

# Domesticating Public Space through Ritual: Tailgating as Vestaval

TONYA WILLIAMS BRADFORD  
JOHN F. SHERRY JR.

Using a semiotic square to study placeway rituals, we theorize one particular sanctuary, a secular ritual we term *vestaval*—and specifically, its manifestation in the form of tailgating—as a site of popular communion. Vestaval demonstrates the power of consumption to stimulate social and civic engagement. We employ an ethnographic team methodology to describe and analyze the phenomenon. We theorize the eversion mechanism that animates vestaval and sets it apart from other social forms including spectacle, festival, and carnival well known to consumer research. We explore how vestaval turns the domestic world inside out and offers a template both for the temporary suspension and potential remaking of the social relations of market and polity. We detail a set of practices within four themes—location, construction, customization, and inhabitation—that enables the conversion of private space to public place and the creation of community from a confederacy of consumption encampments. These dynamics are presented as a Mobius strip to emphasize not only the simultaneity of stages, but also the constant sharing of energy. By examining how midwestern American tailgaters in a collegiate setting personalize public place and publicize personal place, we demonstrate how individuals negotiate two of the fundamental consumption ideologies of public space.

*Keywords:* ritual, vestaval, tailgate, communal space, place

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McQuire (2008, 134–35) has voiced a common lament that the late twentieth century experienced the loss of “vibrant public spaces capable of sustaining rich interactions” along with the “diminished capacity for public

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Tonya Williams Bradford is assistant professor, Department of Marketing, Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556, email (twbradford@nd.edu). John F. Sherry Jr. is the Raymond W. & Kenneth G. Herrick professor of marketing, Mendoza College of Business, Notre Dame, IN 46556, email (jsherry@nd.edu). The authors acknowledge the constructive guidance from the entire review team. In addition, the authors extend appreciation to their research assistants—Daniel Azic, Julia Ball, Caitlin Connolly, Karly Denkhaus, Grayson Duren, Jessica Eder, Joshua Flynt, Caroline Gould, Kinsey Hoffman, Ronald Kadykowski, Matthew Kane, Siobhan Martinez, Michelle Mezzanotte, Lanna Nguyen, Sean Osier, Zacherie Reuvers, Catherine Ryan, Joshua Schuster, Justin Siler, Brett Straka, Neil Toland, and Michael Weiss—for support in data collection and preliminary analysis. Finally, the authors extend gratitude to each tailgater participating in this research!

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expression” of intimacy, which has driven “authentic” interaction into the “sanctuary” of the family and reduced the “prospects for flânerie.” This situation has prompted him to ask whether there is “still space for unplanned social interactions outside the dictates of the commodity spectacle” to which “technologies of policing” have channeled desire (McQuire 2008, 144). In a more focused critique, Venturi (1966) opined that the piazza is uncomfortably “un-American,” for a people more inclined to office work and home televiewing. Assuming for the moment that they are amenable to such convocation, where might Americans seek such spaces of public intimacy?

We theorize one particular sanctuary, a secular ritual we term *vestaval*—and specifically, its manifestation in the form of tailgating—as a site of popular communion. Such ritual is an American cultural form that resists the uncivil and totalizing forces of spectacle. Social or civic disconnection is often regarded as a by-product of consumer culture that displaces people from the public realm to the marketplace (Miles 2010, 18, 25; Visconti et al. 2010). However, vestavals, such as tailgating, demonstrate the power of consumption to stimulate social and civic engagement. In this

article we theorize this placeway ritual, situating its celebration in the growing literature on the consumption of space (Goodman, Goodman, and Redclift 2010).

## SEMIOTIC FRAMING OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

### Touring the Square

The semiotic square (Floch 2001; Greimas 1990; Hetzel 1998; Mick 1991; Mick and Oswald 2006; Sherry 2001) has been used to discover gaps in a phenomenal field and interpret that complex more comprehensively. It has also been used to imagine how phenomena might change over time, whether organically or through intentional management. We employ a semiotic square to develop and define the new category we call *vestaval*, and to contrast it with the other extraordinary place-based forms that are its nearest counterparts. In the present case, consumer research has explored a number of related place-based rituals and the institutions to which they give rise, affording a starting point for theorizing.

The gap in our semiotic square, and hence our research knowledge, occurs when we look for the contradiction to spectacle, the complement to festival, and the contrary to carnival, three social forms well recognized in the consumer research literature. Is there another phenomenon that is sufficiently distinct from those placeways in form, sociality, and ritual mechanism that ethnography might reveal? We posit the *vestaval* as just such a phenomenon. In our investigation, we employ *tailgating*, a type of consumption encampment that we describe in more detail in a following section of this article, as a context for our theorizing. We capture the formal relationships between the ritual categories in [figure 1](#) and explore them briefly here.

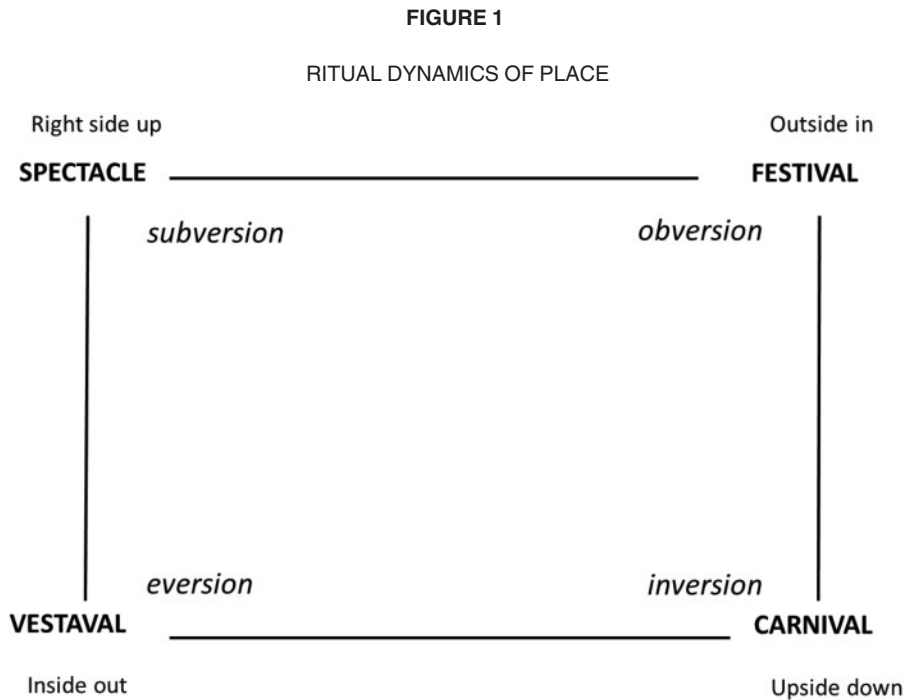
*Spectacle*. Perhaps the most thoroughly studied phenomenon in the consumer culture theory (CCT) tradition—whether to demonstrate its totalizing impact on contemporary behavior or the creativity of consumers who actively resist it—spectacle has loomed large in the theorizing of place. Grounded in [Debord's \(1967/1995\)](#) situationist aesthetic of “total participation” and critique of a culture that actively prevents dialogue, the concept of spectacle is polyvalent. Spectacle refers to the “subjugation of the world to the economy, the fetishism of goods, reification, alienation, ideology, and specifically, how images, representation, entertainment prevent authentic life from coming into being” ([Kauffman 2006](#), 160). For our purposes, the logic and ethos of the marketplace can be said to so pervade everyday life that only a heroic effort can produce the insight and action required to transcend the spectacle. The built environment emplaces this condition, reinforcing its power. Politicians and managers engineer spectacular space to blunt, if not prevent altogether, civil and consumer resistance.

Themed flagship brand stores such as NikeTown ([Peñaloza 1998](#); [Sherry 1998](#)), ESPN Zone ([Kozinets et al. 2004](#)), American Girl Place ([Diamond et al. 2009](#)), LVMH ([Joy et al. 2014](#)), and Starbucks ([Elliott 2001](#); [Thompson and Arsel 2004](#)) are sites where spectacle is emplaced. The Mall of America ([Hetzel 1998](#)) is another such spectacular marketplace. Other themed environments such as Las Vegas ([Baudrillard 1995](#); [Belk 2000](#); [Firat et al. 2001](#)), EPCOT Center ([Houston and Meamber 2011](#)), and the Titanic museum ([Brown, McDonagh, and Shultz 2013](#)) have also been treated as exemplars of the spectacle. We argue in a following section of this article that football, the companion event to tailgating, is a preeminent vehicle of space-based spectacle in America.

Spectacle can be characterized as a ritual of subversion that saps authentic participatory agency in the service of political pacification and structures social relations hegemonically, right-side up. Spectacle imposes a view of the world as it is, from the vantage point of the dominant design, whether civic or commercial. It is a totalizing perspective that demands stakeholders be either docile, on the one hand, or minimally agentic within rigidly prescribed boundaries, on the other. It projects a vision that demands buy-in and deflects critical reflection. The places and events it vivifies are often monumental larger than life affairs ([MacAloon 1982](#); [Rockwell 2006](#)) that inspire awe in those who gaze upon them. Spectatorship is its diagnostic mode of expression.

*Festival*. Almost as popular in the annals of consumer research as spectacle, films as well as journal articles have been devoted to the analysis of festivals. [Falassi \(1987, 2\)](#) defines festival traditionally and synthetically as “a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a worldview.” Thus the festival celebrates the values a community holds essential to its identity and survival. [Getz \(2005, 21\)](#) updates and streamlines this view, defining festivals simply as “themed, public celebrations” that may be frequently tied to place attachment ([Getz 2010](#)). Festivals can be motivated by sacred or secular impulse; sometimes these motivations may coexist in the same festival.

[Abrahams \(1982, 163\)](#) finds “serious play” at the heart of festival and calendrical events, often tied to natural cycles, at the center of celebration. For him, the “vocabulary” of festival is “the language of extreme experiences through contrasts . . . between everyday life and these high times, and, within the events themselves, between the different parts of the occasion” ([Abrahams 1982, 167](#)). Through festival, people allocate “play and pleasure time” in such a way as to disengage joy from “deeper human anxieties,” through moments of “high display” and even “crass



commercialism" (Abrahams 1982, 171). The "holiday" marks the translation of "human work" into "the work of the gods," as the celebration of plenty plays out as a sharing of "goods" and "energies" within the community (Abrahams 1982, 176).

