Bronner 2005c, 311). This is an association the product makers are likely looking to avoid association with in order to better sell their product.

Example Nine: Molson Canadian

Following on the example of Ailsa Craig, whose 2015 study of misogyny and patriotism in Molson Canadian advertisements has served as a meaningful interpretive model for my own work, I decided to include an example of the Molson advertising from within the time frame of my own observations of CBC and NTV. The example I recorded centered not on the product itself but on an aspect of Canadian identity relevant to popular culture such that it could be generalized for a wider market: backyard ice hockey.

The commercial shows three different pick-up games taking place: one on a tract of rural farmland where an aging barn abuts an area of wilderness, another in

the remote wilderness with only mountain ranges in the background (Figures 4.12

and 4.13), and a third in a semi-urban setting where very non-urban darkness lies

beyond the chain-link fence

surrounding the ice rink. In all three

cases the dominating features are

snow and ice. The primary actors are

men who arrive early in the morning

Figure 4.12. Molson Canadian. (Molson Canadian 2011).   at a nearby frozen pond and make it

ready to play hockey. The isolated settings, the early morning hours, and the focus

on ice hockey speak to the same sentimental strategies employed by the Dempster's

Bread advertisement featuring a professional hockey player juxtaposed with a

farmer. The advertisement partially supports Craig's conclusions, as it centers on

patriotism by invoking the idea that

Canada's climate breeds heartier men

than those found in other localities and

the preferences of those men in terms of

sports reflect that heartiness. No female

characters can be seen in this

Figure 4.13 Molson Canadian. (Molson Canadian 2011).

advertisement, though if we recognize Paul Nonnekes's interpretations of Canadian

literature in *Northern Love* (2008) as valid, then perhaps femininity is present in the

visual depictions of the landscape, which is implied to have spawned these hockey

players.

My collaborator Melissa offered two different sets of insights on this

commercial related to her childhood. On the one hand, the commercial accurately

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portrays even informal hockey games as men's space. Referring to the local ice-

skating rink in the neighborhood where she grew up, Melissa said, "A lot of times the

girls weren't allowed on the ice because the boys were having a game of hockey,"

and, "I never remember playing hockey with any of the boys," (Melissa Long 2012).

At the same time, though, she made me aware that participation in formal youth

hockey was driven by economic class saying, "Hockey [was] more of an elitist, upper

class sport...because it's so bloody expensive," (Melissa Long 2012). This second

fact is at odds with the players in the commercial, who wear little more than street

clothes, which creates both an informal and egalitarian representation of the game:

which may do more to tie beer to the game of hockey than anything else.

We should also not overlook the underlying notions Pierre Bourdieu

attributes to young men and sports activities as we view this advertisement,

especially in light of the fact that it ends with the narrator naming the product as a

sponsor of professional hockey. Bourdieu identifies professional athletics as a

highly visible but relatively inaccessible means of upward mobility through the

gendered socio-economic systems established by hegemonic masculine traditions.

Professional sport is, among adherents to traditional masculinities, the equivalent of

the feminine tradition of marrying a wealthy man or the mass-mediated notion that,

"Someday, my prince will come," (Bourdieu 1991, 366).

The realities of professional sport are in keeping with mass-mediated

portrayals, but far more complex, as I learned from Terry, a collaborator whose

professional hockey career spanned ten years and sixteen different major and minor

league teams—most notably two years with the Montreal Canadiens. "In Canada,

for the NHL, I think it's one in twenty-seven thousand kids plays one game," Terry

explained, expressing just how few young athletes set foot on the ice to play in a professional hockey game. This statistic seemed to back Bourdieu's notion of professional sport as fantasy, but Terry surprised me when he said, "Most junior hockey teams, " meaning those minor-league teams that draft sixteen- to twenty-year-old athletes and billet them in towns away from their homes, "pay for your education." Terry explained that, for the bulk of these young men, the journey toward being that one in twenty-seven thousand is not about achieving wealth and fame through athletic prowess but about using athletic prowess to achieve educational opportunities that are beyond their reach otherwise. To do these things *and* play competitively means that work ethic and commitment to one's teammates are reinforced daily for these young men, something Robidoux echoes in his work on hockey players and their team-oriented responses to external pressures from management and fans (Robidoux 2001, 176-177). Those who cannot keep up with the demands, "weed themselves out," as Terry puts it, meaning the sport creates players who are dedicated to its cultural and economic structures. Terry himself coordinates "hockey camps" for boys as young as ten years old, thus ensuring that the structures of the hockey business are imparted to future generations. There is certainly enough financial momentum within the world of professional athletics to allow participants to alter their socio-economic status, but the realities of that opportunity are far more complex than the simulacrum the young male spectator witnesses and to which he aspires.

Lending support to Narváez and Laba, Bourdieu identifies sports as inventions of "the people" akin to "folk music" which are taken by organizing authorities and given back to the people as spectacles (1991, 363). What Bourdieu's

analysis shows us most clearly is the impact that the removal and repackaging of traditions can have on societal structures. The French scholar's assessment of sport as a driving force behind the ethics imparted to Western boys as they experience public education (1991, 365) can be applied to the gendered motifs used to produce convincing television advertising. The method of transferring information remains unchanged even as the goal shifts from molding young minds so that they participate in social structures that mirror their recreational activities to molding social minds so that they seek to consume products stemming from a technological source that entertains them. In Molson's hockey-centered beer advertisements the masculine viewer experiences the same: a source of entertainment that fashions a nostalgic experience driven by recreation which, in turn, plays into values of competition and team spirit that he has been exposed to since childhood. Even if he is no longer driven by these values, the nostalgic experience imparted by the television medium endeavors to rewrite history and foreground what the viewer remembers positively about childhood sport. The inclusive message becomes one of hockey being something meant for "Canadians" rather than something meant solely for players and fans.

Example Ten: KFC

There were a handful of commercials for which I broke the rules of my own television survey method to include in my study. They were either sent to me by parties familiar with my research in the form of email links to streaming sites like YouTube, or else I turned them up by happenstance in the course of my nighttime channel surfing. The first of these was a KFC advertisement featuring a cashier for

the fried chicken franchise being accused of flirting with another man's wife by offering her what the second man perceives to be an excessive discount on a bucket of chicken.

The point of the advertisement is obviously that KFC's prices are so low that they will force one to consider them unreal or outside the normal course of business practices. What the viewer also sees, however is a traditional heteronormative man in a business casual, button-up shirt and casual zippered hoodie-style jacket accuse a younger man in the uniform of a fast-food worker of flirting with or, in the language of the commercial "hitting on" his marital partner. He is accusatory, aggressive in his stance, and will not believe the clerk has no ulterior motive until his eyes are drawn to a sign confirming the price and the accused party's story. Somewhat embarrassed by his faux pas, he quietly excuses himself from the scene before the advertisement ends. Though clearly parodied for comedic purposes, my collaborator Jill identified with the advertisement saying, "I've known a lot of aggressive (men) in my life," and further that men often, "don't get along with each other," when it comes to interacting women (Jilly Ryder 2012). So while the context is clearly comical, the values displayed ring true.

Example Eleven: Southern Comfort

This advertisement is truly outside the media-scape I had cordoned off for my study, but I elected to incorporate it because I saw a very different kind of masculinity at its center and I needed at least a few of my collaborators to comment on it. The advertisement focuses on an obese middle-aged man with anachronistic hairstyle, glasses, and shorts walking along a crowded beach with a drink in his

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hand. Collaborators who saw this ad used words like "typical," "average," and "reality," to describe what they saw. Andrew used the Newfoundland slang, "Buddy," to describe the actor as friendly, relatable man who he'd compare to some of the men he works with on oilrigs. My collaborator Kim used intonation to draw out the word "man" saying, "He's a *man*. He's not all fake and perfect. He's average," ("Kim" 2013). Rather than his out-of-date mustache, mirror-shades, and strangely inappropriate dress shoes and socks making him an object of derision, he exudes confidence and charm, attracting the attention of women and even the admiration of another beach-goer's dog.

It is representative of the transformations taking place in the advertising world as it bridges the gap between television and the digital age. It is significantly longer than the typical thirty-second format fit for the spaces between television shows. It is a short, artistic film punctuated with corporate branding. Despite its lack of dialogue, the audience is invited to engage with the main character on a deeper level through his actions and the accompanying musical soundtrack. We have the time necessary to not just see the anachronistic, overweight man as a figure of humor, but also as a portrayal of masculine confidence that is difficult to see in other sample advertisements, as it is expressed through a more complex series of scenes and actions than can be shown in the traditional television format.

Collaborator Discussions

As I introduce the reader to the collaborators taking part in my study, I feel it is important to step back and note that, by no means is this group of men and women meant to be an exhaustive list of television viewers whose insights can solve

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all problems pertaining to the way advertisements influence the transmission of masculinities information in Western society. Hopefully though, their deep insights can offer a window into the problematization of this subject matter and a stepping-stone to future research in this direction.

The interviews I conducted with each of my collaborators were atypical in that they did not follow the format of interviews for previous research endeavors in folklore, nor do they adhere to the guidelines set out in my graduate training as a folklorist. I surmise this is because I was not seeking information that my interviewees clearly knew they possessed.   In order to tease out their perceptions and experiences with masculinities, I had to engage each interviewee more than I might if I were wanting to hear a recitation of a narrative or song. Each interview became a dialogue, and below is my effort to portray those conversations in a way that the reader can appreciate them both for their content and for the journey each of my collaborators went on to discover ideas they had held since childhood, but had often not sought to express directly until talking with me: "It's somewhat insidious because we just don't have the capacity to understand what's going on and by the time we're aware of it we don't have the critical skills to break that down. We just accept it," (Sam Swyer 2012)

Ian: Foreshadowing the Importance of "Stereotypes"

Ian and became friends shortly before my I started my thesis research. We shared a common interest in science fiction and fantasy writing, films, and games. He was the first collaborator to sit down with me and answer my questions about masculinities was Ian, an engineering student in his early twenties with aspirations

of leaving St. John's to work in commercial shipping. Ian's way of knowing relied on

dual stereotypes of traditional masculinity, neither of which he fully assimilates into

his personal performance of manliness. His regard for the "wild" figure in the

Volkswagen commercial is a clear example of how he picks and choses features of

masculinity he admires:

> Well, I agree that some of the things portrayed in the commercial are
> part of what I believe to be "manliness" such as the confidence of the
> person who was driving the second vehicle. It is something I would
> think of when I was thinking of manliness. I really don't view
> aggression as a component of manliness. I know it is a component of
> stereotypical manliness but I don't view it as a component of what
> makes a man, (Ian Bryans 2012).

Ian's point of view seemed novel at the time of our interview, though as I

invited more collaborators to view the commercials I selected, it became clear his

distinction between his personal sense of manliness and that which he saw as mass-

mediated masculinities would be something revisited again and again. I can safely

say now that Ian was conscious of the hegemony from which he directly benefited,

and enough as to be critical of it without the aid of academic intervention. His

assimilation of popular culture was not whole, and when faced with Althusserian

strategies such as those presented in the Volkswagen commercial he was affected by

the "passive modes of thought" that are often thought to accompany the

consumption of popular culture (McLaughlin 1996, 54).

Blake: A Voice of Age and Experience

Blake is the stepfather of another collaborator who took at interest in my

project when I explained it to him at a party one evening. At age sixty-five, Blake

was both my oldest male collaborator and representative of the upper end of the

target age demographic for the bulk of national advertising campaigns. He couched

most of his answers in terms of sociology, his major in university before beginning a

career as an agricultural consultant, and/or his passion for left-leaning political

philosophy. He spoke of his upbringing in terms of "socialization" and identified

masculinity and femininity in terms of "roles," stating that most of the

advertisements "defined roles" through the placement of characters in the fore and

background. These rather flat and analytical answers were occasionally punctuated

by outbursts of emotion (e.g. "Well that's a sexist fucking ad if I ever saw one," in

immediate reaction to the Wiser's Whiskey commercial) (Blake Cryderman 2012).

