2007

The Southern Rock Music Revival: Identity Work and Rebel Masculinity

Jason Todd Eastman
THE SOUTHERN ROCK MUSIC REVIVAL:
IDENTITY WORK AND REBEL MASCULINITY

By

JASON EASTMAN

A Dissertation submitted to the
Department of Sociology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Degree Awarded:
Summer Semester, 2007
The members of the Committee approve the Dissertation of Jason Eastman defended on June 13th, 2007.

Douglas Schrock  
Professor Directing Dissertation

Andrew Opel  
Outside Committee Member

Patricia Yancey Martin  
Committee Member

Irene Padavic  
Committee Member

Approved:

Patricia Yancey Martin, Chair, Sociology

David Rasmussen, Dean, College of Social Sciences

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................. v  
LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................. vi  
ABSTRACT ....................................................................................................................... vii  
INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................. 1  
CHAPTER 1: REVIEW OF LITERATURE .................................................................. 8  
The Culture Industry ................................................................................................. 8  
Subculture .................................................................................................................. 14  
Identity Work ........................................................................................................... 16  
CHAPTER 2: SETTING AND METHODS................................................................. 21  
The Setting: The Southern Rock Revival .................................................................. 21  
Defining the Population of Interest ......................................................................... 23  
Strategies of Data Collection .................................................................................... 29  
Data Analysis Procedures ......................................................................................... 39  
CHAPTER 3: CLAIMING ARTISTIC AUTHENTICITY .......................................... 40  
Vilifying Commercialization .................................................................................... 42  
Valorizing Southern Rock and Southern Rockers ................................................. 52  
Southern Rock Saviors ............................................................................................. 62  
Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 70  
CHAPTER 4: RECLAIMING WHITE TRASH .......................................................... 71  
Stigmatized Rural Poverty ....................................................................................... 71  
Celebrating Rural Poverty ....................................................................................... 72  
Flying the Flag ......................................................................................................... 86  
Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 92  
CHAPTER 5: VICE AND SINFUL IDENTITY WORK ............................................ 94  
Alcohol ....................................................................................................................... 97  
Rowdiness and Violence ......................................................................................... 102  
Drugs ......................................................................................................................... 108  
Sex ............................................................................................................................ 114  
Sin and the Devil ..................................................................................................... 121
Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 127

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION ............................................................................................. 128

Empowering Stigmatized and Marginalized Masculine Selves ..................................... 129

The Implications of Rebel Masculinity ......................................................................... 133

Limitations and Future Research .................................................................................. 134

APPENDIX A: HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL .......................................................... 137

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM ....................................................... 138

REFERENCES .................................................................................................................. 139

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH ............................................................................................... 151
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1: Tennessee Flag ................................................................. 4
Figure 1-2: Wilderkin ................................................................. 4
Figure 2-1: Hank III’s Ink ................................................................. 27
Figure 2-2: The Rebel Razorback ....................................................... 28
Figure 2-3: My Myspace Page .......................................................... 37
Figure 3-1: Bob Wayne’s Home ........................................................ 55
Figure 3-2: J.B. Beverly & Wayward Drifters ...................................... 63
Figure 4-1: Adam McOwen ............................................................... 74
Figure 4-2: Jescofest Flyer ................................................................. 78
Figure 4-3: Jeff Clayton’s Rebel Flag Tattoos ....................................... 87
Figure 5-1: Adopting the Pabst Blue Ribbon Logo ............................... 98
Figure 5-2: Drinking Like a Man in Texas ........................................... 98
Figure 5-3: Ruyter Suys of Nashville Pussy ........................................ 116
Figure 5-4: Nashville Pussy’s ‘High as Hell’ ....................................... 117
Figure 5-5: Unknown Hinson’s MySpace Blog ................................... 126
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1: List of Informants and Bands ................................................................. 30
Table 2-2: Southern Rock Albums ........................................................................ 34
Table 2-3: Southern Rock Internet Pages .............................................................. 38
ABSTRACT