Signature events such as Burning Man (Kozinets 2002; Sherry and Kozinets 2007), the Mountain Man Rendezvous (Belk and Costa 1998), the Renaissance Faire (Durgee, Holbrook, and Sherry 1991; Rubin 2012), and stock shows and rodeos (Peñaloza 2001) are sites where festivals are emplaced. Retail venues such as festival marketplaces (Maclaran and Brown 2005) and brand fests (McAlexander and Schouten 1998; McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002) provide similar grounding. calendrical celebrations such as Christmas (Belk 1989), Thanksgiving (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991), Japanese Valentine's Day (Minowa, Khomenko, and Belk 2011), Japanese Christmas (Kimura and Belk 2005), and Loy Krathong (Sherry and Schouten 2002) have also served as vehicles for our scholarly understanding of festivals.

Festival can be characterized as a ritual act of obversion that reveals a ludic dimension to quotidian life, turning the outside in. Festival is a respite from the mundane world of hard labor, boredom, and thrift. It foregrounds and amplifies those moments of play in the workaday world that help give life a deeper meaning. Festival turns our attention away from production to consumption, and from individual struggle to communal celebration. Its diagnostic mode of expression is participatory. The joyful energizing that

festival affords is carried back into everyday life as an aid to sustenance and hope. It is sanctioned by the dominant design as a safety valve, ultimately reinforcing the status quo.

*Carnival.* A variation or subset of festival proper, carnival has been treated fairly obliquely and historically by consumer researchers who have been largely interested in the devolved manifestation of the carnivalesque in contemporary culture. The work of Bakhtin (1984a, 1984b) on medieval festivity informs most current inquiry into carnival. From his perspective, carnival presented a "comic folk aspect" of church and state institutions that ensured that hegemonic power was periodically challenged by the people, principally through satire and mockery (Bakhtin 1984a, 1984b). Power structures were temporarily turned upside down through the active engagement of all carnival participants. Carnival celebrated "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed" (Bakhtin 1984a, 10). Ethnographic research affirms that status reversal, social critique, lampoon, and satire figure prominently in carnival (Turner and Turner 1982).

Carnival proper has been relatively neglected by consumer researchers in comparison to spectacle and festival. This neglect may reflect the rarity of the phenomenon as a

stand-alone institution in contemporary society, where the postmodern legacy of enfranchised doubt and entrenched spectacle has rendered institutional challenge superfluous or impotent. Its persistence as a strain in other social forms, however, under the label of carnivalesque, has been noted in the consumer research literature. For example, its presence in such celebrations as Halloween (Belk 1994), Christmas (Belk 1989), and Mardi Gras (Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012) has been explored. It animates some activity at Burning Man as well (Kozinets 2002; Sherry and Kozinets 2007). Carnivalesque has also played a role in the identity politics of subcultures that have sought to challenge the legitimacy of dominant or mainstream cultural contexts, as, for example, in the performance of gay pride (Kates 2000, 2002, 2003; Kates and Belk 2001) and the elaboration of the “Goth scene” (Goulding and Saran 2004, 2009). Finally, understanding of the experience and practice of embodiment, especially with respect to the so-called grotesque body (Goulding, Saran, and Follet 2003), has been enlarged through the concept of carnivalesque.

Carnival can be characterized as a ritual act of inversion that turns social conventions upside down. It is a legitimate threat to the dominant design, encouraging (sometimes radically) alternative ways of construing the world. The heterotopias and temporary alternative zones of recent interest to consumer culture theorists suggest that this threat is generally contained within a larger institutional framework but that the status quo may occasionally be profoundly disrupted. Carnival encourages critical reflection, and its diagnostic mode of expression is participatory.

*Vestaval.* We now add *vestaval*” (Vesta + *leväre*), after the Roman goddess of the hearth, to our typology of placeways. A *vestaval* celebrates household values, dramatizing them in hermetic space, and publicly proclaiming the importance of a shared sense of domesticity to the life of a culture. While it occurs in ordinary space (DeBenedetti, Oppewal, and Arsel 2014) and is constituted by mundane behaviors, the ritual leads to the creation of the kind of extraordinary place with which the consumer research literature has been most concerned. In terms of the semiotic square, the *vestaval* is in a relation of contradiction to spectacle, of complementarity to festival, and of contrariety to carnival.

Casey (1993, 133) identifies two “aboriginal” senses of dwelling—hestial and hermetic, after the gods Hestia and Hermes—that frame people’s experience of place. The former, associated with women, is domestic and containing; the latter, associated with men, is public and mobile. One faces inward, toward the household, the other outward, toward the marketplace. These conditions have been explored in the servicescape literature (e.g., Diamond et al. 2009; Sherry et al. 2001). The hestial (or vestal, as Vesta is

the Roman counterpart of Hestia) sense is most immediately germane to our study. Sherry (2001, 57) has observed,

Hestia is the goddess of the hearth and the symbol of home. . . . The hearth is the very heart of culture. It is the essence of domesticity. The hearth symbolizes female productivity and generativity, vigilance and diligence, stability and presence. The hearth is a beacon and an anchor. The hearth animates and vivifies. It is a uterine crucible. . . . In ancient times, an infant ritually joined the family by being presented before the hearth. Meals emerged from the hearth, and prayers were offered before the hearth to begin and end each meal. Each Greek city had a public hearth, carefully tended so it would burn forever, that was sacred to Hestia. Coals from the hearth of a mother city were carried by colonists to ignite the public hearth of a newly founded city (Hamilton 1969). The soul of polity, its generative impulse, is the hearth. . . . For such a fundamental deity, Hestia has surprisingly little mythology or iconography associated with her. It is almost as if she were the abiding essence or genius locus of the condition of domesticity, to be embodied in the practice of household making. She is a virgin, presumably to embody the female sovereignty of the practice of fructifying, of interior world building, of cultivating in the sense of bringing culture into being. . . . [T]his virginity serves as a calling out to the hermetic impulse to carry interiority into the outer world.

Over time, as the domain of the hestial has waned and the hermetic has waxed, understanding the misarticulation, integrative reconfiguration, and holistic decoupling of these realms has challenged scholars (Thompson 1988, 1992, 1999), and none more so than consumer researchers.

For example, in his analysis of the material cultural basis of domesticity that he labels “homeyness,” McCracken (1989, 179) has observed that

[T]he ideology of homeyness enters into the processes by which we fashion the distinction between “private” and “public” domains, and “personal” and “anonymous” ones. . . . and the instrumental, the natural and the artificial, and the authentic and the contrived. . . . Homeyness helps fashion the architecture of the home, the family, and the culture all at once. . . . [Homeyness] lets [individuals] reckon with the intrusion of alien meanings from the market place, the distracting competitive impulses of a mobile society, and the unwelcome aesthetics of changing fashions. Homeyness helps the individual to mediate his or her relationship with the larger world, refusing some of its influences, and transforming still others. . . . It is in creating the homey home that the individual fashions his or her relationship with the outside world.

This is another way of imagining the potentially transformative effect of domestic place upon public space. What happens when the former type of dwelling reaches out to challenge the ascendancy of the latter? The hestial sphere

becomes a template for the remaking of the hermetic sphere, even if only periodically.

Consumption encampments provide an effective context for studying the interaction of these dwelling styles, and they offer the insight needed both to complete the tour of our figure 1's semiotic bases and close the gap in our knowledge of placeway rituals. In particular, they yield an example—tailgating—of a vestaval whose form is domestic in character, whose sociality consists of turning the home inside out to embrace and transform the public, and whose ritual mechanism is eversion. The vestaval's diagnostic expression is participatory and consists in putting the interior workings of the household on public display, so that family, friends, and strangers may interact in intimate quarters to redefine the polity. Vestaval encourages critical thinking and provides a template for the revision of the status quo.

### Interpretive Summary

Generally speaking, spectacle is provided to consumers as a template for experiencing, offering constraints that encourage passive consumption but that also allow consumers some imaginative, co-creative wiggle room for personalized response. Progressive spectacular environments provide for greater amounts of individual autonomy and customized response, so that consumers may be challenged to add more active value to the venue. In either case, consumer improvisation is appropriated by the venue and incorporated into the offering.

Festival and carnival are largely participatory and shaped primarily by consumers within loose institutional and spatial frameworks and constraints. There is tension between scripted roles and improvisation, with more structured guidance provided in festival and more autonomy in carnival. Vestaval, although largely participatory, annexes itself to these other forms (principally spectacle) in symbiotic fashion, and it offers the most balance between structure and improvisation. While there is a fixed site and a cultural script for the phenomenon, the latitude provided consumers for constructing the event is quite broad.

All of these forms may overlap in some of their particulars, sharing their energy with one another. Spectacle may threaten (or offer) to pull the other forms into its orbit, re-making them as commodities more conducive to spectatorship. Spectacle may also be vulnerable (or receptive) to these forms, incorporating the forces of disorder that they embody into a more seductive version of itself.

We have situated our research focus in the place rituals that consumer researchers have explored and framed our problem in terms of ritual dwelling dynamics. In the following sections of the article, we contextualize our study, describe our methodology, present and discuss our findings, and conclude with a consideration of the process by which the hestial is restored to the realm of the hermetic.

## TAILGATES AND TAILGATING

In order to ground our analysis of the placeways contributing to the ritual mechanism of eversion, we provide a brief account of the context in which that mechanism is embedded and the spectacular social form with which it is associated. We define and describe tailgating, survey the small extant literature surrounding the social form, and characterize the collegiate football scene that motivates the event.

### Setting the Scene

Technically, a tailgate is a board at the back of a wagon that can be lowered to facilitate loading, then raised again to facilitate containment during transport. In the lowered position, the board could also serve as a makeshift seat or table, as needed. As vehicles evolved, the tailgate morphed into the back door of a truck bed and eventually (in the form of a trunk hatch) came to refer to the rear region of the automobile. In current usage, drivers following another car too closely are said to be “tailgating” that vehicle. In our present case, tailgating is now commonly understood in American society to be a social gathering comprising individuals grilling, eating, drinking, and socializing in advance of an event. Since feast issues forth from the back of the vehicle, the part is used for the whole to characterize the gathering.