Blake, who wore his curly gray hair under a newsboy-style cap, was also

someone I could talk to about the personal experience of age changing his

appearance. His understanding was that there was an "appropriate age," as defined

by traditional masculinity, to let one's hair go gray, but often this happens "too

young" for many men. It was open to debate, in Blake's mind, as to whether hair dye

was a solution to deal with this feeling of being "too young" or if the "too young"

feeling was precipitated by hair dye and other cosmetic advertising.

Jeremy: The Competing Views of Manliness

Jeremy is a divorced man in his thirties who was dating one of my other

collaborators at the time I was in the interview phase of the project. I had already

interviewed his partner, and when he arrived at my house to collect him head home,

I told him about the project and he took an interest. Jeremy's, background is a

curious one for this project as his father spent most of his working life in the local

CBC newsroom as a producer. As a result, Jeremy and his siblings were aware early

on of a pervasive cynicism and sarcastic contempt individuals in the television industry hold for commercial advertising. Jeremy's father never took the medium seriously, instead offering lessons to his children about the dangers of buying into an advertisement by making sarcastic statements to their mother like, "Honey, if we only had Mr. Clean our lives would be perfect."

Just like Ian, Jeremy reflects upon manliness using duality but instead focuses upon what he defines as "extrinsic manliness" and "intrinsic manliness." Manliness that reflects "duty," "responsibility" or other non-quantifiable virtues Jeremy labels as "intrinsic" or "my father's masculinity." He was of the mind that these are values one cannot learn from watching television commercials or any other short-term passive sources. "Extrinsic" elements of masculinity are then those things that are attributed to an individual by others, those in one's life with the capacity to define one as manly, unmanly, or something in between. When we got onto the subject of masculine appearance Jeremy and I had a meaningful discussion about the masculine qualities of facial hair. Like me, Jeremy had maintained a full beard for most of his adult life, and I questioned him on issues of beard grooming and metrosexuality. "I don't like the word," he said. "I guess the definition hasn't fully shaken itself out." His personal definition centered on, ". . .expressive interest in personal grooming," and, "I wouldn't think its entirely the preserve of affluence," but "there is a desire to appear affluent," (Jeremy Bourque 2012). He identified these concepts as "extrinsic," in that they were part of one's effort to be identified by others in a specific way.

Jim: Critique in the Form of Vernacular Theory

In observing and analyzing the commercial advertisements discussed in the previous chapter, each of my collaborators hit upon a conception of traditional manliness derived from a duality of tropes at some point in the interview process. On the one hand, they perceived a traditional masculine ideal that holds to a number of conceptions expounded by Dundes, Bronner, and other scholars, namely that the heteronormative man should aspire to be physically dominant within his work and home environments, capable of athletic prowess, and possess a blend of skills that let him master the land, the animals, and the women around him. At the other end of the spectrum is a man who is sophisticated, worldly, and capable of socially dominating his home and work environments with a skillset that achieves the same aims as above though through more subtle means. He has knowledge that lets him organize others to master resources on his behalf.

Two competing visions of the same masculine ideal struck me as peculiar, and Jim, a friend of mine for multiple years who had allowed me to interview him in the past regarding his fondness for Robert E. Howard's Conan the Barbarian character, provided two pieces of evidence I had not considered. Regarding the Just for Men advertisement he remarked that, "It's kind of odd it's targeting older men," after all these older men are, "…generally married or with someone. Who are you fooling or trying to impress?" (Jim Ross). Moreover, based on personal experience as a man within the commercial's perceived target audience, Jim asserted, "You reach a certain age and you've competed and won. You've found your niche in society. There's love and support there," therefore, "…the audience they're targeting shouldn't really respond." In comparing the Just for Men ad with the Dos Equis

commercial featuring the "debonair" and "totally gray" Most Interesting Man in the

World, Jim concluded, "These commercials are almost diametrically opposed."

The idea that a commercial would strive to make an audience of what, in

Jim's opinion, should be an unreachable group and that it would be so oppositional

to an ad targeting young men brought me to the conclusion that both

advertisements were making their audiences aware of a deficit in their lives that

could be filled by the product in question. This was not about selling something

someone needs, this was about creating a need in order to sell something. In both

cases viewers are, according to Kimmel's interpretation, being emasculated by the

images they see. The Dos Equis audience was seeing a suave and worldly older man

they were not, and the Just for Men audience was seeing the young, physically

appealing men they were not. Jim latched onto this notion saying that the two

advertisements are "diametrically opposed." One, "is teaching young men that they

have to stay young looking to be virile. It's as if one part (or) group of advertisers

are playing on the experienced debonair older man image and the other is saying,

'No you always want to look pre-gray.'" The notion even began to frustrate him

after considering it: "It's play [sic] on a man's vanity. It's kind of odd because it's

targeting older men, but older men are, even with the high divorce rate, generally

either married or with someone. Who are you fooling and who are you trying to

impress? At a certain point, everyone knows that you're older," (Jim Ross 2012).

This leads me to the conclusion that the masculine ideal being, "at odds with

itself," another statement for which I have previously credited Jim, is something of a

fallacy lying at the root of traditional masculinity that is being manipulated by

advertisers to sell goods and services. The ideal at odds with itself represents some

other impassable deficit, marginalized by popular and folk imagery to the extent that it is largely unseen. This then plainly reveals ties between masculinity and other fixed barriers constructed by society: age, race, and economic status, for example.

Andrew: The Blue Collar Frame of Reference

Andrew and I were first introduced through a mutual friend, and it turned out we shared a number of interests and became friends ourselves. We knew each other for about three years before I started my thesis research. As a commercial diver and industrial cleaning expert who frequently lives and works for weeks at a time on the oil-rigs off the coast of Newfoundland, Andrew spoke in line with elements of traditional masculinity most of my other informants would not, but then he would very carefully redirect the conversation or overlay a previous statement with a formal reversal. This may come from the fact that Andrew, while the kind of person willing and able to participate in my research, spends his working hours among tradesmen and similar "blue collar" individuals. Andrew was a rare window into a world to which I had little access despite my best efforts. I had even approached him after the fact about having some of his associates watch my selected commercials and complete the interview alongside him, but he had strong reservations saying, "They probably wouldn't understand," what I was trying to accomplish or why it was meaningful work (i.e., they fit the framework of masculinity and anti-intellectualism discussed in chapter 2, which eschews questions about complex and uncontested cultural constructions). I think, in some ways he did not want his work colleagues to know he had friends like me, with

whom he shares hobbies, but little else in terms of professional skillsets or values, and he was at least hesitant to let me know he had friends like his work colleagues. Thus, Andrew is suspended between two worlds and my interest in what life is like for divers and industrial cleaners watching television on a deep-sea oilrig was uncomfortably bridging that gap.

Andrew acknowledged the differences between himself and many of his colleagues from the outset in words similar to those employed by Jim: "I do overthink the shit out of stuff, but I see value in it," he told me, whereas he described the perspective of his colleagues as being more an "automatic response," (Andrew Knickle). He also indicated that differences existed between the way his coworkers interacted with each other and the way they did with their spouses. In considering the clandestine behavior of the Wiser's Whiskey protagonist, Andrew talked about an associate, "Oh my God, the most macho dude I know talks a big game. Most people know him by himself, but I'm friends with his girlfriend and him and I see the softer side." This man would frequently censor his overtly masculine behaviors and attitudes out of "consideration" for the fact his partner was present.

In addition to his worklife, Andrew provided a glimpse into pick-up truck culture in his work environment and its connection to traditional masculinity. He and his colleagues frequently discuss their, "big, dirty trucks," in terms of size, power, and quality of material construction. Andrew has learned to accept a certain amount of harassment in exchange for making choices outside of the norm amongst his peers: "I catch a bit of heat for having a small truck. 'Why don't you get a real truck,' that's what I hear a lot." While the temptation here might be to draw connections between vehicles and sexual prowess, as the truck-as-sexual display

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metaphor is alive and well in both popular and informal culture, as is the tendency

for some urbanized Canadians and Americans to remark, "Sorry about your penis,"

when sighting a man in a large, flashy pick-up truck, I think that considering vehicles

as an economic or occupational extension of masculinity serves this project better.

Andrew seemed to consider this as well by stacking his discussion of truck culture

amongst tradesmen with lots of provisos such as, "buying a truck because you're

using a truck," and making distinctions between trucks used for "work" and "show

trucks."

Sam: The Continuum of Traditional Masculinity

I met Sam at the graduate student pub on my second day attending Memorial

University of Newfoudland, and I consider him the first I made in St. John's. A self-

identified bisexual graphic artist in his late thirties who grew up in St. John's and

recently finished a master's degree in humanities at MUN, provided a number of

valuable insights both by acting as an outsider to traditional masculinity, in which

he felt he could only partially participate, and by acting as an insider to the world of

commercial art and style. Media is a part of his life and work and even though he

counts himself as someone who actively avoids live television broadcasts in favor of

tools like Torrent downloads, he admitted he would often seek out pieces of clever

advertising on internet sites like YouTube saying, "I'm very aware of television

commercials," even though he does not, "usually encounter [them]." His tone was

often hypercritical when it came to the commercials I showed him saying of

television advertising in general, "It's so normal it's boring," or "that's not terribly

funny or terribly original."

Sam's most critical insight about traditional masculinity was that while there were no outright rules for traditional masculinity, "There are definitely targets and direction given." Sam noted a particular type of man that hit the "target" in practically every commercial I showed him: "the strong, silent male." For him, "that kind of captures all ideas about manliness and masculinity," (Sam Swyer 2012). He was the first among my collaborators to point out how few examples I had collected featured men who were manly *and* speaking. When men spoke in my collection of advertisements it was either a very brief statement of fact within the context of an ad, such as the Most Interesting Man in the World's tagline: "I don't always drink beer, but when I do I prefer Dos Equis," or for comedic effect such as when the Whiskas protagonist is caught being affectionate with his cat or the KFC customer who is excessively masculine in accusing the clerk of making romantic advances toward his partner. Sam fixated on the fact most men were communicating through actions, hand gestures, or in the case of the Scotiabank customer who's finally right about something, "The only sound you get out of him is a very guttural primal sound," (Sam Swyer 2012)

Sam's capacity to interact with both heterosexual and gay social groups also drove home the idea that traditional masculinity is linked to heternormativity. He described advertisements that centered on relationships between men and women (e.g. Scotiabank, Wiser's Whiskey) as being far more traditionally masculine than those that focused on an individual's relationships with other men alone (e.g., Ancestry.ca).

Jill: The Ladylike Practice of Buying Men's Underwear

Jill and Jim had been married for several years when Jim and I became friends and he assisted me with a previous research project. Growing up in what she describes as a "traditional family," where, "the man was the breadwinner," Jill, a married phlebotomist in her mid-fifties, offered a great deal of insight into the changes between the traditional masculinities she knew, "thirty, forty, fifty years ago," and the contemporary visions portrayed in my example advertisements. For her, the most "traditional" commercial I showed her was the KFC ad that portrays heteronormative men as "aggressive beings," who "don't get along very well," where a jealous husband accuses a man behind the register of trying to make a pass at his wife. For Jill, the customer's "over-exaggerated" reaction was most reflective of what she understood to be manly display of emotion. "My dad and my brother, both of them have a very short fuse. I've known a lot of [men] who are very aggressive over the years."

Jill also related to me that her mother and other female relatives were often sources of traditional masculinities information, which was usually interlaced with traditional femininities information. Two different anecdotes from Jill's formative years show this. The first was related to her musical desires, "...when I got to Grade Seven I was in music class we could pick an instrument for concert band. I said I wanted to play the drums, my mother said it's not ladylike," and instead, "I had to play flute because that was ladylike," (Jill Ryder 2012). Again, when Jill reached her highschool years she was stopped by this unassailable barrier of gender. She had seen her older brother acquire a motorcycle license and use a motorcycle as an inexpensive alternative to an automobile. "When I turned sixteen I loved his

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motorcycle. I wanted to get my bike license. [Her mother] said, 'Absolutely not,

that's not ladylike,'" (Jilly Ryder 2012).