Based on interviews with 30 southern rock musicians, a content analysis of their lyrics and web pages, and observations of their performances over a two year period, I analyze the construction of rebel manhood used by a group of under-educated, under-employed, marginalized, white, working-class men to empower their otherwise disempowered selves. My analysis shows how the musicians empower the self by glorifying a lifestyle of “drifting,” which involves traveling from city to city performing and overcoming the challenges of the open road. In their struggle to compete with a culture industry that produces popular music for mass audiences, southern rock musicians construct themselves as authentic and legitimate musical artists who exemplify and express the experience of a poor, rural, white American culture and rebel masculine identity. Southern rockers construct and signify this rebel masculinity using a variety of identity work strategies. They signify the self as both strong and independent through their ability to negotiate rural poverty with their hunting, fishing and faming skills—while at the same time they chastise the middle class virtues of family, education, work and religion as metaphorical prisons to which only the weak succumb. Rebelliousness is exemplified by southern rockers as they embrace and even celebrate the disgrace of rural poverty by revaluing labels used by the larger society to stigmatize the rural poor such as “hillbilly,” “redneck,” and “white trash.” They flaunt whiteness through display of the confederate battle flag. Another identity work strategy engaged by southern rockers to construct the rebel masculine self is through celebrating “sinning,” or drinking alcohol, using drugs, and having casual sex. However, these rebel masculine behaviors can also perpetuate the increasingly marginal status that white, working class men find themselves by reinforcing stereotypes that they are sexist, racist, homophobic, unskilled, uneducated, uncivilized drunks.
INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2003, I became the bassist for an already established Tallahassee band whose sound mixed different musical genres including rock, punk, metal, country, and blues. The band quickly arose to the forefront of the Tallahassee music scene, and was moderately successful as a regional act. In both touring the southeast and in performing alongside other regional acts on their own tour stops in Tallahassee, I came to realize my band was just one of many that blurred these seemingly incompatible musical genres. While I was able to balance my educational pursuits and being a musician for a period, ultimately I could not sustain it. As the band became more successful and developed a demanding touring schedule, I was forced to make a decision between academia and music. Although I chose academia, I never abandoned music. As a sociologist, I chose to research this peculiar blending of musical genres taking place in the musical underground of the south.

I wondered how it was possible that so many different musical genres existed in harmony alongside one another within one regional music scene, given that audiences and bands of different musical styles are often competitive if not outright antagonistic toward one another. In some ways, the stylistic combination is logical as the genres being fused in the southern underground are loosely related to one another. Punk and metal are forms of rock-n-roll, and rock itself is the combination, or what some call the “unholy alliance” of blues and country (Goldstein 1968). All of these genres of music also embody manhood or masculinity, or all are primarily an expression from men for other men (Betrand 2004; Le Blanc 2005; Walsner 1993). I noticed that while concerts of this musical collage attracted a diverse crowd, the vast majority of attendees had certain things in common with the musicians they came to see; audiences were almost all white, mostly men, in their late 20s to early 40s, heavily tattooed, dressed mostly in black, and working class. Despite sharing certain socio-economic characteristics, there is no applicable label like “punk,” “metal head,” “biker,” or “greaser” for this crowd. Rather they are only referred to as “a certain breed of people who like country music and heavy metal,” “the guys in black T-shirts,” or the “tattoos on the neck” crowd.
Upon a closer examination of the musicians I encountered and the audiences I was sometimes a part of, while other times in front of, I discovered these crowds had one thing in common. Like most of the bands they came to see, the majority of audience members identified themselves as “southern.” There are a variety of ways in which the south as a region is embraced. Sometimes the south of the country is indicated by the band’s name, as is the case with Alabama Thunderpussy, Nashville Pussy, and Dixie Witch. On recordings and while onstage many artists exaggerate their southern accents—accents that many times disappear when I spoke to musicians face-to-face.

Southern rockers also identify with the south lyrically, both by naming specific places in the south and by making general statements about the entire region. For instance, Hank Williams III sings both about being “born on the south side, with a lot of rebel pride” and to “pour him another shot of whiskey, this one’s for the south.” Preceding their recorded version of their blues-heavy song ‘Here’s to Your Destruction,’ Nashville Pussy asks audiences to “open wide and put a little south in their mouth.” One band even wrote an entire song about the south. In ‘Son of the South’ the Laney Strickland Band sings:

I was raised down in the swampland, where the black water flows.
Way down south, on an old dirt road.
I done a lot of livin’ in a very short time.
You can change my flag, but you can’t change my mind.
‘Cause I’m a son of the south, born and raised with grits in my mouth.
I still cry when I hear old Dixie played, southern born and bred, till they put me in the grave.
I don’t hate nobody, I’m just telling like it is.
I’m just proud of where I’m from, proud of my heritage.
I spent half my life, with guitar in my hand.
Lord I gotta sing loud till the day I die, god bless Dixie land.

There are many phrases in this song that show the singer’s devotion to the south as both a region and a culture. However, perhaps most significant is when he sings “I still cry when I hear old Dixie played,” because on their first album ‘Roots’ Laney Strickland has another song entitled ‘Men Don’t Cry.’
Another phrase in Laney Strickland’s ‘Son of the South’ proclaims “you can change my flag, but you can’t change my mind.” They are speaking of the confederate flag, also known within southern rock as the “rebel” flag or as “bars and stars.” This flag is the primary symbol used by southern rockers to communicate their southern identity, a symbolic display they call “flying the flag.” While not used by all southern rock musicians, most display the flag proficiently. They incorporate it into their band logos, websites, and album art. They display it with stickers on everything from instruments to vehicles. Southern rockers also wear clothing that displays the flag and many get confederate flag tattoos.