While arguably as old as the Greek *symposium* or Roman *convivium*, one of the earliest documented American tailgates occurred during the Civil War Battle of Bull Run in 1861, for which hundreds of people—press, government officers, and average citizens—packed picnics and bottles of wine to watch and await the outcome (Hall 1991). Similar behavior was reported for US atomic bomb tests in the 1950s (Rockwell 2006), as well as for the current Gaza conflict (Mieszkowski 2014). The connection between food, celebration, and sporting contests emerged in the United States during the first football game between Princeton and Rutgers (Drozda 1996). That heritage of tailgates is evident in its present-day characteristics—domesticity, portability, celebration through food and beverages, and fandom—even though implementation continues to evolve through consumer and market ingenuity.

It is estimated that at least 70 million people now tailgate in advance of a collegiate or professional football game (Freedom Grill, Inc. 2008). Although estimates show that men may represent as much as 79% of all tailgaters (www.tailgating.com), at our field site, men and women (as well as children) actively participate as tailgaters. The gendered nature of some tailgate behaviors is germane to our analysis of the interplay between hermetic and hestial space. In particular, we examine role stereotyping and role reversal tied to placemaking in a later section of this article.

Tailgaters establish a minimalist home on the grounds of the host university. This is a domestic place, configured like its counterparts in the everyday world. Within this place, we can discern kitchens, dining rooms, family rooms, and living rooms. Bars and patios are also in evidence. Yards are a figurative presence, detectable in the play spaces between tailgates. It is as if the walls of the domicile have been removed, leaving many of the household's everyday practices exposed to the surrounding world. This public performance of domesticity is a hallmark of the tailgate.

Some of these minimalist homes cohere in an encompassing fashion, comprising a place characterized by multi-site tailgates of extended families, groups of friends or fans, and associates who understand their encampment cluster to constitute a neighborhood or village of sorts. At a still higher level of social organization, these larger units recognize that they constitute the fan-brand hybrid community that unites them all in spirit. These units band together in the creation of a commons (Visconti et al. 2010), promoting a mosaic of tastes that can be captured in the regional essence of terroir (Jacobsen 2010; Trubek 2008) and a feeling of belonging that is rooted in a primal sense of sharing a natal place (Sandvoss 2005).

### Football as a Site of Tailgating

Although it may occur with other events (e.g., concerts), the pairing of the tailgate with collegiate football is our focus. Football has long been regarded by social scientists (Arens 1976; Gannon 1994) and cultural critics (Carlin 1975/1990) as a key symbol in American culture, a cynosure unique to the United States, despite the slow spread of the sport beyond its borders. Football reflects the American affinity for violence, "expressed within the framework of teamwork, specialization, mechanization and variation," and constitutes a "male preserve" celebrating the homoerotic "values of masculinity" (Arens 1976, 8). The game is played on sacred space, is hedged about by ritual, and is suffused with religious significance (Arens 1976; Gannon 1994). Football has been described as a spectacle, a celebration of "perfect movement," enshrining the values of "individualism and competitive specialization," and "profit, fame and glory" (Gannon 1994, 304–5). It is inspired by a military ethos. Football embodies the principles of corporate specialization and coordination, technological innovation and ubiquity, quantitative precision in performance measurement, and strict time limits for all activities (Carlin 1975/1990; Gannon 1994). Sherry (2003, 314) has described the Super Bowl, in which the sport is most famously showcased, as the apotheosis of the American retroescape.

Scholars have treated football as a metaphor for violence, corporate organization, mass society, civil religion, sexism, homophobia, and adolescent masculine identity,

among others, and have understood it as a ritualization of the "teamwork, cooperation and individual heroism" required to move and resist moving the "frontier" (Bronner 2011, 354–56, 372). College football in particular was groomed as a "cultural ritual" to "publicize universities" and to disseminate "prevailing ideas about the body and social order," such that academic institutions could appear "culturally relevant to nonacademic constituencies" (Ingrassia 2012, 3–4, 13). In smaller metropolitan areas lacking professional franchises, the university football team becomes a focus of local pride and devotion (Bronner 2011, 394). Ingrassia (2012, 4, 9) describes college football as an "uneasy coexistence of pedagogy and market forces," and the football stadium as a "liminal space between rationality and irrationality." The spectacle of college football appears to demand and resist control by the university, in a way that invites contrast with tailgating.

If football is understood as a spectacle embodying mainstream US culture, then tailgating can be construed as both a complement, creating a more holistic view of the culture, and as a competitor, offering mild countercultural resistance to the mainstream. On the surface, tailgating represents an embrace of disinhibition and excess, and it becomes an escape from the ordinary. On a deeper level, tailgating represents reunion and homecoming, and thus a return to the extraordinary. Tailgating reinforces some of the central principles of the football-as-key-symbol trope (e.g., organization, competition, territoriality) at the same time as it offers alternatives to other pillars of the conceit (e.g., community, indulgence, populism), affording participants in the complex an opportunity to reflect on the many contradictions compartmentalized in their culture.

The geography of tailgating reflects this intimate association with football. The contest is emplaced within the confab. Stadium is surrounded by symposium. The hestial engulfs the hermetic. The game summons forth festivity, and revelry energizes rivalry. The tailgate grounds the match that consumers seek to influence, intensifying the exhilaration of prospective victory and mitigating the disappointment of prospective defeat.

### The Tailgate Phenomenon in the Literature

Tailgates, with several notable exceptions, have gone largely unexamined, beyond their implication in alcohol-related traffic incidents (see Wood, McInnes, and Norton 2011 for a consumer research example). Drenten et al. (2009) provide a short-term ethnographic account of the motivations (and underlying dualities) that encourage consumers to engage in tailgating at a large southeastern university: involvement, social interaction, intertemporal sentiment, and identity. Describing tailgating primarily as a "ritual," the authors use reversal theory to extend psychological theorizing on motives, and they employ a strategic orientation in their goal of helping marketers discover

ways to deepen and grow consumer loyalty to the behavior. The authors are less interested in presenting a comprehensive account of tailgating per se than in unpacking motives for participation that will permit effective intervention. They offer a template for fostering “ritual commitment” and encouragement for brands to use a “consumer-created venue” to reach target markets (Drenten et al. 2009, 104–5). Part recipe for consumer empowerment, part blueprint for corporate takeover, we imagine the authors’ recommendations might prove contentious as universities move toward tighter control of the game day experience, as our discussion of themes to follow suggests.

Tailgating has been interpreted in compelling fashion as a metasocial commentary. Newman (2012, 245–46) unpacks the institution of “Ole Miss” football as an unparalleled spectacle of the “new sporting South” and describes the practice of tailgating at the University of Mississippi—held in a venue called the Grove—as a performance of “Grove Society,” a “contextually unique mythscape which weaves together spectacularized white bodies, revisionist/absolutionist histories, and (ahistorical) false idioms of neoliberal meritocracy.” Tailgating is an enactment of racial politics, a site where the “fetishization of white exclusionism is materialized.” Newman (2012, 248) views the spectacle in the Grove as an “exercise in postplantation power. . . a rite of inheritance to the privilege embedded in. . . [a] racialized and class-based subject position. . . [and] the canvas on which a posthistoric future with modern racist resonance can be written.” His interpretation is underwritten by a few secondary sources citing lavish consumption and an absence of black participants, yet lacks details of the phenomenon that underlies the commentary. In our account, we provide a host of ethnographic particulars in support of our analysis.

In their analysis of Gator football fandom as a vehicle of individual and collective identity construction, Gibson, Willming, and Holdnak (2002, 402) provide a glimpse of tailgating activity at the University of Florida, where, on football weekends, “[e]very spare space” on campus is filled with “fans grilling, eating, drinking and socializing,” some “in the same places for years.” This study of fandom is based on surveys and interviews, and data indicated a number of topics of relevance to tailgating that we feel bear deeper ethnographic investigation, such as intergenerational transmission, upgrading, preparation, friendships, rituals, fan identification, and family time (Gibson et al. 2002, 409–19). Stamps and Arnould (1998, 580) also enfold a mention of tailgating as a festival-like event into their ethnographic analysis of the Florida Classic as a dramatic show performance of African American middle-class community dynamics. The enacting of tailgate practices is considered in our analysis.

Beyond the academic literature, St. John (2005) treated tailgating obliquely in his journalism. In a quest to understand the nature of fandom, St. John spent a football season

traveling in an RV chronicling the fortunes of the University of Alabama’s Crimson Tide in the company of fellow nomads. Observing and interviewing in caravans, stadiums, tailgates, and other venues, he tells something of a confessional tale (van Maanen 1988), his creative nonfiction intersecting with the academic genres of ethnography and autoethnography. Random bits of tailgate behavior (e.g., heroic drinking and rowdiness) are provided as incidental vignettes in his interpretation of fandom, but he does make the link (through Guttmann 1986) with the Olympic antiquity of tailgating, an issue we address at length in later paragraphs. Other conversational accounts (Koreivo 2011) and practical guides (Drozda 1996) abound, but they do not provide much descriptive or analytic insight into tailgating.

## METHODOLOGY

The focal site of our research was Blackthorn University (a pseudonym), a small midwestern private Christian university with a strong sports heritage and a history both of successful athletic programs and dedicated fan communities. Although universities tend to have limits to access for those who are not members of their community as students, faculty, or staff, the property is often available to the broader community, particularly for athletic contests, thereby allowing it to be considered a public place. Our study took place over four years, in the autumn of 2010–13, primarily during the 25 home games of those football seasons, the prime time for tailgating on this campus. Supplementary fieldwork undertaken at numerous away games, as well as at several nonrival universities, provided some comparative perspective on our local context. Given our four-season, single-sport focus on a particular institution and its rivals, we recognize the limitations of our study but believe that the insights derived from a comprehensive investigation of a primary site have promise as a collective starting point for future work to be undertaken in other venues, whether collegiate, professional, or beyond the orbit either of American football or sport altogether. We conducted our team ethnography in the manner suggested by Sherry (2006), from group composition through selection of follow-up projects.