The deepest part of my conversation with Jill centered on the issue of buying

men's underwear. Under the traditional structures of heteronormative masculinity,

women are permitted and encouraged to reach into men's intimate spaces for select

purposes, but men are expected to eschew involvement with the same spaces in

women's lives, less they become tainted by femininity. Case in point, a commercial

featuring celebrity soccer player David Beckham silently modeling tight-fitting

underwear as the camera pans across his muscular, tattooed frame, showing pieces

of the whole. This effort, which parodies pornographic cinematography, where

women's bodies are not often seen as whole things but disjointed collections of

limbs, mouths, breasts, buttocks, and genitalia is clearly meant to objectify a

physically attractive man to draw in women as customers. This only makes sense if

heteronormative women are responsible for buying underwear for the men in their

lives. When I presented this concept to Jill and my other female collaborators it was

met with laughter, followed by what was almost an admission of truth, as though I

had discovered some secret long buried. "Generally, it's women buying the

undergarments. It's been women," Jill explained, "A lot of men don't know what

size underwear they wear," (Jill Ryder). My three female collaborators all stated

emphatically that this arrangement was a proverbial one-way street. Each had been

or was in a long-term relationship with a male partner, sharing finances, and said

their male partners had never purchased undergarments for them. Like Jill, my

other informants couched this revelation in humor, asserting that it showed not an

unequal distribution of power across culture, but rather that men would be unable

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to take care of themselves without the assistance of women. The same revelation, which was much more subtle, was present in the Beckham ad, but overlaid with sexuality rather than humor.

A curious phenomenon worth mentioning here is that while this thesis and the interviews associated with it are designed to discuss the transmission of masculinities information through television advertising, I also came across a number of examples of television entertainment as sources for the same kinds of information the collaborator or participant was seeing in selected advertisements. Often we would discuss masculine phenomena such as the taboo against holding a woman's purse and while the collaborator in question could not offer me an anecdote from their personal life that reflected previous understanding of this idea, they would often cite television entertainment as a source for their knowledge. Episodes of the television series *Friends* and *Seinfeld* both center on the issue of men being feminized by other men and women for carrying ambiguous accessories that might or might not be purses. Jill was not the only informant to bring these tense debates to my attention. These anxious moments in the scripted lives of television characters are presented in a comedic frame, therefore invoking Brottman's admonition of the "censored impulse," (2004, 150).

Kim: An Advertising Insider

As I closed out my data collection for this project I came across a collaborator with a different perspective on advertising from those who had previously offered insight and assistance. Kim was not only a television viewer, but also an advertising professional. She worked as a production manager for an advertising firm,

coordinating television commercials, radio spots, and digital media campaigns.

Under conditions of anonymity she served as a window into a world that was largely

untouchable due to professional constraints and what I personally found to be a

general mistrust of the intentions of academics. Two concerns prevail through my

personal experience attempting to contact private sector experts related to my

research. The first is a desire to keep trade secrets out of the hands of competition,

as an academic writing about businesses' plans and marketing strategies from a

cultural perspective might make available sensitive information through which

others could achieve market share or profit. The second is a sense that an academic

might damage the reputation of a business by speaking to any inherent inequalities

or biases in its internal practices. My opinion, based solely on personal experience,

is that the first concern is legitimate given the competitive nature of private sector

industries, whereas the second is more of a political statement that demonstrates an

ideological gulf between scholarship in the humanities and the private sector.

With Kim's cooperation I was able to learn how a television commercial

begins with an idea and eventually manifests within mass-mediated popular culture.

Also, with her assistance I was able to discern conflicts between the industry

authorities deciding what becomes mass-mediated popular culture and what does

not, to understand why masculine images portrayed on television are largely

conservative in their approach to the greater dialogue of contemporary manliness,

and to recognize a vernacular theory present among advertisers that coincides with

one that I had been drawing from my participants and collaborators the whole time.

Kim explained that most television commercials began with an agency's

efforts to feel out the needs of a given client. The client meets with a team of

creative professionals with an account executive acting as an internal liaison

between the two groups:

> So basically a client says we want a commercial let's hire this ad
> agency. So you have the client, the creative team, and the account
> executive. The account executive would bring the client into the
> agency and creative would be brought in. Once budget is nailed down,
> let's say fifty thousand for a thirty-second commercial, which is a
> pretty good number for a good commercial locally. Creative talks with
> the client and tries to figure out what they want, ("Kim" 2013).

Once the creative team establishes the needs of the client, "brainstorming" begins:

> They come up with a few ideas, they go to their creative director. They
> bounce ideas around, they shut ideas down, they keep some, take parts
> of others. They storyboard those ideas. They would meet with the
> client again and they would say here are a few of our ideas, what do you
> think? ("Kim" 2013).

Kim described not a simple brainstorming process, but multi-part negotiation effort

to weed out ideas until something usable is found. "Usually they don't like anything

and you have to do it again, and again. Go back to the drawing board," ("Kim" 2013)

Part of the corporate culture in advertising would seem to be a sense that a client

has full control of the time and energy of the professionals they have hired. Kim

described the experience of being "on-call" even after working a full day. She must

frequently check her phone and email even while performing domestic activities or

in the midst of recreation in order to avoid letting down clients and her fellow

advertising professionals.

Once the clients accept an idea, production professionals are contacted to

arrange for each and every aspect of the commercial's contents. Actors, crew,

locations, props, lighting, computer graphics, and other needs are filled with

creative professionals having approval. An actor's wardrobe, for example, receives a

tremendous amount of attention. Kim explained, "They might say, 'We want black

ballet flats,' and we might have to go through ten different black ballet flats before Creative and client are happy," ("Kim" 2013).

Once filming is complete the commercial moves into post-production, and editors work to piece the film together with text, audio, and other elements to complete the original storyboard laid out by the creative department. While Kim indicated the primary stressors of pre-production and production were time and budget management, post-production's central stressor was seeing the final vision come together. Despite careful planning on the part of the creative team and strict adherence to the storyboard by the production team, a commercial can still turn out to be something either the client does not want or that the advertising agency thinks is unfit for a television audience—"then we've got a problem," as Kim put it. Re-filming all or part of a commercial is apparently not an option for most agencies, as the client's money has been spent and a product *must* be made. "Re-editing" is one tactic. The footage taken can be slowed down, more text or music can be added, and a new vision can be made from the pieces of the discarded, non-functional commercial. Even if a client asked for something the advertisers knew would be unsuccessful, the advertising agency cannot simply blame the client and walk away from the project. The money has been spent, "this is business," and the client must be pleased if the agency expects to see more clients walk through their doors.

When Kim alluded to the process of taking "parts" of ideas and using them in commercials I was intrigued, sensing something akin to Lévi-Strauss' *bricolage*, the act of constructing cultural concepts from materials at hand (1992 [1966], 17). I was not disappointed. She said, "You kind of just take bits and pieces from things you've already done or things you've seen...they're just constantly reading up on the

latest things and watching the latest movies and watching the latest TV shows and watching commercials and they're going out and seeing bands," ("Kim" 2013). According to my source then, the impetus for the popular culture created by television advertising is, in fact, more popular culture. This would mean that any masculinities information that is transmitted through television advertising is, in most cases, already at least two steps removed from any sort of folkloric source.

If television commercials are largely sidestepping Narvaez and Laba's continuum of folklore and popular culture by being recycled back upon themselves, then we may at last have hit upon one key reason as to why television advertising cannot reflect ideas of alternative masculinity. Laba establishes that folklore becomes more generalized as it is filtered into the realm of popular culture. What is deeply meaningful for specific groups must take on a more "casual" manner as it is presented to a wider audience (Laba 1986, 12-16). If that folklore makes multiple trips through the same filter of casual consumption, it stands to reason that more and more ideas derived from and tied to specific groups are going to be eliminated in favor of the homogenous. Therefore, even as masculine alternatives make their way into the mainstream, become accepted, and even held up as positive images for other men to emulate, television advertising will still lag behind. While Kim seemed to accept this particular strategy of double and perhaps even triple filtering expressive culture as essential to her business, her tone regarding some of the advertisements from my data collection seemed to indicate some resentment for this quality. She would often mimic a deep voice and alter her body language when portraying an advertiser's message she thought was crass or out of touch with

contemporary society, saying things like, "You're a man, drink Wiser's," ("Kim"

2013), in a way meant to demean the product message attached to it.

Kim also related that the masculine images brainstormed by creative

professionals and then tempered by the needs of advertising clients are deceptively

specific. In looking for an "average" man to fill the role of a television father, very

specific criteria must be met to satisfy all the agents behind the scenes. "The

planning for what these people look like goes on for weeks," she remarked. She

continued:

> If it's something geared toward families say, they would want a typical
> "happy"-looking family. They would want the typical dad, he needs to
> be good-looking, he should be tall, he should be handsome, he should
> look gentle, and happy yet strong, it's a pretty specific look that they're
> usually going for. It's most certainly pretty good-looking and run-of-
> the-mill looking. Not distinctive, ("Kim" 2013).

Here we see the power the creators of popular culture wield over expressions of the

everyday and the informal. When "run-of-the-mill" is revealed to be "a pretty

specific look" this signifies a disconnect between the experience of normality or

averageness and its television simulacrum. "Typical" is so painstakingly constructed

that it ceases to be a representation of anything but itself. By the end of our

interview Kim herself was exasperated. She exclaimed, "It's ridiculous, it's all just so

fake. The amount of work that goes into make something look effortless on TV,"

("Kim" 2013) and I sensed in her the same sort of sarcasm which my collaborator

Jeremy had described in his father, a television professional working in the CBC

newsroom.

Kim ended her interview with me on a curious note. I had asked her if the

creative people in her business expressed frustration at being hemmed in by their

budgets, the needs of their clients, or other such circumstances. She remarked that,

"…a lot of times we'd say, 'Oh wouldn't it be great if we could do this?' Or we come

up with ideas and we say, 'Oh that'll never fly with the client,'" ("Kim" 2013), and I

saw clearly that she regarded the creative professionals in her industry as artists.

"I've heard it said that no one plans to work in advertising," and it is obvious that

these professionals would prefer to produce more edgy and thought-provoking

material, but those desires are most often "sacrificed," according to Kim, to meet the

needs of the client. "We're dealing with government departments or banks or car

dealerships, like a typical client that needs commercials made. They're not the most

adventurous," ("Kim" 2013)

Kim stated that advertising professionals often seek out creative safety

within the changing strategies of their industry. "I think there's definitely more

emotion offered now, they're going for more of a sensory thing…More artistic and

creative with pictures and music," ("Kim" 2013). She lamented that "old

commercials from the 50s," involved lots of dense text and little creative freedom.

Photographs, slow motion, fonts, and different styles of film, all contribute to

making the creative professionals' vision a reality. For Kim, these are some of the

joy of her business, written plainly on her face as she talked about new directions in

art and editing, and what makes a "good commercial." That joy is tempered,

however, as the needs of the client come first, as do the requirements of legal

agencies that place demands on certain kinds of advertisements for disclaimers that

must use certain phrasing and take up a certain portion of the audience's screen

relative to the imagery in the background. "Unfortunately," Kim lamented to me,

"creative always has to sacrifice what is their vision because there's certain information that has to be on the screen," ("Kim" 2013).