The confederate flag was used so frequently that some southern rockers claimed it was overused, even “trendy.” As one musician noted:

We made a point right at the beginning [of the band] not to use the flag, and not because of what the flag means so much—because it means a lot of different things to a lot of different people—just because we kind of think it’s kind of over-used by bands. It’s just been done a lot. You look at Nashville Pussy shirts, Lynyrd Skynyrd shirts, and there it is, it’s the rebel flag … And I just think it’s kind of trendy too. I’ve seen a lot of bands be like, “We are southernish sounding band so we better use a rebel flag.” And it’s like, that’s not all there is to being southern or southern inspired is the rebel flag. There’s lots of other imagery you can use. We’ve used the Texas flag a little bit and stuff, so we decided if we are ever going to use flags, but even that even a lot of Texas bands get carried away with that, so we’ve even tried to stay away from that as much too.

This informant thus thought not only is the confederate flag overused, but so is the Texas state flag. The Tennessee state flag is also used in the revival, including Joe Buck’s bass drum in which the three stars are replaced with three pentagrams (see Figure 1-1). Joecephus & the George Jonestown Massacre also use the Tennessee state flag as a template for one of their band logos. For example, the flag is silk screened on the front of one of their band T-shirts, while on the back they replace the stars of a Tennessee shaped confederate flag with white pot leaves instead of white stars, around which it is written: “Fuck You, I’m from Tennessee.”
This led me to wonder what being southern meant to these men. While I originally thought it reflected a connection to the southeast region of the country, I found that was not dependent upon geography. While living in Buffalo, NY, for example, I auditioned for a band in Niagara Falls. Although I was so far north I could see Canada on my drive to the audition, upon arriving at the rehearsal space, I saw a rebel flag displayed behind the drums. I asked curiously who was from the south, every band member shrugged their shoulders, and then one spoke up “we just love southern rock,” referring to the blues-based progressive rock movement of mid 1970s that spawned acts such as The Allman Brothers Band, The Charlie Daniels Band, and the now infamous Lynyrd Skynyrd (Brant 1999; 2002; Odom & Dorman 2002). As shown in Figure 1-2, I saw a sticker stuck to a toilet advertising the oxy-moron; “southern rock from the north.”

I looked to the culture of the region and discovered that while in some ways there is a stereotypical ‘southern culture,’ like all cultures what “southern culture” is or entails is ambiguous. Even when I asked some southern rockers what being from the south entails, I received over-generalized answers about how the south is heritage, a culture, or even an attitude. Other southern rockers spoke in even broader terms and say the south is a certain way to live—which is indicative of Hank Williams III’s lyrical description of being southern as “a certain way of living” and a “certain kind of style.” No musician who staked claim to a southern identity I asked was able to describe what being southern meant specifically.

While southern culture is recognized by the larger society as unique, exactly how it differs from a “northern” or
“western” culture is unclear. Also, the concept of culture is reifying when it homogenizes people who differ greatly from one another. For example, Bill Clinton and Strom Thurmond are both from the south and embody forms of southerness, yet they have little in common regarding their socio-political worldview. Each is uniquely “southern,” in his own way. The southerness expressed by the bands and embodied by their fans is uniquely their own, as it is not the refined southerness that is stereotypically concerned with fundamentalist religion, strong family ties, hospitality, and home cooking. In fact, the southerness that I discovered is fundamentally at odds with reverence for religion and family. One musician I spoke with even spoke of a “dirty south that results from dusty bibles.”

Through my investigation I came to understand that members of the this musical community used the notion of southerness as a proxy for a version of white, rural, working class masculinity I call rebel manhood. In this dissertation, I analyze how southern rock musicians construct rebel manhood. Based on norms that prescribe a man be proudly independent, rebel manhood revolves around constructing the self as above and beyond the influence of others—as doing what he pleases, when he pleases, despite or in spite of protests from others. At the same time, rebel manhood dictates men signify and flaunt their indifference to others, thus constructing the self as an outlaw deviant; as someone who follows his own set of rules. Thus, rebel manhood involves not just rebellion, but making it readily apparent others that one is a rebel. In this study, I examine the different ways in which rebel manhood is constructed and embodied in a community I came to call the southern rock music revival.