### Data Collection

The research team consisted of two seasoned ethnographers and a revolving set of undergraduate assistants—seven in the first season, six in the two succeeding seasons, and three in the final season—formally trained by the senior author in the practice of qualitative research methods (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). These assistants were selected on the basis of their high grade point average and status as double majors (the primary was marketing and the secondary was from either the social sciences or

humanities). Selection criteria reflected not only academic aptitude but also the ability to contribute insight to the project beyond the discipline of consumer research. Assistants completed a senior author's MBA course in qualitative research methods, where skills they acquired were practiced and refined in the context of a group project unrelated to tailgating. This training allowed the senior researchers to provide detailed guidance and feedback to assistants on all aspects of the research process, which established the baseline insight required for coaching the team to a higher level of performance in the live project.

The team comprised members of varying genders, ethnicities, regional affiliations, and generations. Our research assistants mirrored the demography of the university research site. They were native participants in the phenomenon (which we acknowledge as both a strength and liability of our approach) and thus had ready access both to front and back regions of consumption venues. Further, assistants were able to develop networks of key informants in addition to the more informal associations established during the course of fieldwork. While in the field, we typically worked either as individuals or as dyads and triads, to minimize potential disruption of context. We shared access to all informants that permitted triangulation of insights. Senior researchers often worked alongside assistants, both as peers and as supervisors, to enhance quality of data collection and help individuals sharpen their elicitation techniques.

The research team employed a standard battery of ethnographic techniques including participant observation, interview, photography and videography; autodiving and member checking were also practiced. Archival material both public and private (e.g., informants' records) was collected throughout the study. Our occupation of research sites can be characterized as immersive engagement, as we inhabited the venues with the posture of dwellers seeking to make sense of participants' lived experience of the phenomenon. We sought to be present at as many moments of tailgating, from planning through postevent reverie, as experienced by a variety of stakeholders (e.g., producers, consumers, regulators, retailers, avoiders) as we could manage.

Encounters with consumers ranged from casual and opportunistic through formal and strategic. Brief interactions yielded a wealth of data. So also did prolonged interaction and repeated engagement with some informants over time. Fieldwork thus alternated between repeat visits with key informants and constant circulation for new engagements. Members of the research team assisted in the staging of an informant's tailgate, whether as an assistant to set up or tear down, or as a provider and dispenser of food and drink, in addition to participating actively in the revelry of the events themselves. Finally, we maintained contact with some informants via email and social media during the off-season to monitor postseason adjustments and preseason

preparation efforts. We operated with a dramaturgical model of cultural ontology, to facilitate the systematic and comprehensive collection of data. Data were recorded both manually and electronically. Field notes, photographic and videographic images, and interview transcripts constitute the body of data from which our analysis proceeded.

Our four-season immersion followed a traditional ethnographic wide to selective focus trajectory. In season 1, we oriented to the phenomenon, documenting its dimensions and developing preliminary themes. In seasons 2 and 3, we delved deeper into these themes to flesh them out, continued our search for new empirical and conceptual insight, and engaged in additional member checking. By season 4, we had become regular fixtures on the scene, and so we were able to deepen our participation with informants while filling in remaining gaps in our field notes. At this point, having achieved empirical redundancy and theoretical saturation, we concluded the project.

Our research team met regularly both to strategize about ongoing data collection procedures and to analyze data from successive immersions. We employed an emergent design and adopted the combination or mixed strategy described by [Miles and Huberman \(1984\)](#) that allowed us to sample by maximum variation, critical case, snowball, extreme and typical case, criterion, opportunistic, and theory-based procedures as the project unfolded.

## Data Analysis

Analysis was continuous and driven by constant comparison. Data analysis followed an iterative and hermeneutic processes, inclusive of jointly negotiated interpretations in a way that allowed the distinctive perspectives of team members to figure in significant and sometimes privileged (whether substantive or critical) fashion through the investigation. All data were analyzed by each of the seasoned researchers. In addition, assistants within each season analyzed all data from that season collectively with the researchers. The data were analyzed by specific tailgates, between game days for specific tailgates, across tailgates on specific game days, and across and between tailgates over the four seasons. Thus we employed a hybrid format of [Spradley's \(1997\)](#) diagnostic research sequence and [Strauss and Corbin's \(1998\)](#) open/axial/selective process to guide the coding of our data. All informants were provided pseudonyms. The iterative tacking between library and field that is an integral component of ethnographic consumer research ([Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989](#)) was practiced throughout the project.

In the following section, we present our findings through an overview of how individuals transform space into place for tailgates, representing the lived experience of the participants who enact the phenomenon. Much of this account derives from our field notes, which we generally deploy textually, rather than parse out as excerpts, for stylistic



purposes. We place emic terms in quotes to highlight their significance and offer some extended interview transcripts verbatim in presenting our interpretation. Recognizing that different theoretical traditions construe “practice” to the point of mutual incomprehensibility (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000), we use the term throughout our account simply to characterize both individual and group activity or behaviors ranging from the ordinary to the extraordinary. We do not seek to theorize practice as such, but to demonstrate how practices contribute to the theorizing of the ritual of eversion.

## FINDINGS

The structure and dynamics of tailgating reveal an interesting interaction between the hestial and hermetic dimensions of place (Sherry 2001; Sherry et al. 2001). This performance in plain sight of thousands of individual acts of hospitality, the public enactment of generosity (as well as such dark side behaviors as invidious comparison and theft), and the forging of community through the sacred-celebratory vehicle of the party (Kozinets 2003; Sherry and Kozinets 2007) brings hestial and hermetic into intimate association. McQuire’s (2008, 8) meditation on Freud’s idea of the “uncanny” as a “disturbed domesticity, the return of the familiar in apparently unfamiliar form” is useful in understanding the essence of tailgating, which is manifest “when the known and familiar are made strange.” Tailgating is weird because it turns domesticity inside out: households display their intimate inner workings to a world of strangers that stands to become a pool of fictive kin. The prospect of the hestial engulfing the hermetic generates a palpable aura.

To illustrate the levels of complexity that contribute to the production of place, we describe some of the constitutive practices that lead to its construction. At the level of the individual gathering, the “my place” focus that characterizes the home or base encampment that consumers associate with the hearth is achieved through a number of local practices. We use the themes—location, construction, customization, and inhabitation—to which we aggregate these practices and that help us theorize the place ritual of vestaval, to structure the presentation of our findings. In the following pages, we lay out the hestial dynamics of vestaval summarized in table 1, as they manifest in tailgating.

### Location

Tailgates, while locations in and of themselves, are also associated with the location of a triggering event. At the level of the entire gathering, a “this place” (i.e., campus) focus that characterizes the vestaval is achieved via two common practices through whose unfolding the tradition of tailgating is given a metasocial frame. That frame comprises the twin phenomena of homecoming and leave

taking, and it is saturated with the emotions of nostalgia and ataraxia. We designate the two principal practices at this encompassing level with the emic terms “*pilgrimage*,” and “*stations of the campus*.”

*Pilgrimage* is the practice of inhabiting the campus, whether as a new or repeat visitor. Informants routinely describe their visit as a “pilgrimage,” whether as a sacred or secular ritual. In the former instance, the place is regarded as hallowed ground, inhabited by genius loci of Christian spirits believed to be palpably present. In the latter instance, sport (and its attendant panoply of past coaches and players) is the genius locus, and the campus is described as a “shrine” or (ironically) as a “mecca” of college football.

It almost feels just comfortable and at home, I would describe it. You come back and it’s like you’ve never left . . . We actually, my wife and I, put an endowment in place for our parents here. That’s so their name will live forever. My dad used to come up with us before he passed away. ~Alton

Recall that homeyness is the creation of a meaningful context within which other meanings become possible (McCracken 1989). As a stage, it provides context for domestic life, and here the context begins with the general experience of the campus itself where fond memories of loved ones are made immortal and perpetual, further imbuing the campus with a sense of homeyness. Thus this locale may be experienced as both public place and personal space.

Several informants speak of “*stations of the campus*”—riffing off a Good Friday tradition—as a ritual of visiting memorable or significant (whether personally or historically) places. Some fans may stake their site and depart on walkabout immediately; others set up completely, and may even have a meal, before their round of visits. For some, this is a reverent procession; for others, beer in hand, it more closely resembles a pub crawl.

We have two spaces—we put up our tents and do our traditional walk around campus—all of us. We go to the student center and get coffee, then the Cove, the Quad, and then the Old Schoolhouse. We do the [religious service] there sometimes . . . We set up after our walk. ~Kristy

The outcome of these practices working in consort is to unify and integrate all the other practices at all the other levels of the tailgate in a general recognition of the vital work of co-creation of the university brand undertaken by the fan community. The ambulatory nature of exalted experience (Joy and Sherry 2003) is reflected in this journey.

Pilgrimage and stations of the campus emplace experiences of homecoming, encouraging individuals to embrace feelings of homeyness and belonging as they relive relationships and experiences from the past, or imagine the heritage through which they are figuratively stepping. Vestaval provides opportunities for individual agency and participation as individuals reenact and recreate those experiences that evoke home.