The constraints under which advertising professionals are often placed were made clear to me when I showed Kim a handful of the advertisements I had collected for my other collaborators to peruse. Her reaction to both the Scotiabank and Wiser's Whiskey ads were what might be interpreted as professional disdain. She made light of the fact that both ads employed examples of an "age-old joke" and seriously rather than in an "ironic way," which is her preference for incorporating well-known tropes into new advertising. As a final thought I showed her a commercial I had procured after my classroom data collection and only showed to a pair of collaborators. It was the Southern Comfort liquor advertisement featuring an overweight, middle-aged man with long curly hair and a mustache walking along a beach wearing short, tight men's swimming attire along with dress shoes and socks. The main character appeared out of shape, out of touch with fashion conventions, and yet totally at ease and confident amongst a more physically fit, younger, and better-dressed crowd. Kim enjoyed the ad immensely from a professional point of view, remarking, "a lot of creative teams would like it," because it was very different from what they're typically asked to produce for liquor companies. "It's not trying to put out this fake idea," ("Kim" 2013)

Put in terms of the portrayal of gender in television advertising then, it seems creative and production professionals wind up caught in the crossfire between the client and the audience the client is seeking win over. The client is effectively taking two risks by creating a commercial advertisement: a risk of turning off the potential buyer with an poorly-received appeal and a risk of losing large amounts of money

through production costs and media-buys that could be spent more successfully elsewhere. As the client's need is to appeal to the widest audience possible and offend no one in the process, traditional hegemonic masculinity is asserted as the safest way to make the appeal, whereas alternatives are interpreted as "edgy" or a risky move to make with a large amount of capital. Statements like, "Wouldn't it be great if we could do this?" are markers of censorship, silencing alternative voices within the greater dialogue on masculinity in favor of profit through safer risk-reward business strategies.

Summary

With the reader having an understanding of the depth and breadth of my research sample, we can now move to discuss how to interpret the insights of my participants and collaborators, and take a longer view of just what these insights mean for future directions in the study of masculinities. What follows in the remaining two chapters is my theory-driven effort to understand what is being said, acknowledging that my sample of vernacular insights are part of a larger, ongoing dialogue in Western masculinities, that often goes on without being verbalized as the greater media-viewing audience reflects upon its social landscape through the lens of popular culture—simultaneously educating itself, contributing new ideas to the conversation, and passing the ideas it has learned on to new participants.

Chapter 5: Interpretation of Interview Materials

Upon reviewing the materials collected from participant surveys and collaborator interviews, it becomes clear that my informants are more than capable of forming and supporting their own ideas regarding concepts of masculinity when prompted by inquiry or a conversational context. The goal of this chapter is to highlight this vernacular mode of theorization and allow it to speak for itself. The insights drawn by my informants were frequently framed as semiotic and/or psychoanalytic constructions: an informant would identify an image or series of images and discuss meaning.

In this multi-layer theoretical approach, my role as researcher is to allow these people and their experiences to take center stage, and that is why this chapter focuses on interpretation instead of analysis. My informants are performing the analysis in the act of observing the materials I have presented to them. In turn, I have the role of interpreting their analysis for a wider audience.

The Semiotics of Vernacular Theory:

In order to fully appreciate the insights of my collaborators, it is necessary to regard them as the creators, maintainers, and transmitters of vernacular theory[1]: a "widespread" cultural practice that, "does not differ in kind from academic theory," and in the presence of which academic theory becomes, "a rigorous and scholarly version of a widely practiced analytical strategy," (McLaughlin 1996, 6). By now it must be clear that much of this work is generated through the use of dyadic—or in a

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[1] This concept makes itself known in folklore through a variety of approaches, most notably Leonard Primiano's work on vernacular religion (1995) that started an ongoing debate over the legitimacy of understanding informants as, "the folk," and more recently it has been acknowledged in the works of Robert Glenn Howard (2005) and Dorothy Noyes (2008).

few cases triadic—conversation as symbolic interaction. The words of my

informants will never reveal what they are thinking, only the simulacrum. The case

is the same for me, and every other theorist employing *psychoanalysis* as a tool of

understanding a person or group's way(s) of knowing.

I highlight the word psychoanalysis because it has become something of a

dirty word in much of humanities and social sciences. Freud is often a target of

ridicule[2] in many Western classrooms and, try as they might, proponents of the

psychoanalytic method in folklore, anthropology, and other disciplines cannot seem

to break free of its historic missteps and the very real harm it has done to women,

LGBTQ individuals, ethnic minorities, and other groups it has turned its gaze upon

since its inception in the late 1800s (De Beauvoir 1989 [1952], 38-52; Nardi 1992,

3). The approach puts the power of interpretation in the hands of individuals who

do not have the knowledge necessary, in many cases, to make the statements it

forces them to make. Knowing one's own mind, after all, is tricky enough given the

fluidity of life experience. To ask any academic to fully know the mind of a person

who is of a different sex, ethnic background, social class, etc. than her/himself is to

ask too much and to offer the individual too much power in letting her/his voice

fully stand in for that of others.

Stephen Winick, in his work on contemporary legends involving crime

victims, suggests an approach that moderates what a researcher can take from the

psychoanalytic approach to folklore. When someone shares a joke or sees a

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[2] Here I refer the reader back to the literature review and the place of Mikita Brottman within it, if only to ask: what impulses are we censoring within ourselves as scholars when we make light of "penis envy", "the Oedipus complex", and other Freudian phenomena? Perhaps each person censors her/himself for personal reasons or perhaps we censor ourselves as a group. This dissertation is not the place to take up why disdain for Freud evokes laughter rather than some other reaction, but I would like to take up the question at a later date.

particular meaning in a humorous narrative, it is oversimplifying matters to suggest that person holds associated beliefs or constructs their worldview with that meaning in mind. What can be said though is that the individual who finds a joke or humorous narrative relevant enough to perceive its symbolism is expressing anxieties associated with the symbol (Winick 1992, 17). This distinction allows for the notion that a symbol can be meaningful to someone without being a factor in the make up of her/his identity.

Returning to the notions of simulacrum and language as symbolic interaction, I want to stress that relationship of sign to signifier is such that even when a symbol is an affront to our physical or intellectual senses, it can still contain information that is useful to us. This, I surmise, is how best to reflect on wholly psychoanalytic works such as Dundes's *From Game to War and other Psychoanalytic Essays* (1997). I would urge the reader not to focus on what is wrong with the assessments in such a work, for they are rife with inaccuracies and conclusions based upon false assumptions, but rather engage the material where it either A) agrees with material using language we deem more acceptable within the post-modern frame or B) does not disagree with that material. In doing so, consensus emerges between the works of Alan Dundes and those of sociologists such as Michael Kimmel and Peter Nardi—who both demonstrate a use and close scrutiny of primary source material (i.e., interviews and historical texts respectively) unmatched by Dundes (Nardi 1992; Kimmel 2008). While Dundes's language clashes with feminist and post-modern critiques, the material signified by that language does not. Much the same can be said for Bourdieu's androcentric vision,

which is interpreted from the top down by the scholar as inevitable in cultures that practice distinctions between the behavioral norms and work of gender groups.

Bengt Holbek ran across a similar while constructing in own model for the interpretation of fairytales in 1987. In the buildup to laying out his own method, Holbeck takes the opportunity to cover how psychoanalysts have worked to use Freud's theory of the conscious and unconscious mind to establish their own methods of interpretation. Holbeck finds some value in the psychoanalytic model, but he ultimately steps away from it on the basis that the interpretations are coming from the scholars: "Under the circumstances we have no choice but to reject them all. None of them has proved beyond reasonable doubt that their particular brand of latent or unconscious meaning actually present in any given text," (Holbeck 1987, 319). If Dundes is not the person to tell us what we need to hear through a psychoanalytic frame, perhaps someone or some other group can. Perhaps it is not scholars who should be drawing conclusions from signs and symbols, perhaps our informants should be doing that while we act as careful observers eager to help when asked. At the same time, perhaps there is a way to refine the psychoanalytic approach to avoid the hang-ups the Holbek notes such as incompatibility between the involuntary construction of symbols in dreams and the voluntary construction of symbols in folklore (Holbek 1987, 316).

I recall, during my time as an anthropology graduate student, a class on the subject of psychoanalytic methodology and theory where I was told that if one extracted everything from Freud's approach that was harmful or maintained via incomplete understandings of biology and/or culture, one is left with two

theoretical suppositions.[3] The first is that childhood will contain experiences that

can impact upon the thoughts and agency of any individual human being for the

duration of her/his lifetime. The second is that as individuals restrain or suppress

desires due to an overriding cultural or personal obligation, those desires are not

truly sublimated. Rather they manifest through avenues and choices not

constrained by cultural or personal obligation. This is, perhaps, the safest extent to

which we can ask any researcher to interpret on behalf of others, and even then that

scholar must be cautious not to overwrite experiences of sex, gender, sexual

orientation, culture, and economic class she/he cannot have based on her/his

position in society. This then would mean my interpretive methodology.   It is not

wholly psychoanalytic, but a derivation of the psychoanalytic model, tempered by

the semiotics of vernacular theory. Psychoanalytic analysis is then a means by

which to transition to a vernacular mode of understanding and interpreting

experience.

Vernacular theory becomes a gateway to incorporating a wider range of

theoretical frameworks into a folkloristic model. For example, Robert Glenn

Howard's use of a vernacular approach to online prayers allows him to view the

construction and reproduction of informal evangelical rhetoric through the lens of

folkloristics (2005), building on Primiano's model of vernacular interpretation of

informal religious beliefs within the well codified and formalized Roman Catholic

religious framework (1995). Dorothy Noyes points out that vernacular theory,

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[3] I am placing credit for what follows in the hands of Sabina Magliocco, the second in a group of three of advisors who have directed me in my career as a post-secondary and graduate student. It could be that others have made similar deductions, but at this time I am unaware of any published source material that relates the sort of *distillation* practice she encouraged when it came to Sigmund Freud, his disciples, and their antecedents.

"...calls upon metaphor rather than abstraction to encapsulate and clarify reality," and, as with Howard, she points to it as a way of understanding the symbolic systems that underlie human interaction (2008, 42).

One thing we must understand and expect of vernacular theory is that it will not march in lock-step with other theoretical constructions. Vernacular frameworks dispute the authenticity of concepts such as history, as in the case of Madhu Dubey's scholarly interpretation of black feminist historical fiction set during the Great Migration, which led to the growth of African American diaspora communities in Chicago and nearby cities during the early decades of the Twentieth Century. Vernacular theory can become a way for individuals with their fingers on the pulse of a segment of society to, "...have it both ways, to mediate as well as elude historical change," (1998, 309) and in these cases the scholar becomes responsible for the challenging work of establishing an academic authenticity—a troubling concept for any folklorist familiar with the ideas of tourism and cultural commodification. Here, in following Richard Bauman's line of thinking on the subject, the folklorist risks seeing some texts and more "authentic" because they lie closer to the, "originary form." The solution is to step back and see texts, even those containing vernacular theory, as data associated with folklife and other familiar genres (2008, 33-34).

This is specifically how I have chosen to negotiate the psychoanalytic concepts I have collected from my participants and collaborators. Secondary theoretical lenses are necessary, as the theory emerging from my interview materials is not a complete academic interpretation. I neither expect my informants to make the mental transitions from psychoanalysis to contemporary theory, nor do

I condemn them in any way for offering insights along psychoanalytic lines. I was, in fact, encouraging them to engage with the symbolic elements of what they were seeing on the television screen.

Personal Experience + Vernacular Theorization = Worldview

What follows is my effort to detail the vernacular theory proposed by each of my interviewees. First I focused on the personal experiences of each collaborator with regard to television viewing and masculinities. I then asked them to evaluate television advertisements and make generalized statements based on that personal experience. The end result, in each case, is a reflection of the collaborator's way of knowing when it comes to men and manliness.