I begin by reviewing the different areas of sociological theory and research applicable to this study. To begin, the Frankfurt School’s theory of the culture industry is outlined so that the southern rock revival as a music scene can place into a socio-cultural-economic context. Next, I describe research on different music genres and their associated subcultures, including many music styles that are now part of the revival: rock, metal and punk. I then turn to a discussion of the theoretical frame for my study: symbolic interactionism. I describe how an interactionist perspective yields understanding of social subgroups by accounting for how individuals in groups perceive or frame their reality. The frame encompasses individuals’ self-understanding or identity.
In the last portion of the literature review, I discuss how identity relates to gender through the concept of masculinity. The following chapter then describes the research methods used for this investigation.

The remainder of this study reports my findings. The first analysis chapter describes how southern rock musicians perceive themselves in relation to the culture industry. Southern rockers are marginalized as artists by an oligopoly-like culture industry comprised of record companies, music television stations, and conglomerate radio station networks. Southern rockers are forced to exploit a niche market by traveling from city-to-city to perform, hoping to make enough money for gas to travel to the next show. Their status in the margins offers little economic rewards and a very low likelihood of future career success. Despite their marginalized status, southern rockers perceive themselves favorably. They rationalize their life on the road into a positive lifestyle that allots them a freedom not available to those who follow a more standard life course of career and family. Many claim themselves to be the saviors of American music against the commercializing products of the mainstream. Both identity work strategies are entwined with southern rockers’ rebel masculinity. For instance, southern rockers not only rebel from normative work and family arrangements, they also claim that their courage and ability to live on the open road raises their status as men. Also, southern rockers ridicule mainstream male performers by claiming that their façade of clothing, make-up, and dancing not only lack artistic integrity, but is effeminate and non-masculine.

A second findings chapter describes how southern rockers stake claim to a poor, rural, white identity. They do this primarily by celebrating rural poverty as a situation that instills positive traits and characteristics in men. While many considered the poor to be stupid, lazy, or both, southern rockers perceive those who survive rural poverty as having personal strength allotted only to those who have suffered and struggled up from little. Southern rockers rebel by staking an identity claim as “hillbillies,” “rednecks,” or “white trash,” terms that others use to attach social stigma. At the same time, they claim to have rural survival skills such as hunting, fishing, and farming. Endemic to the embodiment and glorification of rural poverty is the celebration of whiteness as a race/ethnicity. While often assumed as opposed to explicitly stated, the primary symbol
that southern rockers use to signify the self is the confederate rebel flag. Because the flag is controversial and a symbol of racism, southern rockers rebel by displaying it and also feel empowered when they display it.

My third and final analysis chapter analyzes behaviors that southern rockers use to signify their rebel masculinity, that is, various forms of vice. Through drinking, using drugs, and having casual sex, southern rockers view their status as men as being heightened; they view these behaviors as signifying self-efficacy and mastery. The practicing of vice is a way for southern rockers to present the self as doing what he pleases, when he pleases, with whom he pleases. Rebelliousness is present as southern rockers construct the self as willing to engage in these behaviors over the protests of others. Also, rebelliousness is maximized as rather than describing these behaviors as vice, southern rockers frame drinking, drugging, and casual sex as sins, thus maximizing the offensiveness of these acts as perceived by others. By framing vice in religious terms, southern rockers construct their behaviors as sacrilege, as offenses against what many others hold to be sacred and good, indeed godly.

To conclude, I explore how my analysis furthers our understanding of identity work and masculinity. I also place my analysis in historical and political contexts in order to speculate about why the southern rock music scene is in the midst of a revival. In addition, I propose the implications of rebel masculinity for the revival, other poor, rural, southern white men, and the larger society as a whole. Finally, I address the limitations of my study and explicate avenues for future research.
CHAPTER 1: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this study, I build upon previous research conducted on communities centered around a musical genre along with other sociological work on culture production, identity and masculinity. First, I place southern rock into social, cultural, and economic context by discussing how southern rockers are marginalized by a culture industry with near monopoly control over the mass distribution of music. Second, I survey previous studies on rock-n-roll communities to show how the southern rock revival is similar to, different from, and related to other music-based communities. I also discuss the interactionist approach to subculture and identity, which is central to my analysis. Third, I review the sociology of masculinities. Lastly, I describe how interactionism will be used to explore the rebel manhood embraced by southern rockers.

The Culture Industry

Even though Theodore W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School outlined the principles of the culture industry over half a century ago, their work is still applicable to the political economy and mass production of contemporary popular media. A simplified version of the Frankfurt School argument claims the culture industry manufactures media according to a standard production formula that has been developed from the economic successes and failures of previously produced culture products. The formula mimics attributes of economically successful products while avoiding characteristics of failed products. The end result is a standardized production formula dictating the qualities of a profitable culture product. Standardization ensures a maximum return profit on investment as few resources are invested in production given that the basic formula or template already exists. Standardization is also low risk as the products are already known to have an appeal to a large mass of exploitable consumers (Horkheimer & Adorno [1944] 2001).