**TABLE 1**  
HESTIAL DYNAMICS OF VESTAVAL

Sociocultural level of integration	Themes	Practices	Outcomes	Vestial progression	Informant accounts
Meta	Location: "Enacting Our Place"	Pilgrimage Stations of the Campus Affordancing Co-locating Relocation Wayfinding Staking Placemaking Platting Building	Co-creation of fan and brand community	Hermetic is hestialized	We've been tailgating here for about 10 years. I've been doing this all my life because I grew up about three blocks away. We show up, we set the two tents up to claim our spot on the grass. ~Mike
Macro	Construction: "Defining My Place"		Demarcation of space for place	Hermetic begins hestializing	The grill is always at the end of the peninsula. If the weather is bad, we put up tents but usually not until November . . . the chairs we put in a circle here on the grass. And, between the grill and the chairs, we have tables for the bar and for stuff people bring—cookies or special snacks. And you can make your plate there—the food and condiments are always there too. Well some stuff, like the belly bombs, they are cooked as people come—cooked to order. ~Kenneth
Meso	Customization: "Creating My Place"	Householding Personalizing Mimicking Upgrading Expanding	Conversion of space to place	Hermetic continues hestializing	The bar was built, I think, seven years ago; we were trying to figure it out today. And it's seen better days, obviously, but it's held up quite well for its age. The two-story bar was started by the people that we were actually tailgating with when we were in high school and back in college. We kind of picked it up from them and built our own bar. ~Shawn
Micro	Inhabitation: "Living My Place"	Coordinating Sharing Curating Memorializing Milestoneing	Apotheosis of Hospitality	Hermetic is hestialized	This is home for us. And our motto—we always do a game day shot—and at the end it's always "friends and family!" And when he proposed to me and wanted to get married, I said let's do it at the tailgate. He was shocked that I said that. But I'm like "everybody's there." You know, it's perfect. Rain or shine it would be great. There's so much love within the Blackthorn thing. ~Cate and Nolan

In addition to homecoming and leave taking, our informants are likely to participate in four additional location practices as they prepare and create their personal encampment: *affordancing*, *co-locating*, *relocating*, and *wayfinding*. *Affordancing* is the creative incorporation of the built environment into an encampment. The most common form of affordancing involves the homesteading of grass islands, abutments, and peninsulas in the parking lots, to afford a little suburban or country panache to the urban blacktop.

We like parking here—we have grass and space because this is a dead end street—the guys can play catch with the kids. ~Kristy and Chris

A more creative form involves the opportunistic annexation of features of the built environment. For example, in season 3 of our study, the university reclaimed a number of parking spaces in order to create restricted access to underground utilities serving the local buildings and stadium, erecting a cement island surrounded by a rectangle of protective concrete posts to secure the area. Fans immediately began to colonize this new space, treating it as a veranda for their nearby sites. One group of regulars christened the island their “patio,” where they hosted drinks and conversation, often inviting passersby to join them.

*Co-locating* is the practice of camping in close proximity to relatives and friends, the latter often having been acquired in one’s tailgating career. Tailgaters refer to parties parked nearby as “neighbors.” One informant stated,

We all save spaces for each other. People seem to always park in the same spot, and people make friends with the people next to them. I pulled up here and I was very happy because I see a very nice family over here. ~Interview in field notes

Co-location may take the form of actual or fictive extended family compounds, or of ersatz civic associations that may have a nominal or ceremonial “mayor” responsible for facilitating interaction among members over time. Many tailgaters have expressed a sense of neighborhood among fellow tailgaters in a certain area. Where relationship maintenance is often managed by women in the hestial realm, here it is men who facilitate continuity. Through co-location in vestaval, tailgaters actively participate in sharing, which further enhances the pervasive communal ethos.

On the Blackthorn campus, individuals secure access to specific lots and fields for tailgating with a parking pass. *Relocating* sometimes occurs as the result of displacement, either by earlier arrivers, by a change in lot assignment, or by the university’s exercise of eminent domain. Those displaced are often able to post signage on the interloper’s site directing otherwise thwarted guests to a new location, as a form of common courtesy.

Signs were being posted on three adjacent tailgates advising guests of the [Smith Family] tailgate, that the tailgate

relocated. The woman posting the signs was asking other tailgaters if she could place her signs on the exterior of their tent posts. When [we] asked what she was doing, she shared that her brother had recently died. And that the university would not bestow his parking pass to her though they tailgated for a couple of decades in the same lot. We offered condolences. She said “Oh that’s ok. I don’t want people to think we aren’t here, so I have to get these signs up.” ~Field notes

When the university exercises eminent domain, tailgaters weave the relocation experience into the heritage of their tailgate:

Many people spoke of construction around as well as on campus that changed the location and nature of the tailgate experience. One location known for grass, trees, and the ability to have RVs was at the Caldwell Institute. Once the university built on that space, the neighborhood split, with people finding alternate locations and new neighbors. ~Field notes

Tailgaters are essentially nomads recreating their home out of their transported storage for each game day experience. We contrast this congenial nomadism with unexpected or unplanned relocations due to university rezoning, which tailgaters experience as frustrating, unsettling, and unwelcoming. These disgruntled nomads become, in effect, refugees.

The parking lots do not change, but the composition of the neighborhoods erected upon them from differs from week to week. The preexisting built environment provides a set of affordances by which consumers first locate, and then establish, their homestead. Nomads navigate initially by university buildings and lot signs. Once inside the perimeter of the lots, numbered parking signs posted on tall aluminum poles provide frames of reference. As such, we find individuals employ *wayfinding*, a more strategic practice of travel we characterize as steering by a predetermined set of waymarks. Navigating by the waymarks posted by family, friends, friends of friends, and the university itself, the wayfinder seeks out other enclaves of celebrants, whether as a participant in a single tailgate or a series of tailgates (progressive tailgating) or as an at-large ambassador of goodwill.

The outcome of location practices working in consort is the creation of a subcultural mosaic of vibrant encampments that permits residents and visitors to savor similarity, variety, and contrast across the game day experience. These practices may occur before, during, or after tailgating proper, and they help participants realize that hermetic space has been hestialized.

## Construction

Dwelling is found in several practices to prepare the chosen site for inhabitation: *staking*, *placemarking*,

*plating*, and *building*. *Staking* involves marking a territory for inhabitation, especially for campmates arriving later in the day. It is accomplished quite commonly by depositing boxes of food or beverage on the perimeter of the site:

I tailgate every home game. . . . We generally have eight to ten cars and we just park across from each other. . . . [S]ince I'm one of the two local guys, I get to go out early and stake out the spots because [at Blackthorn University], there's reserved parking lots but not reserved spaces. So if you want a certain space, and we try to get to the same general area every week, somebody's got to go early and you put out coolers or chairs or anything to block the other spaces. ~Peter

Vehicles are normally the first material items used by consumers to establish their temporary residence. An exception to this practice, as just noted, is the use of objects to stake out satellite areas for late-arriving relatives and friends, or to mark personal space to which one intends to return following completion of other pregame errands or rituals (e.g., stations of the campus). This staking activity resembles the wintertime practice in many northern cities of marking a freshly shoveled public parking space (thereby transforming it to personal place), with lawn furniture or other household goods, as a peremptory claim on that spot. Tailgaters begrudgingly honor this practice, although it is the focus of occasional disputes and claim jumping.

Accessories to these vehicles are legion and further contribute to the definition of place. Shelters of various sorts (from simple tarps that act as shade structures and rain flies through elaborate canopies with sidewalls to free-standing tents) may be anchored to or abut the vehicle. The canopies of our informants invite comparison with the sukkot, the stalls of the Jewish Festival of Booths that commemorates the Exodus, insofar as they both involve the "intergenerational transmission of values," the celebration of a nature's bounty under a simple dwelling, and the hospitality of a shared meal (Bronner 2011, 103–5). The creation of a dwelling separable from (or separate within) the house and open to the sky represents tabernacles, or "feasts of ingathering" (Bronner 2011, 107).

Consumers post a range of signage to mark their sites and facilitate the wayfinding of friends and family. *Placemaking*, a complement to wayfinding, is the hoisting of flags and banners, or the erection of signs and monuments, to serve as beacons or blazes to assist guests in the location of individual sites. Flags and banners bearing the names (and collegiate pedigrees) of families are perhaps the most common. Distinctive markings (e.g., university logos, company names and logos, state seals, skulls and crossbones, and other designs) may adorn some flags and banners. Totem figures (e.g., decorated dogs, scarecrows, dolls) may also proclaim places. Balloons and inflatable figures (including seasonal decorations such as Halloween monsters) also signal sites. Whimsical signs (e.g., hand

lettered, professionally painted, neon lighted) also help define a tailgater's area:

One of my classmates . . . bought a huge flag for [our] class, so it says the "Sublime '59" on it. Very humble! That's to draw all our classmates who aren't regulars to kind of know what to look for and if they only come to one or two games a year, they kind of will come congregate with our group. ~Peter

Placemaking is akin to creating a home address to locate a specific "we" among the broader community encampment. While many participants visit numerous other tailgates, a home location is established, with "home" the kinship group (real or fictive) that anchors the game day experience. The experience of homeyness for these groups is most often sustained by a male tailgate organizer in lieu of (and at times in addition to) a female maternal figure. Vestavall recognizes a wide range of "family members" who support and enact experiences of home life throughout the tailgate.

First-time and experienced tailgaters alike have a plan for converting space to place. *Plating* is the process of establishing zones for discrete activities such as cooking, eating, televiewing, game playing, dancing, and the like. *Plating* begins with the deployment of material culture. The stuff of tailgating is distributed in a way that defines macro and micro zones of consumption. Discrete places are constructed for the performance of particular activities and the enactment of the genres of tailgating.

These zones are usually defined by activity. The organization of home is often considered to be within the realm of the hestial, and, in these settings, we find men comfortably implementing interpretations of what constitutes home. Individuals are mindful that all that they have and do is on display. Bathrooms alone are not turned inside out, but the blue portable toilets that line the perimeter of lots and fields are sites of extensive queuing that occasions much conversation among strangers and the public witnessing of individuals' need to answer the call of nature. To salvage a modicum of privacy, some tailgaters seek to create a distinction between the front and fully available environs, and the back, which may be closeted from public viewing.

Setup processes may be shielded from view, to prevent interference with efficient staging. Accessibility may be regulated, as with the creation of secret compartments to hide top-shelf alcohol from the undiscerning:

[Martha] has a setup crew of current students who come to help her unpack her SUV, set up the tent and tables. They begin with what she is preparing that day to discern where the cooking elements will be located. . . . the bar is amply supplied; however, high-end wines and liquors are stored within the rear of the open SUV with access available by invitation. . . just before kick-off, personal items such as

wallets or other valuables are secured in the car. Decorations and chairs remain to stake the homestead, and foodstuffs are covered or stored in coolers under tables for the duration of the game. ~Field notes

While vestaval is characterized by dwellings and activity zones open to public viewing, some measures may be taken to secure back regions. However, many participants leave their tailgates set up and unattended during the game, trusting that the goodwill of others will discourage theft.