Psychoanalysis can be perceived as dangerous because interpretations come down from on high, from a limited group of professionals. Questions can naturally arise about representation, cultural competence, diversity, and whether there is sufficient personal experience necessary to make generalized statements about the unspoken motivations of an individual or group. I am, therefore using an exercise in semiotics and critical theory to put the interpretive power of the theory back in the hands of my collaborators, reframing what Thomas McLaughlin terms the depiction of "the public as the passive victims of power elites who control the media and thus *create* the popular mindset." They are the ones interpreting my material. I am tracking the material and, when necessary, translating it to meet the linguistic expectations of a scholarly audience.

In dealing with writers and creators of vernacular theory, McLaughlin considers the issue of "coming to consciousness," questioning early Marxist insights about whether oppressed classes need the assistance of bourgeois intellectuals or if they possess "their own intellectual and cultural resources which they bring to the educational dialogue." He decides that his somewhat privileged writers, advertisers, and critics of popular culture have an "equally difficult and perhaps more complex struggle in order to come to consciousness about the culture that privileges them," (McLaughlin 1996, 13). The same is the case for my participants and collaborators, in that my questions and examples are forcing them to think in directions the veil of traditional hegemonic masculinity normally forbids. We can recall the barriers of nostalgia, parody, and anti-intellectualism discussed in Chapter Two to understand how that hegemonic masculine veil makes itself known in the lives of my informants, while what follows will show that proverbial *thinking outside the box* can and does happen under the right set of circumstances.

Ethical Concerns Regarding Participant Information

In the back of most scholars' minds is often a concern that A), "my informants are just telling me what I want to hear," or, less often, B), "my informants are not being entirely honest with me." Though a healthy measure of my collection in this project comes from interviews, I collected from my collaborators more in the manner one would collect contributors to an ethnographic project rather than seeking out experts in a particular skill, craft, or tradition. Firstly, this is because there are few examples of professional viewers of television commercials, save for

reviewers and industry professionals—the latter being represented by my collaborator "Kim" who is discussed as a unique circumstance in Chapter Four. Secondly this has to do with the challenges in openly discussing masculinity that I have alluded to in previous chapters. I surmise that cold-calling contributors and interviewing strangers would only add to the number of stammers, pauses, and confusing statements that inevitably take place when one attempts to discuss socio-cultural constructions that are inherently obfuscated and elude all manner of definition.

Thus I sought a body of collaborators with whom I was familiar and friendly, with whom I had shared some personal experiences, and with whom I had carried on one or more conversations that went past the sort of "some weather we've been having lately," small talk with which strangers or acquaintances are comfortable. Each of these collaborators, in turn, has expressed her/his feelings to me on one or more issues critical to them at some point and I have done the same with them. There are those among them with whom I do not agree on matters of politics, ethics, and even on constructions of gender and the social realities men and women face in their daily lives. For the purposes of this study I did not attempt to argue or sway any of these individuals as we talked, save for perhaps reminding them their ideas, opinions, and inquiries regarding my methods were all highly significant to me.

My final thought on the matter of ethics and collaborator information is that no doubt bias is present in the way my collaborators construct masculinity and therefore in what interpretations they make regarding the television advertisements I shared with them. I have not so much counteracted these biases as

embraced them as central to understanding the wider picture of vernacular theory on the subject of masculinities. I have achieved this through efforts familiar to folklore research: participant observation,[4] survey work which determined the internal consistency and external validity of my initial interpretations, and interviews that have given voice to my collaborators on topics with which they are familiar but often lack opportunity to speak on due to the strength of hegemonic masculinities in their lives.

This is an effort to synthesize a wide range of discussions on the same subject. I have found collaborators from a variety of age groups as well as social and economic backgrounds with varying lifeways in terms of work, sexuality, and recreational pursuits. These variable circumstances and concerns mean they each talk about masculinities in a different way. Some only perceive one form of masculinity with some alternatives, whereas others are aware of the masculinities dialogue. Some use very formal language to discuss the subject of gender, whereas others are highly informal, relying on context, innuendo, and anecdotal evidence to help them give their words meaning. Still others struggled multiple times with finding the right words to discuss a topic they had never really discussed before. All of this is highly meaningful, but it requires codifying on the part of a researcher if that meaning is going to come across to the reader. In the end a heavy responsibility falls to me to bring to the reader a unified understanding of what took place in these interviews without damaging the ideas or intent of the collaborators.

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[4] I am part of the contemporary television audience. I would like to think this project began with a reflexive analysis of my own habits as a viewer of television shows and advertising.

Anthropologist Stephen Tyler puts the responsibility of the scholar rather poetically saying:

> To represent means to have a kind of magical power over appearances, to be able to bring into presence what is absent, and that is why writing, the most powerful means of representation, was called, "*grammarye*," a magical act. The true historical significance of writing is that it has increased our capacity to create totalistic illusions with which to have power over things or over others as if they were things (1986, 131).

I am modeling my efforts above on those of H. L. Goodall Jr. (2006), Robin Clair (2003), and Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) to make the reader aware that I do not take lightly the impact this text will have on my informants or the problematic nature of the work I do.

The Psychoanalytics of Television: The Application of Vernacular Theory from Within

Toward the end of our interview Kim used the word "subconscious" to describe the various ways advertising was written into the framework of video upload sites like YouTube and Vimeo. When I asked her if people in the advertising industry thought of their work as appealing to the Freudian-derived divisions of the minds of viewers she said, "We don't talk about it a lot but a lot of it is assumed...it's kind of known you're trying to draw people in subconsciously and consciously. It's just kind of a known thing. I mean advertising definitely tries to reach people on a subconscious level." She gave me the example of how, if a product comes in a red package then the creative team and producers know without saying as much to add red accents to the various media created to promote the product, subtly enticing the audience to associate the red packaging with the ideas and emotions communicated

through the advertisement. I treat this statement as justification for my previous

argument regarding psychoanalysis and its place as a vernacular approach used by

people to understand themselves and their environments.

If advertisers are employing a vernacular version of psychoanalytic theory,

stripped of identifying markers that link it to Freud and the harms some understand

as done through his theorization, then it should only make sense that a similar

vernacular theory be used to deduce the meanings of those advertisers' intentions

on the receiving end of the advertisement. As it turns out, my collaborators are not

arbitrarily cataloguing the signs and signifiers within the context of the

advertisements I was showing them, they were reverse-engineering the work of

people like Kim and her colleagues. Granted, the problem of interpretation still

arises within the context, but of course that is muted by the use of Fine's internal

consistency and external validity (1992, 51-52). My collaborators and participants

have shown themselves to be highly consistent in their interpretations. The validity

of their claims is based in the questions I have raised and my guiding efforts in

choosing these particular commercials as strong, somewhat heavy-handed even,

examples of the use of masculinities imagery with the medium of television

advertising.   However, the validity of personal experience overrides any concerns of

leading questions or railroaded responses, as vernacular theory is inherently

accurate in its own construction: it is what people think and not what scholars

surmise or deduce people think, which Primiano defines as, "necessary

methodological reflexivity on the ethnographic process," (1995, 42).

Kim herself participates in this vernacular process, though she does so from within the context of an experienced professional. Her opinions are ethically valid, in that I solicited them in the same way I might while conducting participant observation. She is not a stranger to me, but my neighbor, and we met while watching our children making chalk art together on the sidewalk in front of her house. While I do not suggest that strangers relate poor information, as my participant surveys rely on just the opposite supposition, I am of the mind that our personal relationship assisted her in divorcing herself from her professional context. Indeed, I asked her at one point how she would feel if any of her commercials turned up in my data collection. Her response was casual, saying she did not feel conflicted at all about critiquing her own work the way she might "if you were a journalist," with a local newspaper. In this fictive case she would be obliged to support her employer and say only positive things about her kind of work and the material it produced for public consumption.

With Kim's ability to shed light on the advertising industry from within and the commentary of my collaborators articulately rendering the experience of the television audience consuming masculinity as it consumes product information, brand imagery, and other components of mass-mediated advertising, two threads emerge that must be critically evaluated. The first of these is that there is little to no dialogue occurring in television advertising with regard to alternative ways of knowing masculinity. Traditional masculinity, while varied in its aspects, comes off as silent and challenging to critique without the presence of alternatives to define it. The second thread that emerges is that, if there is no dialogue on masculinity within

the confines of television advertising, then it must be occurring elsewhere, for such a

dialogue exists. My collaborators are aware of it and other scholarly sources attest

to its existence.

    This secondary thread, despite the simplicity of its message that, "It's not

happening here, it's happening somewhere else," contains shockwaves that reach

beyond the intellectual space occupied solely by gender and into the border regions

of other major societal constructions. Advertising on television is a major

manifestation of societal innovation, as driven by the concepts of consumerism and

free enterprise. The vernacular warning that television is, according to more than

one of my collaborators, "selling you shit you don't need[5]," has roots in the 1920s, as

businesses expanded and advertising agencies took center stage, creating print,

radio, and later television advertising that was driven by brand-based strategies

that focused on gaining the customer's attention by a variety of means (Eadie 2009).

This pattern has continued unabated, through the establishment of suburban

neighborhoods in the 1950s, the coming of electronic entertainment, and now into a

present where advertising reaches its audience through cellular phones, tablet

computers, and eyewear.[6]

    It is peculiar, however, that as the products and services propagated by

television advertising plunge toward the future at breakneck speed, images of

masculinity employed by the medium remain rather stagnant. Words, styles, and

mannerisms of characters have changed, but one can still find images of masculinity

in those ads that fit the values espoused by men three and four generations

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[5] Blake, Sam, Jeremy, and Jill all made mention of this warning in their interviews.

[6] Google Glass (Christie and Gordon, 2014).

previous, if one reads interpretively the historical analyses of Gail Bederman and others (Bederman 1995; Nardi 1992). Curiously, it would appear that the agents of advertising have the reasoning for this disconnect between masculinities and their consumer-driven medium at easy reach: advertising is not principally derived from the vernacular world, it is instead derived from other forms of media. When we see "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like," the well-dressed men of "Wiser's Whiskey," or even outliers like "Whiskas" affectionate cat owner, we are not seeing Narváez and Laba's continuum of the folk and the popular, but instead a portion of that continuum looping back upon itself. Television advertising further processes what popular culture has already digested and sanitized for its wider audience. If we assume that advertising professionals participate in the vernacular critique of popular culture, which we can do to a degree, given Kim's place in the industry and her capacity to think critically toward that which effectively privileges her, it is reasonable to add an addendum to the Narváez and Laba continuum regarding advertising, wherein vernacular theory has an impact on mass-mediated popular culture at the point where it becomes used as a tool to propagate capitalistic interest.

Consider for a moment the changing face of advertising media as Western homes move away from gathering around the television to watch primetime programming and move toward ubiquitous and constant advertising streamed through a variety of digital means. One could suppose that new modes of interface coupled with new, young creative minds, and emerging political transformations could lead to a more multivocal approach to advertising. However, such a

supposition is contingent upon new information working its away into the framework of advertising design via the continuum of vernacular and popular culture. If the continuum is looping back on itself due to dependence on other forms of media, then there is no opportunity to add material that is not already sanitized by the simplifying properties of popular culture.

Though the contemporary reworking of advertising methods might seem to distance the ramifications of these insights from younger generations of digital-entertainment seekers, some important aspects of what is learned through this project will remain through the next stages of innovation, perhaps becoming more widely available as time goes on. Sam was not the first collaborator to mention to me that he would go out seeking after a particular advertisement online if he heard it to be enjoyable. As commercials work to copy other modes of entertainment, they are becoming more like those modes of entertainment. If the slow death of interest in television is resulting in a mass exodus of commercial viewers, those viewers are not exiting toward an advertising-free digital environment. They are instead moving toward advertising that is more and more indistinguishable from the entertainment they are seeking. Watching television ads is something of an ironically pleasant pastime among internet users. One could even surmise that such entertaining ads could push past the bulwark of skepticism demonstrated by many of my collaborators.