A musician and composer himself, Adorno ([1936] 1989; [1951] 1984; [1967] 1997; 1991; Adorno and Simpson 1941) elaborated the specific techniques used in the mass production of popular music. First, any antagonistic, contradictory, or controversial meaning is stripped from culture industry products as to neither upset nor anger any
segment of the buying public. Products are bland in meaning so that they are accepted by a wide variety of taste pallets in a population with diverse moral beliefs and political opinions. Second, there is pseudo-individualization of the products. That is, new products are only slight revisions of what audiences have been sold previously even though they appear quite unique to unsuspecting consumers. Third, the culture industry glamorizes not just the products, but the entire industry in order to maximize profits. By advertising across many mediums, often even before a product is released, a superficial façade of hype and excitement is created in order to cover up the emptiness of both the industry and its music. Glamorization includes the “star principle,” which involves packaging performers themselves as desirable products to be sold alongside the music they sing and play.

**Rock-n-Roll and the Culture Industry**

This section explains how the history of rock-n-roll is actually the history of youth sub and counter cultures. Following World War II, such communities arise around various genres of rock and evolved through a conflict-fraught relationship with the culture industry. Rock-n-roll first emerged as a product of the culture industry marketed to the 1950s youth culture of American teenagers when artists like Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash fused Black blues and gospel with White country and folk to create what we now call rockabilly (Marcus [1975] 1997). The culture industry mass marketed the music to exploit a new consumer demographic that was created when society embraced compulsory education: the teenager (Frith 1978).

Initially rock-n-roll was only a product marketed to youth, but soon after the music’s inception a contradictory relationship with the culture industry developed. Rock-n-roll was incorporated into a brewing dissident element in society when embraced by the 1960s youth counterculture led by Bob Dylan, which had been fusing beatnik jazz and a folk music. What emerged was the hippy counterculture, which created rock music that expressed the youth movement’s utopian ideals of cooperation and communalism (Flacks 1971), free love (Smith 1990), recreational drug use, and protest politics (Adams 1998; 2003; Hamburger 1969; Howard 1969; James 1990; Kanzer 1992; Lehr 1971; Patridge 1973; Pearson 1987; Yablonsky 1968). The culture industry commercialized the sound,
or molded the music into a marketable folk-rock, epitomized by the Beatles, that was sold to an entire generation of middle-class adolescents (Denisoff 1972; 1970; 1969a; 1969b; 1968; 1966). The music was further transformed into acid-rock, like that of the Doors (Frith 1978; 1980).

Involved with the socio-political movements against the power elite of the times, the 1960s youth counterculture rebuked materialism, militarism, and institutions of economic power (Roszak 1969). The culture industry adopted these counter-culture ideals by creating rock-n-roll products that critiqued and admonished the very industry and capitalist system that created the music in the first place (Frith 1981). The rock culture industry thus profited from co-opting the counterculture; that is, they constructed a façade as an authentic and legitimate protest against the status-quo (that they were a part of).

Rock was successful because it came to market symbolic dissent from the same profit-driven, capitalist industry that creates the music in the 1960s—a marketing strategy still being used today. There has been a continuous cycle between mainstream and underground rock-n-roll in which a dissident subculture and its music is popularized for marketing to an entire generation of youth. This cyclic process begins when a reaction to mainstream rock is created in a niche sub-cultural market, referred to as the underground. More often than not this underground is a critical reaction to the mainstream given that marginalized artists usually define themselves and the music they create as “a superior sound” to the “market driven,” commercialized popular music of the culture industry. The culture industry then embraces a “new underground” genre and its dissident ideology, applies its formula of standardization and principles of glamorization, thus making it more palatable and marketable to a mainstream audience. The underground is then further marginalized and the next generation of dissident youth is develops a new sound through which to differentiate themselves from, and rebel from the mainstream and its commercialized music. Then, the cycle repeats as the “new underground” is made into the “new mainstream.”

This cycle of give and take between the mainstream and underground has repeated itself many times through the evolution of rock-n-roll. After the emergence of rockabilly and its evolution during the 1960s, a group of working class youth in England
revolted against the “utopian hippy,” mainstream rock by creating a darker and pessimistic, blues-driven heavy metal (Weinstein [1991] 2000). Metal revolves around themes of power, masculinity, and blue-collar sentiments (Ahlkvist 1999; Breen 1991; Gross 1990; Took & Weis 1994; Walser 1993; Weinstein [1991] 2002). These themes were then softened by the culture industry as the music was popularized and commercialized into the “hard rock” of the 1970s exemplified by bands like Led Zeppelin and KISS.