With the planning for the conversion of space to place completed, implementation begins. *Building* entails construction of more or less elaborate structures, whether multi-canopied shelters with lavish interiors or art vehicles tricked out with electronic accessories and university regalia. For many, the canopy or tent is erected to demarcate the site. Boundaries are defined, often in concert with neighbors. Tables, grills, coolers, and storage bins further define boundaries for and within the dwelling. In addition, chairs and games may be used to delineate place.

And the building process may be prescribed as a form of ritual in creating the dwelling as a sacred space:

First thing we do is set up the satellite dish. Then we'll put the tent up. Then we do the tables, get them covered and get the food out. Get the chafing dishes going. It takes about an hour and half to get things going. Then we have our first shot of Swedish vodka [Absolut] and that starts the day. ~Mike

Beyond the physical markers, individuals also employ music as a powerful, but immaterial way of defining place. Music tends to be representative of the character of the tailgate and is played loudly enough to allow for conversation while also providing a buffer against music and ambient noise from other tailgates.

Construction demarcates boundaries and activities of "my space." These outcomes of Construction practices initiate the gradual conversion of hermetic space to hestial place. While this conversion occurs in the public realm, participants may seek to manage this process to create an experience of separation between what is visible to versus hidden from others.

## Customization

With tents and tables erected, place gradually emerges and is further customized through the practices of *householding*, *personalizing*, *mimicking*, *upgrading*, and *expanding*. *Householding* is the practice of designating areas of the encampment as the "backyard," the "kitchen," the "den," the "family room," and so forth. This level of customization provides tailgaters opportunities to manage the experience of their publicly viewable personal place:

The wife shows me their "living room," comprising a U-shaped set of chairs with cup holders, the "dining room,"

with tables and chairs arrayed for eating a meal, and then the "kitchen," with prep surfaces, a grill, pots, serving dishes, and several coolers. The kitchen is the hub of the place, allowing her husband a view of everyone and everyone of him. She notes that, from the kitchen, her husband will cook different meals throughout the day. Her husband is the designated chef, and he has small individual-sized pans on the grill surface in preparation to cook eggs. The day will culminate with his famous ribs—he prepares ribs for every tailgate because of their popularity. The husband shares that they only entertain at tailgates because their apartment in the city is too small to hosts guests. They invite friends throughout the season to spend the day with them at their tailgate (vs. beach or mountain) home. ~Field notes

Householding also involves the intergenerational dynamic of socializing and succession planning, such that traditions may be continued into perpetuity. Many of our informants share that they are not the first generation in their family to tailgate. Childhood memories are resonant and abundant, and they shape expectations of adult experiences and inform a desire for continuity into future generations. Some informants describe how certain foodstuffs are prepared and sent by former participants who are no longer able to tailgate. Others wonder who among their members will perpetuate the tradition. And still others identify an heir:

Well, actually, our daughter, we are passing [the tailgate] down to her. . . . we usually have 4 cars and 6 tables of food. . . . You know everyone has their specialty and stuff they like to make. . . . My daughter will [keep the tailgate going]. She'll always be here. ~Mr. and Mrs. Applegate

Vestaval provides a place-based template for a distinctive form of immortality. Just as each home is distinct, the allocation of space for activities conveys priorities within the domestic unit. Designations for activities within these domestic units provide a canvas for further individuation through adornment.

*Personalizing* is the practice of transforming generic space into a psychosocially meaningful place, sometimes by producing permanent alterations in the environment. One of our informant families brings dirt from their distant hometown to fill in divots and potholes on the grass peninsula they inhabit on game day, making this place a literal home away from home. Another informant has carved his initials into a nearby tree to preserve his presence, while yet another has installed (with the blind-eyed collusion of officials) permanent brackets and pulleys on fencing and trees to facilitate the quick pitching of awnings and tarps. One group, located next to an institutionally posted and numbered pole intended to help drivers remember their parking location, posts a banner that plays off the location and the Blackthorn University motto: "Heaven, Homeland

and Pole 11.” Personalizing extends to the materials used to host a tailgate:

A woman and her husband have a beautiful setting of monogrammed china and matching glasses. They have a modest assortment of food; however, the table is immaculate. She describes searching eBay to find additional pieces of the Wedgewood pattern and that it goes quickly. She observes that it is important to her that even though it is a tailgate and outdoors, that the table be elegant. No drinks in Solo cups, no beer cans . . . They have a tent covering their picnic table and on the side is what she describes as a one-of-a-kind decorative monogrammed ornament. ~Field notes

Although tailgaters tend to have similar categories of objects to host their party, there is also a desire to appear distinctive and experienced. This is most evident in upgrading and expanding, but it is also found through *mimicking*, the reproduction of features observed at other tailgates in one’s own area. Mimicking is a reflection of the occasionally competitive urge egged on by not quite invidious comparison. Some buck pressure to “keep up with the Joneses,” although they acknowledge the proverbial Joneses’ presence and contrast that with their intentions:

We’ve seen them out here with candelabras, the white linen, crystal. There’s somebody always trying to do something, it never ends. It gets to the point where it’s almost ridiculous. We don’t try to be too fancy. We like to do things just basic, provide people with some decent food and some shelter and have a good time. We don’t get glamorous, that’s not our thing. ~Robert

Informants may often compare their own effort to those of others, which may in turn act as an engine of escalating materialism in tailgating. Notably, the presence of china, crystal, and candles tends to reflect variations in the instantiation of the hearth versus a hestial dominance of the hermetic. The contiguous partying in plain sight of thousands of other revelers invites constant comparison. Some tailgaters respond with acquisitions that replicate and surpass what they have observed.

Tailgates originate simply, with the material basics and culinary staples. Over time, tailgates are likely to evolve. *Upgrading* is the trading up to newer, fancier and more equipment over the course of a season or a tailgating career. Informants who began careers by simply transporting prepared food or cooking simple fare onsite often graduate to more extravagant dining, as well as to lavish accessorizing with widescreen TVs, sound systems, portable heaters, and other elaborate gear:

[T]he first thing that popped into my mind was music so I started off with a cheap product, paid like \$100 for a boom box and then I realized it wasn’t quite loud enough. It was just a small boom box . . . We didn’t have a canopy yet, we just had a table, the chairs, the grill, and then a boom box. You look around and you see the canopies . . . You’re

going to do a good setup, you have to be able to part with bucks cause I mean a canopy tops \$250 to \$300 so you gotta be prepared to do that and it really starts right from there. Once you get that, it kind of becomes a tradition, you’re just kind of trying to continue what you have.. ~Brian

No matter the size of the setup, upgrading is evident. A mobile tailgater beginning with a simple wagon evolved to one that included a small grill and cooler that enhanced his experience. Another family purchased a bus and converted the interior to a lounge area, and a portion of the luggage compartment to a portable kitchen. This upgrade required relocation to an off-campus site where they could rope off a section of grass, set up chafing dishes and dining tables, along with games and music, to service their growing party. Although these relocations are characteristically hermetic, they provide opportunities for the hestial to evince more fully.

*Expanding* is the practice of annexing sites in a way that increases the size of an individual’s place. In some locations, such as the spacious fields, sprawling is a common occurrence. In addition, expanding may result from upgrading or mimicking:

A group of dads and daughters park their cars in spaces across from a large strip of grass. They set up their tailgate on that grass. There are two tents. They are pulling out table games and corn hole—for play as well as to fill in the space surrounding the main tented area where the food is likely to go. There are only tables now. The corner spot in the tent is for the television. And there is a guy working to get the satellite dish running and connected to the television. That was set up along with the bar before any attention to food . . . There are about 15 chairs forming a circle beyond the tents—including one chair that looks to be for a giant! ~Field notes

This tailgate, like many we observed, simultaneously reflects multiple facets of customization. The current tailgate is the continuation of a tradition started during the childhood of one of our informants by his dad. It now encompasses individuals who travel by plane with assortments of food, a custom rug and flag featuring their group name, a full stand-alone bar with specialty drinks at each tailgate, and an array of games and seating to welcome and entertain guests. This intergenerational component of vestavial contributes to the sustaining of relationships that help immortalize individuals.

Through Customization, a place acquires its unique character. This individuation provides a mirror and stage to participants, and a window to others observing a specific tailgate. The gradual hestializing of hermetic space accelerates under the aegis of this theme.

## Inhabitation

Inhabitation, which we characterize as the living and observing of life on a visible stage, comprises the following

practices: *coordinating*, *sharing*, *curating*, *memorializing*, and *milestoning*. *Coordinating* entails the development, cultivation, and active working of telephone trees, email lists, and social media sites such as Facebook in an effort to manage the logistics of tailgating. This work goes on before, during, and after the season, in a never-ending cycle of planning and execution. Menus, division of labor, guest lists, materiel, transportation, and a host of other details and obligations are negotiated and disseminated in this process.

Alums from Minnesota come for one game each year. They have family friends in Pennsylvania, one of whom is a chef and owns a restaurant. . . . The chef packs and sets up a portable kitchen including various prep gadgets (e.g., fry cutter, cutting boards), deep fryer, grill, and coolers with marinated and prepped foods. Because it is an annual event, they speak of creating a memorable experience for their family and friends who attend. ~Field notes

This family also coordinates planting and harvesting of potatoes to provide a signature dish at their annual tailgate:

[M]y niece's place. . . they grow about 1500 acres of potatoes. So, at one time, [Greyson] and I bought a quarter of that land so that they could grow potatoes. It was always called the Thorner [a nickname for Blackthorn students and alumni] Farm. Every year, they have potatoes on that land so these are Thorner Potatoes and we bring the potatoes for the tailgate, for the french fries. ~Claude

Coordination of the domestic life of the tailgate, whose temporal complexity (e.g., periodicity, frequency of participation, time of day) is considerable, challenges even the well organized. Temporality is influenced by the game schedule, ticket availability, and participant availability. Many of our informants profess to be "regulars," where regular does not connote attendance at every game but rather a routine for games that are attended.

Coordination is also evident within specific tailgates, where celebrations are planned and shared:

The game closest to Thanksgiving, we get together with four or five other tailgate groups and we park out in the [Green] lot as opposed to this lot, and we get five deep fryers and last year I think we deep fried 20 some turkeys. I think we deep fried potatoes and some vegetables. I think we deep fried some hams. So we do that once a year. That's kind of fun. At that one we might have three or four hundred people. ~Justin

While tailgates are governed primarily by a game schedule, annual holidays provide opportunities for collective celebrations. For example, another family commemorates Thanksgiving with turkey and dressing sandwiches and invites other participants to bring their favorite family tradition to be part of the celebration. Our informants also create pseudo-holidays that are linked to the game schedule but are distinct from what happens on the field.