The Many Faces of Traditional Masculinity

Traditional masculinity encompasses personality traits that are too varied

for one individual to perform them all accurately at the same time. Even if we

envision a continuum with my collaborator Ian's, "muscular brute" on one end and

"sophisticated gentleman" at the other, traditional masculinity requires its

adherents to fulfill all aspects of this continuum simultaneously in order to be

exemplars of manly perfection. Traditional masculinity is always pointing out what

one does not possess—vacancy or absence is far more recognizable than possession

or tenure. Therefore no traditional man will ever be a whole man, certain of his

sense of identity within the confines of traditional masculinity. This is perhaps why

so many of my collaborators have made distinctions between "traditional" or

"stereotypical" masculinity and, "my vision of a man." In this sense they are acting

as vernacular theorists, seizing, "the opportunity to articulate and circulate their

own sense of popular culture, to make what feels like a desperate attempt to figure

out how it works" (McLaughlin 1996, 54).

It is also worth considering that the focus of this research is masculinities

through the medium television. As Kim points out, content creators and clients are

looking for very specific ideas about manliness, so it is fathomable that this is why

my collaborators can name stereotypes but their own definitions remain nebulous.

There is simply nothing on television that reflects even traditional masculinity in all

its simultaneous variations. My collaborators attempted to establish their

masculine simulacra for me, and these were much more varied than the masculine

simulacra they saw in advertising or referred to when talking about favorite television characters.

What this ultimately points to is inconsistency and disconnect between televised advertisements and their viewers, yet certain elements are reinforced. We can locate lines of anti-intellectual thinking within the parody and nostalgia available through the medium. No one character or commercial exemplifies masculinity, but taken as a whole the viewer can construct *a manliness* through bricolage—which is a critical distinction as the viewer is also able to note what facets of manliness are utterly absent within the context of one or more advertisements. This then is the vernacular theory of masculinity vis-à-vis television advertising, a composite of stereotypes, supported by a popular culture wash of psychoanalytic theory.

A Wider Dialogue to Counter Silence

As I close this chapter on the interpretation of my data and prepare to discuss options and opportunities for future research, I would like to take a moment to reflect on how my informants have made me more aware of the masculinities dialogue that exists just beneath the surface of so much of popular culture. As with previous research on the subject (Wall 2013a, 2013b, 2009), it is clear that hegemonic masculinity is the loudest voice in the chorus of voices that make up this dialogue, but it is not always the voice to which my informants listen. A vernacular theoretical approach shows that the entertainment media audience has a depth of understanding beyond passive absorption even when it comes to something as limited as a thirty-second advertisement. Thus, alternative ideas and discourses

can continually challenge and subvert what we understand to be traditional manliness through vernacular efforts to problematize information as it is encountered.

Masculinities scholars with an interest in advocating for gender equality, curbing violence, and improving health and wellbeing can use the disconnect media viewers experience when they see something that does not meet with their wider understanding of plural masculinities as an opportunity to provide scholarly information to the public. Inviting people to engage in critical thinking on the subject of masculinities may be as simple as providing the space and time necessary for discussion. If we want to undermine a hegemonic tradition that uses silence to perpetuate itself, we cannot go wrong in talking about it.

Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks

I have established from the outset that this an interesting time in television advertising marked with dramatic changes due to technology and the way people seek out televised entertainment as addressed by my collaborator Kim, several of my other collaborators detailing their transitional relationship with traditional television viewing, both of which are supported by works on contemporary media like Rushkoff's 2013 *Present Shock*. The advertising industry is busy pursuing alternative strategies to gain and hold the attention of customers as new products work their way into a saturated marketplace. Some of these strategies incorporate elements of traditional hegemonic masculinity and often use comedic parody and nostalgia as a lightning rod to garner attention. In some cases, such as Isaiah Mustafa's "Man Your Man Could Smell Like," the strategy gains interest but ultimately fails to sell the product in question (Figure 6.1). In other cases, such as Euro RSCG Worldwide's "Most Interesting Man in the World," or BBDO's wheelchair

basketball narrative for Guinness, a brand is reinvigorated and the professionals behind the strategy are hailed as successes by industry insiders. In both cases the cultural fallout is that

Figure 6.1. Isaiah Mustafa, YouTube Video. (2010a). the markers of traditional masculinity make waves across social media as users and viewers absorb information from these idealized and/or comedic representations of men.

My survey participants have shown quite clearly that one is capable of seeing a commercial for a product and understanding manliness within and apart from a

comedic context, confirming, from a folkloristic perspective, Katherine Frith's findings that advertising information reaches out to the viewer at a cultural level, as per her three-tiered model of advertising transmission (Frith 1997), a strategy recognized both by industry insiders and academic observers. Furthermore, my surveys show that observers can competently process and critically consider gendered communications they might normally receive on a subconscious level during ordinary television viewing. I can, therefore, make interpretive statements about the placement and meaning of symbolic structures in advertising as long as we involve the viewer in the process. This latter strategy is what makes interpretive statements internally consistent and externally valid (Fine 1992, 51-52).

Finally, a more detailed understanding of the symbolic masculinities information (Bronner 2005b, 47) present in television advertisements can be achieved through efforts to understand the vernacular theory television viewers use to process what they see on screen. Vernacular theory is serviceable for folkloristic purposes because it is, by and large, little different from academic strategies, merely lacking in prestige and some aspects of rigor (McLaughlin 1996). The former issue can be set aside, as it is a matter of power and politics that most academic disciplines are ready to overlook, especially those employing post-modern ethnographic methods (Goodall 2000, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). The latter issue of rigor can be safely dealt with using collaborative strategies that place the power of interpretation in the hands of informants (Lassiter 2005, 15). When the voice of the informant comes through, it is supported by the academic voice, thus what is said by non-scholars can be seen as doubly authoritative. The words of the

informant can easily stand on their own, but are all the more powerful in this carefully constructed context.

The non-academic voices in chorus with my own are saying quite clearly that there is a disconnect between what they see in television advertising and how they understand men and manliness. Television reflects facets of what they know to be manly, both elements they practice or see practiced and elements they do not practice but know others do, but not the complex whole. The involvement of an industry insider in my research sheds light on why this is so. Advertising is not so much a filter that takes folklore and makes it popular culture, as it is a filter that takes popular culture, applies vernacular theory, and then recycles it to the viewer. If this thesis is to be seen as applicable to continued efforts to study advertising, mass-mediation, political and social efforts to garner the attention of men, and the use of masculine parody and nostalgia in capitalistic efforts, it is this fact that must come across to students in the classroom, researchers in the field, and professionals making efforts in the fields of social work and community health—it is these last efforts I am keen to end on in the hope they inspire further research.

Returning to Bourdieu and his central concept in *Masculine Domination,* I argue that the concept of universal and dominant masculinity based upon an *androcentric vision* holds water, but must be modified if it is to serve as a practical academic tool that can be shared in the classroom and utilized in the field. First I shall speak to the universal thread within the idea by simply and honestly saying, "I do not know." It is not within the scope of my research to support or refute such a claim, nor do I find such a claim to be practical for developing a theoretical framework within folkloristics. I can certainly argue in favor of a multi-ethnic,

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multi-class, and, multi-cultural prevalence of a dominant masculine paradigm, but think it is practical to know to the limits of one's research and state them as such. I am of the mind that my interview materials can say a good deal about the "dominant" element of Bourdieu's *Masculine Domination*. I think Bourdieu's work tapped into the most glaringly obvious facet of a multi-layered masculine reality, yet oddly the one that is most difficult to discuss. Were I to speculate on the theoretical writings that might have followed *Masculine Domination*, I think we would have seen a discussion of masculine multi-vocality noting that the *androcentric vision* is one of many competing templates presented to men and that other less dominant collections of masculine motifs can be acquired and adapted by men from a variety of racial, cultural, and economic groups. My interview materials do strongly support Bourdieu's interpretation of the dominant masculine paradigm as a silent structure based upon the very functional theoretical premise of doxa.

Foregrounding the masculinities information contained in television advertising redraws and supports previously held conclusions that a traditional hegemonic masculinity holds sway over the lives of a large number of men, often without them realizing its social influence over them (Bronner 2005b, 47). I want to clarify this in saying that my research specifically shows the competing influences, perhaps even a dialogue, of a variety of masculinities in the individual lives of men being overshadowed by a tradition of hegemonic masculinity which is capable of silently weaving its way into a variety of ways of being and knowing manliness. As this tradition is embedded through the media spaces that contemporary Westerners inhabit and crosses their lives, from beginning to end, it exerts power even over

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those who actively look to withdraw from its influence and live by alternative masculinities.

While it is the case that, in Foucauldian terms, all aspects of the social world generate discourse, clearly some discourses are "louder" and more prominent than others and some discourses must travel through or be filtered by other discourses before they are perceived. Traditional hegemonic masculinity shows us that the capacity of certain discourses to, for lack a better analogy, "turn up the volume" in some contexts is not strictly a difference between formal and informal structures, rather these particularly intense discourses can appear anywhere in the social frame.

With its attachment to so many unequal economic, racial, and social practices, traditional masculinity is harming men in addition to harming women and other groups. If nothing else, my research makes clear that the embedded nature of men's hegemonic traditions is such that we need new ways of approaching them if we are going to help men understand feminism as the beginning of their social liberty in addition to it being at the core of social liberty for other gendered groups.

Folkloristics has seen a number of partnerships with medical science with the goal of dispelling rumors and legends that harm public health (Whatley and Henken 2001) and allowing healing professionals integrate patients' varied ways of knowing the world into their practice (O'Connor 1995). The heritage industry is, at its core, a partnership between folklore studies, tourism, and education. Understanding these examples, it becomes less difficult to conceive of a folkloristics that seeks to interface with and transform Western gender politics. As much as we can see official definitions and boundaries changing to reflect post-modern thought

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on gender, folklorists understand their subject matter as embedded and conservative in a way that makes unofficial and informal definitions more difficult to deconstruct and transform in an effort to create political equality. Traditional masculinity is often constructed at an unconscious level (Bronner 2005, xii), "off the books" despite efforts in civic and workplace circles to create definitions that favor no one group over another. Its adherents recognize those who belong and those who do not at an unconscious level as well, making decisions that impact the status and lives of others potentially without realizing the depth and breadth of their actions.

If we understand key elements of the communication of folklore as containing, creating, and repeating vernacular knowledge, then a television advertisement embodies these principles on a much more dramatic and rapid scale. A television advertisement that is noted for being a particularly clever and artful depiction of nostalgia and/or parody might be viewed multiple times in one sitting, or a tech-savvy viewer might see the commercial and seek it out on-line and, in the case of the Man Your Man Could Smell Like and the Most Interesting Man in the World, interact with the nostalgic representation through further digital content. These thirty-second bites of entertainment are often dismissed by viewers using various methods: "I usually mute them," "I click past them," "Normally I won't pay all that much attention to them," "…avoiding live television so I usually don't encounter commercials,"[1] but they still come into contact with them and their capacity to contain so much symbolic information in a compact format makes them highly portable. Consider the fact Westerners view non-Western advertisements as

[1] My collaborators Blake, Ian, Jeremy, and Sam respectively.

humorous and edgy entertainment, framed as television specials with titles like,

Banned in America: the World's Sexiest Commercials (Lachman 1999). Such shows

allow viewers to absorb an eroticized caricature of the foreign "other" through the

medium of advertising—the ads becoming the focus of entertainment rather than a

nuisance that can be avoided through a click of the remote control.

From a folkloristic perspective it would almost be better to think of television

advertising as a dirty joke: a symbolic representation of one or more aspects of

culture, wherein an inequality or incongruity is used as the source of humor. As

Narváez puts it, "We are surprised by this incongruity and we laugh," (2003, 2).

Moreover, an advertisement, much like a dirty joke, eschews any effort at

problematization due to its dimensions and use of humor to drive home its thesis.