In the late 1970s, underground punk developed as a reaction to the culture industry’s mainstream hard rock (Hebdige [1979] 2001). Growing out of global economic depression, the punk subculture perceives society as fraught with oppressive alienation—as overbearing to the individual, telling people who and what they should be (Frith 1981; Fox 1987; Hebdige [1979] 2001; Lamey & Levin 1985; LeBlanc 2005; Marcus [1989] 1993; O’Hara 1999; Traber 2001; Tsitos 1999). Punk was faster, more aggressive, unpolished or “raw” than mainstream hard rock. However, by the early 1980s punk was popularized into the more listener-friendly “new wave” of the mainstream from artists like Blondie (Marcus [1979] 1993). New wave further marginalized punk into the underground, where the subculture staked claim to its anti-commercial authenticity by emphasizing musician-controlled “Do It Yourself” or “D.I.Y.” production (Hesmondhalgh 1998) and not “selling out” to the culture industry (O’Hara 1999). Punk and metal would later influence many other subcultural genres of rock-n-roll, including thrash, which combines punk and metal (Baron 1989; Reddick & Berstein 2002).

As an alternative to the popular mid 1980s synthesized dance music, which was fused from hip-hop and new wave, the culture industry developed a mainstream version of metal epitomized with bands like Bon Jovi and Poison. This popular metal was nothing like its underground counterpart, and is often referred to as “lite” or “hair” metal because of its pop song style and glamorized male musicians known for their extravagant hair styles, make-up, and costumes (Weinstein [1991] 2000). As a reaction to the polished and image conscious mainstream metal of the late 1980s, in the early 1990s a raw and unfinished underground “college rock” was popularized into “alternative rock.” Led by bands such as Nirvana and Pearl Jam, this music and its rebellious generation X
subcultural following are known for their satirical irony, a commitment to third wave feminism, and an anti-consumerist and anti-corporate value system (Clawson 1999; Kruse 1993; Moore 2005; Schippers 2000; 2002; Wald 1998; Weinstein 1995). As part of the alternative rock era, punk again arose from the underground with bands like Green Day. Like all alternative music, 1990s punk attempted to authenticate itself as a legitimate protest from the very system that created it using songs of youth rebellion and protest of the status quo (O’Hara 1999).

The end of the 1990s saw the popularization of yet another underground rock genre called “goth,” which is a fusion of punk and the 1970s glam rock exemplified by artists such as David Bowie. The goth subculture is known for its dark and macabre clothing style, anti-conformity mentality, and open sexual attitudes (Hodkinson 2002; Wilkins 2004). Once elevated to the mainstream, goth evolved under the influence of both underground metal, rap and punk into what for the moment is called “shock rock” or “nu metal” (Halnon 2006; 2005; 2004).

At any given time, there is both a mainstream and an underground version of different rock genres. Also, these two reflections are not completely independent of each other. Underground musicians and audiences are inherently antagonistic towards the mainstream; viewing the culture industry as marginalizing their “authentic” music in favor of “status-quo, pop dribble,” that is more of a consumer product than a cultural expression. Like their underground counterparts, many mainstream rock genres also speak out against the culture industry in order to maintain a rebellious façade in order to make the music more marketable to American youth consumers. At the same time, the mainstream needs the underground as this is where their talent and musical innovation—or the “next big seller” is created. The underground needs the mainstream so that they are able to define themselves as the authentic alternative.

Underground musicians consider it important to maintain boundaries between their marginalized selves and their music and the culture industry given how the culture industry has repeatedly co-opted or stolen “their” music. In response to this perceived robbery, the marginalized develop a new music to both express themselves and differentiate themselves from their mainstream components. This process is perhaps most readily apparent in the co-optation of Black music for White audiences, including
the jazz that was transformed into be-bop, the gospel made into soul, the blues sold as rock-n-roll, and most recently rap sold by the culture industry as hip-hop. However, culture industry cooptation has also occurred with the genres of the southern rock revival, both country and different rock sub-genres including rockabilly, metal and punk.

The conflict between mainstream and marginalized music is primarily about who can claim *authenticity*. Music, is relegated a high and legitimate status if audiences perceive it a valid, genuine, meaningful, or even “real” artistic expressions from an artist who speaks not for an industry seeking profit, but for an audience to which he or she relates. Since the development of mass media and mass culture, there has been an ongoing discussion about whether or not productions produced primarily to entertain and generate profits are authentic like an art that is created to communicate meaning. In this discussion the culture industry is often accused of constructing a façade of authenticity in order to legitimize their products and boost sales. Marginal artists considered themselves the ones with the legitimate identity claim to authenticity. For rock-n-roll, that authenticity is almost always measured in terms of a legitimate protest of the status quo.