Collectively, participants of this particular tailgate create and serve a communal feast in support of this celebration that they replicate each season with their individual specialties, be it with hot cider crafted with specialty liquors or a dip made from locally smoked trout. These celebrations are supplemental to more typical celebrations orchestrated by matriarchs back at home.

*Sharing* is a way of life in the gift economy of the tailgate. Beyond the simple act of hospitality extended to intimates and strangers, the sheer logistical complexity of group tailgating ensures both that division of labor and the occasional forgetting of vital components such as food, condiments, tableware, and the like, by someone will occur. Sharing mitigates uncertainty and compensates for shortfalls including lack of experience:

These guys were parked next to us and they opened their trunk, sat down with a case of beer and some potato chips! I couldn't believe it! I invited them to join us. Turns out they are [FBI] officers from [LA]. They promised to return the kindness when we met them for the [LA] game. They gave us VIP treatment to all the events—it was really great. They tailgate with us when they come to a game now. And, as a joke, they still only come with a case of beer and potato chips! They give me money too, but they only bring chips and beer! ~Martha

Such gifts initiate relationships within tailgate dyads that perpetuate gift cycles and also are evident in the general ethos of systemic gift-giving and generalized reciprocity. Failure to plan for inclement weather or failure of shelters during especially inclement weather is another occasion ameliorated through sharing.

Curating and memorializing experiences in inhabitation reflect the desire for continuity of the tailgate home. *Curating* is the thoughtful collection and display of memorabilia associated with the university, either in temporary structures or art vehicles. Consider the renovation of a bus into a recreational vehicle reminiscent of a man cave reflecting an assertion of masculinity even as feminine creature comforts are incorporated:

We basically took an old school bus, a short version of a school bus and converted it to Blackthorn. It looks good on the outside, new paint job, Blackthorn colors, the Troll [a campus icon] picture on the front, and then we also converted the inside so in inclement weather, whether it's cold or raining, people can get in the bus and watch the game from in there. A lot of good, fun memories being here; there's bugs to work out of all this equipment as you go forward and recondition everything, and make sure it works. But we've got it dialed in pretty well, and it works well for us. ~Pierce

These curations are often traveling exhibits in a literal sense and may represent just a fraction of the material housed by fans in their permanent home collections. They also may

represent rituals enacted with pilgrimage. One such ritual is the sharing of a bottle of vodka as part of the pre-tailgate gathering on the Friday evening prior to the tailgate. Each empty bottle is annotated with the date, game opponent, and attendees before being affixed to a board and displayed during the tailgate. This curation encourages participation through documentation of continuity.

*Memorializing* is the ceremonial recognition of tailgaters now deceased. This is accomplished via posting memorial photographs, stenciling the name of the departed onto canopies and banners, dedicating seasons to the deceased, and setting out favorite chairs (which mortals are not allowed to occupy) for fans who have passed. The departed's ashes may also be scattered surreptitiously on campus. Memorializing provides an encounter with the fervor of the deceased at the tailgate:

Uncle Larry passed away this past [year]. . . a sudden, tragic death. The family didn't know what we were going to do, if we were going to continue tailgating. It was his favorite thing to do. [Blackthorn] meant more to him than anything in the whole wide world. So we decided as a family that we were going to carry on the tradition for him. We were going to make sure that we would make him proud. He would have been disappointed in us if we had decided we were going to quit. So, we went ahead, and decided we were going to dedicate the season to him . . . and carry on the tradition . . . [It's almost] like he's here . . . He's looking down at us right now, thrilled to death. Thrilled to death. ~Bryce

Tim, another informant, tells a similar story, using posted photographs as props:

These are all people that were all part of our tailgating group that have passed away . . . Mom [and her bowling buddy] set up our tailgate in the sixties. When [her buddy] passed away—she was very vivacious . . . and full of energy . . . she is really what [the tailgate] is all about. . . my mother [posted her photo at our tailgate and declared,] “This is a way that . . . even though she can't be with us in person, she can always be part of our memory. We can always remember her when she's out here, because she is such a big part of things.” Unfortunately, several years later, my mom passed away . . . so we've memorialized my mom out here. And then my Uncle Ralph . . . It's a way for us to bring the people . . . to remember them . . . It feels good to put their pictures up and just have them part of it.

The prototypical experience of domesticity is family creation, which is most readily evident in marriage. *Milestoning* (i.e., engagements, weddings, births, graduations, deaths) is one of the rituals that defines committed tailgating. For example, marriages and receptions of especially dedicated fans are conducted at tailgates, in keeping with the comedy of the commons atmosphere (Sherry and Kozinets 2007) that reigns in the lots and fields.

Marcy: [Tailgating] is something him and I have always enjoyed . . .

Jonathan: It brings us altogether, friends and family. I had thought of it but just kind of, I don't know if she'd think that was corny or not and then one day, she just spit it out, why don't we do it like [a tailgate]? It was like, cool cause that's what I was thinking of but I just thought you wouldn't go for it . . .

Marcy: Everybody was just so excited about it . . . How are you going to incorporate jerseys? Are you going to get a dress? I said, ‘Oh no, no! Everybody's going to be in jerseys.’ . . . I'm in white, he's in white, the rest are in blue, it's a blue and white wedding . . . It just was natural for some reason, it was just a natural thing for us.

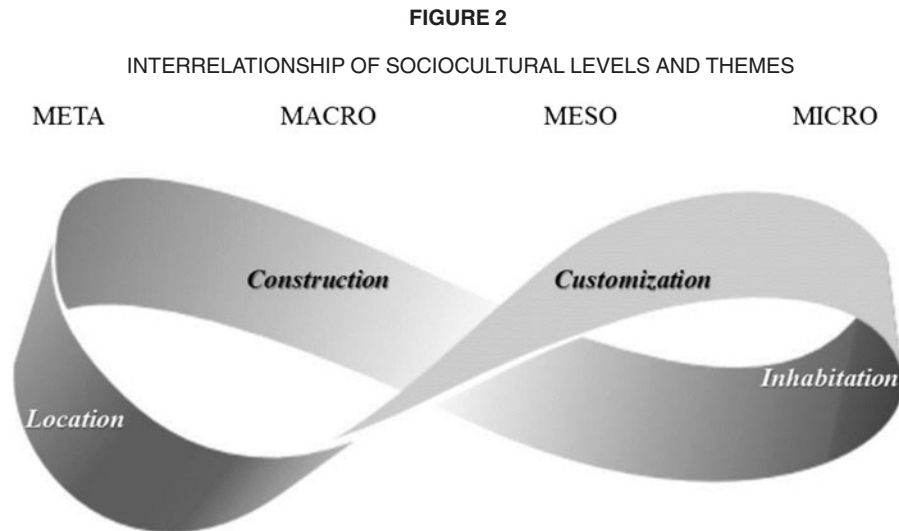
These unions may be between loyal hometown fans or between fans of rival teams. The result of all of these practices working in consort is the apotheosis of hospitality.

Weddings celebrate the uniting of individuals to create a new family. These unions encompass the negotiation and transformation of identity that is most evident through efforts to define and outfit a shared home (Bradford and Sherry 2013). Weddings at tailgates exemplify public intimacy because they serve to create the basic family unit and showcase this transformation for any to observe within a publicized personal place. Experiences of domesticity, including family unit creation, permeate inhabitation in tailgating. In addition to weddings, other life milestones are celebrated including engagement parties, wedding showers, baby showers, attending one's first football game, college admission and graduation, and first alumni game. These experiences reproduce and sustain tailgates intergenerationally.

Inhabitation affords opportunities for interchanging social roles between male and female because men largely build, manage and sustain the hearth, albeit often with plenty of assistance from and supervision by women. As household dramas unfold in the agora of lots and fields, against the backdrop of the gridiron drama staged in the agon of the stadium, the ethos of tailgating is manifested. On the one hand, even if males do not completely appropriate quintessentially female space, their vigorous participation is blessed by women. On the other, to the extent that tailgating is construed as “extreme picnicking” or “camping lite (and even ‘glamping’ or ‘glamorous camping’),” women are welcomed onto the masculine terrain of living rough. Either way, males are domesticated and publicly valorize their taming. The ascension of men to the office of domestic engineer ceremonializes the importance of the role. The role is both appropriated and exalted, calling attention to its centrality in the hestialization of hermetic space.

Let us briefly summarize the practices that motivate the eversion mechanism behind the placeway ritual we call vestival (table 1). We identified four themes (and accompanying practices) that correspond to the sociocultural





levels of integration contributing to the turning of the household inside out and the creation of public place. Location comprises the practices of *pilgrimage*, *stations of the campus*, *affordancing*, *co-locating*, *relocating*, and *wayfinding*, through which consumers determine the scope of public place and prepare to create a personal encampment. Construction, comprising the practices of *staking*, *placemaking*, *plating*, and *building*, then initiates the transformation from hermetic space to hestial place. Customization, comprising the practices of *householding*, *personalizing*, *mimicking*, *upgrading*, and *expanding*, involves the personalization of place as the hestial spreads its influence. Finally, inhabitation comprises the practices of *coordinating*, *sharing*, *curating*, *memorializing*, and *milestoning*, allowing consumers to publicize their dwelling. Through this replicate complex of activity, eversion is able to transform domestic space to public place.

We represent these dynamics as a Möbius strip (see figure 2) to emphasize not just the simultaneity of stages that prose reduces to process, but also the constant sharing of energy that the forces of hestial place and hermetic space enjoy as the former embraces the latter. Following Pink (2012), we understand the places, practices, and material culture of tailgating to be co-constitutive. Places are in effect events, whose becoming situated practices facilitate. Practices are infused with the spirit of place, which binds them in turn to locales.