The censored impulse at the heart of every joke or advertisement is an element of

vernacular knowledge impressed upon the mind of the viewer or listener, subtly

reinforced by the pleasant stimulus of humor. "By disengaging themselves, i.e.

letting down their guard together within play frames of humor, people collectively

communicate in ways normatively judged as unsavory, affirming their own

meanings," (Narváez 2003, 11).

Other folkloric sources contain wellsprings of information regarding this

phenomenon. Consider the vernacular understanding that laughter is "contagious."

For Robert Provine this statement rings true: "The neurobiological (and

unconscious) nature of the coupling between the detection and the generation of

laughter provides a mechanism for the occurrence of contagious laughter," (Provine,

1996, 45). Moreover, contemporary behavioral science postulates that shared

laughter is a key factor in the formation and maintenance of human relationships,

particularly among males, "…people are eager to show they understand jokes made by others…a failure to laugh in a male group would be like admitting one did not 'get' the joke, which could lead to loss of status and eventually exclusion from a coalition," (Mehu and Dunbar, 2008). From a biological and psychological perspective, whether we laugh or do not laugh is perhaps more important than what we are laughing about. It is a physical mandate and we are socially rewarded for doing so.

Elise Kramer argues that, "…in order to study humor as a social phenomenon, we must understand the ways that single instances of jokes and other forms of humor are tokens of broader genres imbued with cultural value," and there exist, "humor ideologies that allow jokes to go beyond individually instantiated pragmatic acts and enable them to carry social and political valence," (Kramer 2011). This fits well with Thomas's notion that jokes are, "not always understood as ambiguous fictions," and might be considered, "pleasing because they reflect a truth or reality," by an audience seeking support for a particular social or political concept (Thomas 1997, 307). Laughter, and what is laughed at, within a larger social context cannot be reduced to only a reaction to anxiety. Rather it forcefully informs and reinforces our social perceptions. As Stanley Brandes puts it, "ethnic humor, sexual humor, and political humor all have prominent deprecatory themes. All types of jokes…invariably include aggressive content" (1980, 222-223). Learning to laugh at something changes the way we view it and forces new structures into our cultural frameworks.

This is not to say that laughing at something opens the gateway to acceptance or understanding. A good example of humor inadvertently affirming the

discriminatory practice of homophobia is comedic song-writer David Choi's anti-TSA song, "Please Don't Touch My Junk," in which the singer plays the part of an insecure and homophobic airline passenger worried about a pat-down by a male officer being a potential homosexual assault. The lyrics, "Can I at least choose my TSA officer? I'll take the girl that's in lane three. I'd let her pat me down thoroughly," show the masculine singer is comfortable with such contact from a woman, but not another man. The homophobic motto has even seen some use in a direct political context (Choi, 2010). Internet memes exist wherein the phrase, "Don't Touch My Junk," replaces "Don't Tread on Me," beneath the rattlesnake emblem of the familiar Gadsden Flag of the American Revolution.

Though Choi and his supporters make it clear there is only one way to view the act of a man touching another's genitals (i.e. an act of sexual desire or invasion), Michael Robidoux points out, "grabbing another male's genitals is a multivalent gesture, capable of withstanding a multiplicity of interpretations," (2001, 138). What we see here is that the Althusserian theory of eluding inquiry can also be applied to instances of traditional hegemonic masculinity outside the framework of advertising.

In an article discussing liberal arts education, Adrienne Lanier Seward, advocates for folklore as "an ideal pedagogical tool," able to access the dwindling imaginations of contemporary students by encouraging them to "reposition themselves—to look at things differently," (1996). I do not dispute this claim, as I have seen folklore and folkloristics work wonders in the classroom. At the same time though, if we cannot deny that folklore can teach and inspire a student audience, we cannot deny its impact upon a television audience, especially if we

consider that a lone viewer sitting before the screen—be it a television, computer, or mobile phone screen—is in a more intimate and more enthralling space than one student among thirty or more in a classroom setting with peers and other distractions available. At the very least, it is worth encouraging advocacy dealing with the pitfalls and inequalities of traditional masculinity, if only because the data herein show teaching is taking place in the opposite direction. The combination of nostalgia, parody, and anti-intellectualism that makes up the contemporary advertiser's perceptions of men and manliness forms a popular cultural barricade against social transformations that could protect and extend the lives of men in addition to improving the lives of individuals wholly disenfranchised by not belonging to the upper echelons of the traditional hegemonic power structure.

Arlene Stein describes such a barricade in recounting the efforts of conservative political groups to halt the normalization of LGBTQ culture by attempting to draw stark distinctions between the manliness employed by heterosexual and homosexual men (2005). Traditional masculinity acts then as cultural capital (Bourdieu 2006 [1977], 183-184) to which some are allowed access and some are not. Blurring the lines of who can successfully perform this masculinity throws an established inequality out of balance. Traditional manliness is not simply a performance but a marker of power and status, and alternative performances appear to taint or lessen that power.

Emma Renold's effort to detail the disconnect between masculinity and academic achievement in ten- and eleven-year-old boys shows us that hegemonic masculinity asserts influence over males at a very young age (2001). This is evidence of a power structure that follows men through life, establishing itself

strongly at a time when other aspects of identity are just emerging. This is how traditional manliness can follow men even as they discover alternative ways of being masculine.

Case Study: the Belief Structures Surrounding Digital Rectal Exams

From the outset, I have been interested in showing that analyzing the masculinities information gleaned from advertisements by television viewers can have more than a strictly academic influence. Men's health issues are a growing trend in popular culture and among Western charitable organizations and this could be the perfect place to begin assessing the value and application of my research in an everyday context. Furthermore, the men's health issues visible in popular culture are not restricted to television advertising. One could easily follow a concept such as those discussed below as they transition from television, to print, and to digital media.

An ideal and contemporary example of hegemonic masculinity impeding men's health is the issue of the digital rectal exam or DRE. The DRE is a medical exam used to test for a variety of problems including growths on the rectal wall, fissures and other injuries, and, most notably in men, the tests scrutinize the prostate as a means of early detection for prostate cancer. In 2008, seven medical professionals, four PhD's, two MD's, and a student, took it upon themselves to assess why men were reluctant to have digital rectal exams and colonoscopies as forms of cancer screening. After interviewing more than sixty men in North Carolina ranging in age from forty to sixty years old, the authors concluded that a series of beliefs held by these men, and imparted by traditional masculinity, was holding them back

from seeking out potentially life-saving screening from medical professionals (Winterich et al 2004).

The majority of these men understood the act of penetrating the rectum, particularly with a finger, to be distinctly homosexual behavior and something that would shame and feminize them among their peers. Ultimately, the shame associated with involving oneself in homosexual or feminizing activities is more meaningful to many men than the potential life-extending benefits early detection of prostate enlargement or cancer can provide. Curiously, it also appears that men who are less likely to benefit from traditional masculinity are more likely to adhere to the construction's homophobia than men who can benefit (i.e. the study noted non-white men were less likely to request or allow doctors to conduct the digital rectal exam).

Efforts have been made to counteract the masculine stigma associated with the DRE and similar procedures. The Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada attempted to disarm threatened individuals with humor in its "Get Your Butt Seen" campaign that featured the occupational folklore of photocopying one's naked posterior as a prank or way of wasting an employer's resources (Figure 6.2).
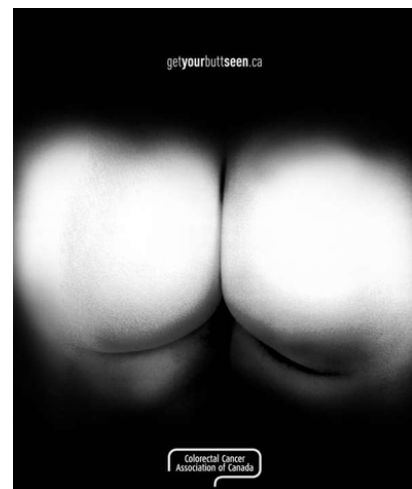
Figure 6.2. CCAC, "Get Your Butt Seen" Poster. (Ogilvy Agency 2010).

Another very traditionally masculine campaign aimed at raising awareness about these sensitive issues, is the Ride for Dad, a charity event centered on motorcycles and all the manliness they imply, including the tag line, "An Army of Chrome and

Leather Fighting Prostate Cancer." Some of the supplemental material on the Ride

for Dad website contains open threats against men understood to be "afraid" of the

screening process. In a short informational video, that could arguably be termed an

advertisement for the charity event, featuring sportscaster Don Cherry in a leather

jacket sitting astride a motorcycle, the hockey commentator crudely addresses the

viewer saying, "Come on, don't be a wimp…." (Figure 6.3) Retired Canadian General

Rick Hillier, standing behind Cherry offers the comment, "Often time (sic) we guys

are a bunch of chickens. Most men are afraid to get the rectal exam or the PSA."[2]

Cherry's appearance is particularly

poignant in that not only is he a

**Figure 6.3. Rick Hillier and Don Cherry, Ride for Dad.
(Ride for Dad 2010).**

controversial figure of Canadian

masculinity, but he is mirroring his

appearances in other television

advertisements (Cherry, 2011 [1991], 2010). He makes a short, introductory

statement laden with emotional appeal, allows his co-presenter to give a rational

argument or sales pitch, and then returns at the conclusion of the advertisement to

deliver another emotional appeal. When compared with other advertisements, we

are clearly seeing the tightly packaged short burst of traditional masculinity that is

Don Cherry the salesman in this short video, not Don Cherry the hockey

commentator or public/political figure (Gordon 2010, Hamilton 2010).

The Cherry/Hillier commercial is one in a long line of Ride for Dad television

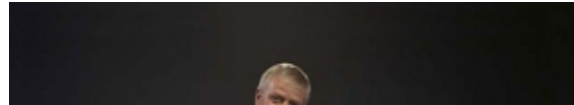and radio advertisements focusing on fear, homophobia, and unmanly behavior as

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[2] Referring to a blood test from the prostate-specific antigen which, along with the digital rectal exam, can screen for prostate cancer.

driving forces related to the unwillingness of men to be screened for prostate cancer. In each case, discussion of the DRE is couched in colorful terms, referred to as "Getting the Check," "Getting it Checked," or even, "A Journey to Uranus...not the planet." Listeners and viewers are frequently told to "man up," or "be a man." Not only does this focus on fear invoke and promote cultural practices of homophobia, but it also assumes that men who identify as gay, bisexual, or even favor anal or prostate massage in their heteronormative sex lives are somehow immune to prostate cancer. Fear of feminization is foregrounded, and thus the message becomes something not intended for men who are situated outside this fear—even though they are as much in need of the DRE as men who stigmatize anal penetration in their personal lives as an unmanly act.

In the last few years I have noted a number of friends and peers who have participated in various "Movember" charity and awareness events aimed at raising money and creating conversation surrounding men's health. Admirable goals, I think the reader will agree, but curious in the way they encourage dialogue. As the Movember website for Canada puts it, "Growing Moustaches is Our Business," meaning the awareness campaign is driven by participants allowing their facial hair to grow in the form of a moustache or some variant thereof for the month of November. Ideally, the moustache, being the antithesis of most contemporary facial hair styling patterns among young white males in North America, is supposed to encourage conversation. An unaware friend or peer is supposed to see a campaign participant sporting a "retro" look better suited to the male actors and models of the 1970s and 1980s and he is supposed to query the wearer as to the meaning of his efforts to grow his facial hair in such a dated fashion. From this initial inquiry, a

conversation is expected to blossom wherein issues of prostate and testicular cancer are discussed as are concerns about mental health among men and the traditional unwillingness on the part of heteronormative males to see their doctor on a regular basis.