**Country and the Culture Industry**

The southern rock revival is heavily influenced by country, a musical genre that has evolved differently than rock-n-roll. Instead of marketing its products as a message of rebellion *against the American status-quo*, the country music industry markets its products as authentic expressions *of the American status quo*. Both industries disguise their commercial foundation to bring an aura of cultural legitimacy to their cultural products. However, rock is constructed as a legitimate protest to society while country is marketed as the legitimate expression of American society’s culture.

Richard Peterson (1997) claims the country music industry is based around “fabricating authenticity,” the intentional construction of a commercialized music that passes as a “homemade,” or as written and performed by everyday, ordinary people whom sing about everyday, ordinary subjects. Ever since the very inception of what we now call “country music” in the 1920s there has been a balancing of two forces: commercialization and traditionalism. Popular country music, or ‘the Nashville sound’ remains committed to communal and rural ideals while simultaneously using a softer,
polished, more professional sound that is both attractive to mainstream audiences and has legitimacy as a high-status cultural form that traditional “lowbrow” country music historically lacks (Jensen 1998; 1988).

Ever since country music was first recorded for mass distribution there have been traditionalists critiquing the co-optation of “their” music. As is the case with rock-n-roll, most of these critiques come from underground artists pushed to the margins of American music by the political economy of the mainstream culture industry. Recently there was the “alternative country,” or “alt country” of the mid 1990s known for embracing a traditional country song style mixed with a rock-n-roll, accompanied by pronounced vocals about love, death, religion and a small town, working class identity. Thematically, the country portions of the southern rock revival are similar to alt country, and there is in fact is one common respondent shared by this investigation and Peterson’s lyrical content analysis study; Wayne ‘The Train’ Hancock (Peterson and Beal 2001). However, unlike the bands of the revival, alt country artists do not embrace rebel masculinity. Furthermore, with the exception of Hancock who labels his music “Hillbilly Swing,” most informants for this investigation would argue against the label “alt” or “alternative,” claiming they are the authentic or “true” country artists and thus should have rights to the country label. Both alternative country and the southern rock revival conceptualize the country music industry as “the Nashville commercial beast,” but alternative country has a “bohemianism” or “avant-garde” quality absent in the more vulgar, more hyper-masculine, more folk oriented southern rock revival country. However, alt country is like the southern rock revival, in that it comes from a community with its own genre of music that could be defined as a subculture.

Subculture

Throughout the history of rock-n-roll, each subgenre of rock popularized by the culture industry comes from a group with its own unique music, style, knowledge, ideals and values. Almost all social scientific explorations of rock-n-roll communities use the concept of subculture; generally defined as a group within a larger society distinct enough in some way from the larger society that it can be identified as unique. Subcultures develop their own social norms and values, and ways to express those values through dress and art—like the musical art of rock-n-roll. However, given the rebellious
nature of rock-n-roll, most rock based subcultures are technically *counter* or *contracultures*, in that these sub-communities are in tension, or sometimes even outright conflict with the norms and values of the cultural mainstream (Yinger 1960).

**Overcoming the Limitations of Subculture**

While researchers using the concept of subculture have yielded insightful, descriptive ethnographies of music-based communities, conceptualizing these groups as subcultures within a culture is not without it shortcomings. Michael Clark (1974) argues the concept of culture itself is unclear, which muddles the notion of subculture as it is defined in relation to the larger culture. Symbolic interactionists critique the conceptualization of subculture by arguing that it is often limited to “basic value orientations, publicly proclaimed attitudes, or reports stereotypic behavior” (Fine and Kleinman 1977: 6). The over-emphasis on the uniqueness of a group’s culture results in a static, over-simplistic caricature of an alternative value and normative system. Rather than explore the southern rock revival as a subculture for narrow, primarily descriptive analysis focused on the differences between southern rockers and the larger society, I take an interactionist approach to explore the southern rock revival as an active site of meaning construction. In this site an interconnected community constantly negotiates and renegotiates meaning within, and in relation to a larger social context (Fine and Kleinman 1977).

To best understand a subculture it must be examined not just juxtaposed to, but in the context of the larger society. The interactionist perspective on inequality makes this possible. While they agree with most other sociologists that social inequality involves differential access to resources, interactionists emphasize the power of meaning construction and interactional processes for reproducing and challenging inequalities (Schwalbe et al. 2000). For example, dominant groups oppressively *other* subordinate groups, or they maintain dominance through defining subordinates as inferior and thus deserving of their marginal and even deprived social statuses. The most egregious examples of othering come from the social construction of racial and ethnic groups in America (Omni and Warrant 1994). During the eras of slavery and Jim Crow, Blacks were subordinated and oppressed partially because they were constructed as biologically
inferior by more powerful, White others. Similar process now occur, though that domination is rationalized not in terms of genetics, but by othering Blacks as being lazy, violent, not valuing family & education, and as therefore deserving of their low socio-economic status (Bonilla-Silva 2003).