At the meta level of sociocultural organization, the creation of the most encompassing conception of place is brought into being not only through its own requisite practices, but simultaneously by those of the other levels. At the macro and meso levels, intermediate conceptions of place are similarly generated both by internal practices and those of contiguous levels. Finally, the micro level, which

ultimately drives the temporary transformation of everyday life that is the vestaval, creates a local conception of place through its own requisite practices, just as it shapes and reflects those of the other levels. Thus it is not a linear process of transformation but rather a replicate or recurvate one.

As tailgates evert, the hestial place they establish moves out into hermetic space, engulfing the public sphere and incorporating it into the ethos of domesticity. Hermetic space is temporarily transformed and returns its energy to the hestial sphere, remaking it, ennobling, celebrating, and reinforcing the domestic ethos in the process. The practices enabling this reciprocal process of remaking and reinforcement are the focus of our analysis.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

We have shown that tailgate is neither mere festival nor carnival but rather incorporates elements of these social forms into the new ritual format of vestaval. Perhaps the most notable redirection of consumer energy on display at a tailgate is the transformation of individuals from relatively passive spectators to relatively active participants in the co-creation of the experience. Implicit in this transformation is the temporary conversion of private space to public place. There are varying degrees of “public” space on campus, ranging from universal free access to university grounds to the purchased passes that permit drivers to hunt for slots in the parking commons. All of this game day space is hermetic in nature before the homesteading focus hestializes it.

The sense of communal creation of place is palpable at a tailgate. Central to the creation of public place is the

eversion of private place, such that the hestial is turned inside out to incorporate the hermetic. The household is redeployed to encompass the public sphere. Female generativity is honored through role exaltation and reversal; domesticity is celebrated through both its public performance by women and its ceremonial appropriation by men. For a brief period, tailgaters are literal and mystical participants in one another's home lives. They become an intimate public emplacement of family, grounded by the hearth.

What is the ultimate significance of the ritual eversion of the household performed in such a public venue? We propose that it is nothing less than a demonstration of the transformative power of domesticity to remake our conception of, and possibly even the institutions of, civility, in the postmodern era. What begins either as private space controlled by the market or the state, or as nominal public space on the margins of everyday experience, becomes a public place of central importance through the creative effort of consumers determined to shape their experience. Empty, vacant, anonymous, or transactional space used primarily for mundane purposes is transformed into vibrant, personalized, interactional place enjoyed by groups for extraordinary purposes. The former space is merely occupied, whereas the latter place is vivified, colonized, and shared by a community of co-creators.

The humane, nurturing, and cooperative relations ideally characterizing the private domain of kith- and kinship become a template for the reformation—temporarily, in the present, and potentially permanently in an unspecified future—of the totalizing and competitive dynamics that dominate civic (whether state or market) relations in the public domain of citizenship. Vestaval is the literal and figurative emplacing of civility in the public sphere. The values and holistic management practices of the household become a model for civil relations. Empathic presence and compassionate response challenge the instrumentality and alienation of much of everyday public life. By removing their walls and opening up both to casual observation and interaction, households singularize (and often sacralize) public space. Private place engulfs public space, converting each to public place. Vestaval renounces seclusion for communion and provides an alternative way of organizing and emplacing public life.

The household becomes the model for social organization in this hestialized public place. The hermetic realm of civic space, with its distanced, contractual, impersonal, and formal modes of mechanical solidarity, is temporarily remade into a living place of intimate, playful, personal, and informal modes of organic solidarity. This new civic place is characterized by a humane, authentic, and joyful collaboration of engaged participants producing an enlightened experience of dwelling. The public performance of household dynamics on such a massive scale becomes both an object of contemplation and an exemplar of possibility for participants. The

elemental spark of the hearth reminds individuals that the civic realm can be a visceral, emotional, agentic community with shared understandings, not just an abstract aggregate of citizens with portfolios of special interests. Vestaval exalts the hospitable placeways of kith and kin as the building blocks of civil society, and it celebrates the importance of the domestic sphere to the health of the culture.

While the hermetic realm of the civic world has traditionally been characterized as a masculine preserve and the hestial realm of the household as a feminine preserve, Thompson (2002, 2003, 2004) has theorized these spheres as complementary systems, each sustained through the joint efforts of both genders. Our description and analysis of the pulsations and disruptions of conventionally gendered behavior that occur in the vestaval support this more nuanced interpretation of domesticity and its transformative dynamics. Once society transcends the “pervasive notion” of separated public/private spheres in favor of a dual system of “interconnected, interdependent, interactive” systems, which, although gender intensive, are not gender exclusive (Thompson 2004, 33, 44), one can imagine the impact the household model might have on the polity model of both social organization and spatialization.

The humanizing ethos of the familial can temper the totalizing ethos of the commercio-political. Vestaval is not a mere displacement of the hestial domain into the hermetic realm—a “commodification of Hestia” (Thompson 2004, 116)—but a temporary remaking of the latter by the former, an alternative way of *being-in-public* that emphasizes communal values of nurturing, sharing, and belonging. This new sphere is one that institutionalizes, no matter how temporarily, *communitas*. Kinship becomes a way of reconfiguring consumership and citizenship. Vestaval reveals the promise of humane public life.

While each of the four placeway rituals we have identified seeks to promote the transformation of everyday life, only the vestaval produces a hestialization of hermetic space. It inscribes the household on market and polity, bringing a semblance of intimacy to these characteristically impersonal spheres and domesticating them in a way that reminds consumers of the foundational priorities underwriting the social contract. By temporarily taming or harnessing these typically totalizing forces through participatory imposition of emplaced household values on public space, a communal place of mutual celebration, assistance, and cause is established. The vestaval offers a corrective—both a temporary respite and a template for prospective change—to the routinizing influence of the spectacle.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this article, we analyzed a place ritual christened the vestaval and theorized the process of eversion as its

essential mechanism. While tailgating is a useful context for eliciting and articulating this discovery, future research is required to identify and interpret other exemplars of the genre that may reveal nuances and extensions of the mechanism.

For example, future research might seek to answer three questions. First, are there other examples of vestaval beyond tailgating? Yard, garage, and estate sales turn the material culture of the household inside out, and they would repay investigation that focused on the performance of domesticity with regard to divestment and disposition practices. The evolution of “Winnebago Nation” (Twitchell 2014), in which RV campers create temporary communities of the road, may also prove to be a fertile field of inquiry. Finally, neighborhood block parties may share features in common with vestaval that warrant exploration.

Second, are there variations on vestaval? Wedding registries (Bradford and Sherry 2013) permit a couple to turn its prospective household inside out by publicly requesting the provisioning of an essentially empty space that will transform it into “our place,” through gifts that permit donors to see both one another’s contributions and the cumulative makeover of their joint effort. Inquiry into the process of such domestic placecoming into being via its transposition through conceptual public space might yield important phenomenological insight.

Third, are there non-vestaval manifestations of the eversion mechanism? Tent sales, sidewalk sales, and other outdoor events that permit merchants to turn stores and showrooms inside out—as well as analogs associated with concerts, restaurants, theaters, churches, and the like—offer a hermetic twist on eversion that might repay inquiry. Factory visits that encourage consumers to observe products being manufactured approximate a workplace turning itself inside out, although they are more precisely incorporating the public rather than extending to it.

The co-occurrence and interrelationships of different ritual mechanisms in the same social form also bear additional inquiry. As we have indicated, a complex phenomenon such as Burning Man or American Girl may embody aspects of spectacle, festival, carnival, and vestaval. Pink’s (2012) investigation of the Aylsham (UK) carnival that celebrates the Cittaslow slow cooking movement is an interesting example of the ways that a multisensory ethnography can lead to a nuanced understanding of placeways in such a complex setting. Finally, other placeway rituals (whether of extraordinary or ordinary provenance) with different mechanisms undoubtedly remain to be detected. For example, we can imagine veneration rituals that would traverse place by going over (e.g., mountains and pyramids), under (e.g., caves and chambers), around (e.g., taboo and labyrinth), and through (e.g., walkabout and pilgrimage) it, revealing or harnessing sacred dimensions of space in the process.

Where gender is pervasive in experiences of home, American civic life also is influenced by class and race. The direct spatial juxtaposition of town and gown creates an intensive, immersive microcosm of forces that modulate the relationship between the university and its home city (and region). Historic and contemporary alignments and disjunctures become grist for the conversational mill ground by denizens of the two worlds in the agora of the tailgate. Similarly, a range of opinions may be aired over food and drink, producing perhaps few immediate solutions but helping establish more intimate relationships among stakeholders that might lead to common cause. Cultural notions of race appear to influence participation in and experience of tailgates at the University of Mississippi and the Florida Classic (Newman 2012; Stamps and Arnould 1998), which in turn may inform the broader manifestation of tailgating as a phenomenon. How might cultural notions of class and race influence the experience of vestaval and particularly what it means to be civil in society? Research is warranted to explore the roles and influences of class and race in vestaval.

By describing how tailgaters personalize public place and publicize personal place, we demonstrate how individuals negotiate two of the fundamental consumption ideologies of public space. Through their “private appropriation of public space,” our informants engage in a collective “striving for common place” (Visconti et al. 2010, 517). Thousands of households turned publicly inside out animate a *genius locus* that is greater than the sum of these eversions: a fan community that is a largely self-determined integral component of the formal university brand that all stakeholders regard as vital. Future research devoted to a thick description and comprehensive cultural analysis of tailgating is warranted to understand more fully the dynamics it comprises, the functions it fulfills, and the implications it has for interpreting other place-based phenomena.

To return to the lamentation with which we opened our article, our research and that of others shows that consumer activism in accommodating and resisting the blandishments of the spectacle has clearly resulted in some reclamation of public space. However, state and corporate forces pose powerful challenges to the survival of vernacular culture. For example, our data suggest that there has been a gradual curtailing of the spontaneity and self-determination of tailgating as universities try to harness and routinize its expression in the shape of a more closely supervised game day experience. For better and for worse, the populist drive is being channeled into more controlled forms of cultural production. Future research focusing on the tension between spontaneity and control in the negotiation of public place (Chen 2009) would have powerful strategy implications in the marketing sphere and important policy implications in the civic sphere.

## DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

All data were collected by both authors along with our research assistants. The data were collected in person with individuals at various tailgates at one college in the midwestern United States. Data comprise interview transcripts, audio and video files, field notes, and photographs.

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