Coincidentally, I had the fortune of meeting "Eric" at MUN's campus pub as I sat editing the above section. He stated that he has been growing his Movember moustache annually, "For five years…with some friends from home." They worked as a team to raise money for the cause. When I asked him to reflect on the sort of conversations his moustache had started regarding men's health issues he said it was primarily a tool to introduce people to the Movember charity, "direct[ing] them to the website." Actual discussion of issues such as prostate exams were rare and mostly occurred "through social media," with the Movember website taking the lead on providing information. When I followed up with my theorizations regarding homophobia and the threat of feminization and mentioned the article by Winterich et al, Eric responded by saying such concerns are brought up but, "as a joke in a closed social setting," and that when Movember advocates are involved in such a closed setting, "It's actually the reverse of what you think, it's more 'Don't be a woman, get an exam.'" Thus men who feel threatened by feminization, suffer feminization at the hands of their more aware and dedicated peers—and the act of, "being a woman" continues to support the *androcentric vision*. This single exchange I had with Eric is an ideal example of how traditional hegemonic masculinity can maintain control of a social space despite transformations that occur in the masculine narrative.

While this word-of-mouth style of passing information is in keeping with traditional masculinity, and perhaps successful in some cases, Movember campaigns suffer from the same difficulties as those mentioned above: through their vague language they fail to face down the hegemonic homophobia that has a stranglehold on men's social space and restrictions when it comes to medical needs. There is no direct correlation between growing a mustache and reassuring a friend, peer, or stranger that it is not "gay" to have regular medical checks of one's testicles and prostate.

What is more, Movember suffers from a curious over-emphasis on its signature piece of masculinity: the mustache. Not only is the

Figure 6.4. Campbell's Soup. "Feed Your Mo." (Bales 2013).

campaign somewhat culturally limited, as the mustache is only an attention-grabbing oddity among certain segments of the male population, but among those segments the mustache's value as a tool of masculine parody/nostalgia becomes an end unto itself. Movember is an opportunity for men, and young men in particular, to put on a nostalgic display of masculinity for reasons other than attracting attention to men's health issues (Figure 23). I look no further than my favorite local coffee shop in St. John's, which offers discounts for men growing Movember mustaches to prove as much.

Perhaps it is the psychoanalyst in me, but I am immediately drawn to the fact that neither the Ride for Dad nor Movember campaigns make mention of the very real cultural concerns of heteronormative men related to rectal penetration.

Despite efforts to masculinize the experience of cancer awareness through the hegemonically manly acts of office pranks and motorcycle riding, both fall short of dealing with the unmentionable subject of perceived homosexual acts performed by doctors and consented to by patients. Even where humor could overrule a major masculine taboo by saying, "Having a rectal exam does not make you feminine or gay, stop being such a fool," homophobia is allowed to stand unchallenged. This would not be the first case in which advocacy overlooks the barriers of traditional masculinity in its efforts to help men live longer, healthier lives. Bowleg et al. note disturbing trends among HIV risk and awareness among Black men that can be traced to traditional masculine constructions related to having multiple partners and the use of condoms and suggest "masculinity-focused interventions" are needed to deal with what they describe as "grave consequences for heterosexually transmitted HIV in Black communities," (Bowleg et al. 2011, 553-555).

Of course, an entirely reasonable alternative is that these awareness campaigns do not bring up the idea of rectal penetration because it is not "camera ready." In the transition from folklore to popular culture, some ideas are, in the venerable terms of anthropologist Mary Douglas, "matter, out of place," (2002 [1966], 44-50). The intimate discussion of a doctor penetrating a man's rectum with her/his finger to perform an exam is out of bounds for television, save for when it is used in a humorous context—which only serves to reinforce homophobic discourse. The only ways in which the homophobic discourse is challenged is through outlandish parodies such as the deconstruction provided by the "magical reality" (Crawford, 2009) of Seth McFarland's cartoon sitcom *Family Guy*—which includes an episode where a central masculine character conflates a digital rectal exam with

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rape—and satirist newscaster Stephen Colbert's segment entitled "November

Sweeps Prostacular" (Figure 24) wherein the aforementioned comedian participates

in a mock prostate exam[3] onstage with guest star John Lithgow removing a pair of

kittens from his rectum as the punch line (Colbert 2013).

These media-driven examples targeting men's health illustrate that there is

room to grow beyond this research. Indeed, it would seem my participants and

collaborators will soon be representative of a declining motif in mass-mediated

advertising and entertainment. As Kim

pointed out, from a professional

Figure 6.5. Stephen Colbert. "November Sweeps Prostacular."
(The Colbert Report 2013).

perspective no less, her industry has

reached a critical and uncertain point in

its existence. Television, as we see it

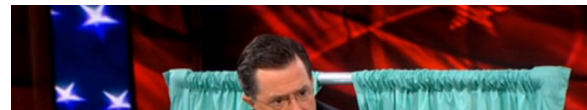now with commercials aired periodically throughout programming, will probably

cease to exist due to the influx of digital technologies (e.g. digital video recorders,

Torrent downloads, and online streaming). This study represents a fleeting moment

in media history, one that may already be gone as I type this.

Studies encompassing more diverse groups of media but following a single

concept or thread represent what might be the next option for scholars seeking to

highlight the way gender is relayed via mass-mediated popular culture.

Alternatively, one might sample a group of viewers/users and consider the images

they see in a day, week, or month. A third option might be to follow these

viewers/users to determine whether masculine imagery and information helps

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[3] Despite the over-the-top approach of Colbert's stunt, a certain amount of hegemonic belief about the DRE's properties of feminization is maintained, as Lithgow is chosen from amongst other potential examiners via a "latex glove ceremony" that mirrors the rose ceremonies of ABC's *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* primetime reality television series.

and/or hinders them in making choices related to products purchased, prostate cancer screening, or other gender-centered phenomena.

The overall point I wish to convey as I close this cycle of research is that though media technology and strategies for mass-mediating popular culture may change, traditional hegemonic masculinity remains static, often despite the efforts or wishes of the viewer. This, in itself, is worth further study and consideration. It would seem that even as the means of delivering the information and the needs of the audience change, the information itself remains stagnant; changing in fits and starts perhaps, but overall unreflective of the complexity of contemporary masculinities.

Brief, Reflexive Coda

I remember every winter when I was young I would see an advertisement for Stetson Cologne. I think it meant a lot to me because "cowboys" was one of the first words I remember associating with men and manliness. It was important not only because of what I saw on television and the toys I played with, but also because I grew up on a rural ranch and my family's business was selling animal health products to local livestock-owners. My father, uncle, and grandfather all used the cowboy aesthetic to market themselves as well as their products. Leather cowboy boots and Stetson hats were the norm in my household, in spite of the fact no one ever rode a horse to work.

As to the commercials themselves, they were different every year, but the characters involved were the same: a man, a woman, and one or more horses. The man would always be dressed in immaculate cowboy attire. The denim, leather,

sheepskin, and other materials were utterly free of dirt and wear. These perfect

clothes would naturally fit the man's perfect good looks. He would be clean-shaven

and lean, but muscular. His hair would be flawless, his chin and nose perfect also,

and his face would be perfectly symmetrical. His feminine companion had similar,

spotless attire. Denim and leather were, again, the norm, as were long hair and

symmetrical features. Mostly I noticed the way she looked at or held onto her

masculine companion with a mixture of warmth, security, intimacy, or some other

feelings that eluded explanation during the early years of adolescence.

Such things made me burn with insecurity, the soft-sell fear effect chipping

away at my confidence and sense of self long before I had any interest in the product

or its intended uses. It is difficult to sort the depth and impact of one experience

over another, but I can safely say I recall that sense of insecurity alongside other

embarrassing incidents of childhood and adolescence. Looking at it from the post-

Freudian constructions referenced in Chapter 5, it is clear to me now that seeing this

television commercial year after year within the context of my childhood affected

the way I saw the world, and even now those burning moments find ways of

manifesting themselves in my personal life, despite my best efforts to suppress

them.

I say this not to evoke sympathy, but to end on the note of the continued need

for problematizing traditional hegemonic masculinities. Not only do the inherent

power dynamics they establish work to harm non-masculine gendered individuals

and groups, but the men who work for the hegemonic power structure are being

harmed as well. I recall a discussion I had with a friend, an academic working

toward his Ph.D., who I told about an uncomfortable, invasive, somewhat

humiliating, but ultimately necessary medical procedure I had recently experienced.

Upon hearing of my experience he casually remarked, "I never go to the doctor. I'm

probably going to die at forty." Between the anecdotes collected by Michael Kimmel

in *Guyland* and the Colorado advertising campaign for Obamacare featuring

kegstands and other risky behavior, it is clear that hegemonic masculinity asks men

to both place themselves in harm's way and avoid relying on others for support.

Such behaviors burn the proverbial candle at both ends and act as catalysts for a

cycle of cultural transmission wherein there is no opportunity to question the

patterns of the past and their impact on the future, for such inquiries are unmanly.

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Appendix 2: Focus Group Participant Survey Questions

Below is an example of the surveys supplied to each focus group participant. Participants received a sheet with the same four general questions for each "Item" they viewed, only the title and number of the "Item" changed. Participants were encouraged to offer as much information as they wanted and focus on questions they thought they could best answer based on guest lecture information provided and their own experience with gender and advertising in everyday life. Focus group participants would typically review four to five advertisements during a class period wherein I guest lectured.

FOLK1000, March 27th, 2012
Stephen E. Wall
Dissertation Research, Focus Group

Participant Demographic Questions
Gender:
Age Range (Circle One):
        18 to 25   26-35   36-50   50-60   61+
Occupation:

Item 1: "Scotiabank"
Who is the assumed audience for this commercial advertisement? Consider gender, age, sexuality, and ethnicity in your answer.

What parts of this commercial (setting, characters, special effects) express ideas about manliness?

Is this commercial presenting the dominant/traditional conception of Western masculinity, or another kind of masculinity? If so, how would you describe it?

If you were an alien life form, seeing human beings for the first time, what would this commercial tell you about men and manliness?

Appendix 3: Collaborator Interview Questions

Below is a list of questions I used to prompt and probe by Collaborators for insights during our conversations. As my collaborator interviews contained frequent back-and-forth discussion, I would frequently deviate from the order in which the questions were listed or skip questions if the material had already been covered. These questions are subdivided into two groups: a background interview portion and a series of probing questions that were repeated with the viewing of each advertisement.

Background Interview

How do you use television in your daily life?

Did you learn what was unmanly while you were growing up?
(Alternative Phrasing: How would a man behave if her were "unmanly"? Where did you learn that these sorts of behaviors were "unmanly").

Did you learn how to be a man while growing up?
(Alternative Phrasing: When you were growing up was it ever made clear that boys/men were allowed to behave in certain ways whereas girls/women were not? Where/when did you learn this?)

Are there rules when it comes to being a man? What are they?
(Alternative Phrasing: Are there certain rules or behaviors that make men "manly"? Do you think men know about these rules or behaviors, or are they subconscious?)

How much television did you watch growing up?

What time of day, and on what days did you watch the most television when you were growing up? How is that different from your TV watching habits today?

Did your Mom and/or Dad approve or disapprove of television?

Do you remember the last television commercial you enjoyed watching?

Do you remember the last television commercial to which you had an adverse reaction?

What do you remember about television commercials from your childhood? Do any characters, jingles, or other ideas stand out in your mind?

When, would you say, did you first notice some commercials were targeting men and some were targeting women?

Advertisement Discussion Questions

Who is the assumed audience for this commercial advertisement? Consider gender, age, sexuality, and ethnicity in your answer.

What parts of this commercial (setting, characters, special effects) express ideas about manliness?

Is this commercial presenting the dominant/traditional conception of Western masculinity, or another kind of masculinity? If so, how would you describe it?

If you were an alien life form, seeing human beings for the first time, what would this commercial tell you about men and manliness?

Say you were watching this ad alone. Would that change the way you felt about its contents?

Say you were watching this commercial in the presence of a group of men. Do you think you'd be encouraged to feel differently?

How do these advertisements agree with what you've learned about men in your experience?

How do they disagree with what you've learned? Where do they lack understanding/compliance?