Often times those lacking power and status form alternative subcultures as a response to both the othering by more powerful others and the marginal, oppressed conditions in which subordinate groups find themselves. Individuals within these oppressed groups develop their own unique alternative value system that allows individuals to construct a positive sense of self while reinforcing a sense of in-group solidarity (Schwalbe et. al. 2000). For example, young, inner-city Black men’s enactment of the “cool pose” can create opportunities for bonding but also bolsters one’s status by signifying a self capable of violence and risk taking (Anderson 1992; 1999; Majors and Billson 1992; Staples 1978). Cool pose develops in response to structural conditions that restrict young inner-city Black men’s opportunities for social mobility (Wilson 1978; 1990; 1996).

The development of rock-n-roll based subcultures suggests that subordinate adaptation does not necessitate actual oppression like that of inner-city poverty. Strategies of subordinate adaptation are also engaged when the oppression is more perceived than actual, or when a subordinate position is chosen as opposed to ascribed. The subordinate status of youth subcultures is more a perceived reality, as most members of these groups are middle class, white, and upon coming of age will ultimately accept their position in the status-quo that is dominant relative to the legitimately less powerful others.

Identity Work

When southern rockers signify who they are, they engage in what interactionists call identity work (Snow and Anderson 1987). Identity work has to do with how individuals create and affirm their identities through their talk and behaviors. Identity work entails a making of the self. Anything people do and say communicates meaning about their self to others, and subsequently people often intentionally say and do things to give meaning to their self. This is done as people often define themselves as they would like to be seen by others. Thus, a means through which to affirm one’s identity to their
own self is by doing identity work that convinces others one is who he or she claims to be, or that he or she has particular attributes and characteristics as an individual.

Social context is important for identity as those individuals who do not meet socially prescribed norms often rationalize their failures using identity work. For example, research shows that individuals do not achieve career and economic success often embrace their low economic status with pride, such as perceiving themselves as free from job responsibilities (Snow and Anderson 1987). Similarly, temporary or contingent workers salvage as positive identity both by constructing alternative career paths that will lead them toward future success, and by rejecting the idealized permanent employment, considering it overly constraining and even physically unhealthy because of stress (Padavic 2005).

Much identity work is performed to authenticate and reaffirm a favorable self, especially in instances where an identity is *stigmatized* or *spoiled* through the othering of more powerful others. Anderson and Snow (2001: 401) note:

Studies indicate that humans are highly creative in interpreting, reinterpreting, and engaging the social world in ways that salvage a positive sense of self . . . The imputation of a negative social identity does not automatically translate into the acceptance of that identity, no matter how denigrated or demeaned the social status and the self implied, because the actor may assert a strong contrary view . . . When faced with status affronts and subordination, especially when they are likely to be particularly demeaning, social actors tend to respond in ways that allow them to salvage some dignity, a sense of autonomy, and even self-importance.

In their own study, Snow and Anderson (1987) explore how the homeless, one of the most marginalized populations in society use fictive storytelling as identity work to salvage a positive sense of self. Research shows many other marginalized and stigmatized groups do identity work to construct a positive identity in a hostile society, including transgendered people (Mason-Schrock 1996; Schrock et. al. 2005), poor, inner-city Blacks (Anderson 1999), biracial women (Storrs 1999), gay and “ex” gay Christians (Wolkomir 2001) and their families (Fields 2001), and first-generation Irish immigrants
(Field 1994). Individuals in each group engage in identity work to redefine their spoiled or stigmatized identity into a positive, even empowering sense of self. In a subculture that has developed its own unique value system, identity work occurs as a group process.

Subcultural identity work entails four basic interactional processes (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock 1996): defining, coding, affirming, and policing. Defining involves bringing an identity into existence by delimiting who is and who is not part of a group. Coding creates rules and conventions individuals use to signify an identity. In order for an individual to stake claim to a group identity, they must behave according to prescribed identity codes. Affirming involves creating opportunities to signify and validate the group’s shared identity. Lastly, policing involves maintaining how an identity can be signified (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock 1996).

**Masculinity**

R.W. Connell (1987) defines masculinity as men’s configuration of practices and personal attributes attached to their position or status in the structure or institution of gender relations. Because men differ across the status of race, class, and sexuality, there is not just one type of masculinity, but many masculinities. While multiple masculinities exist, Connell argues that there is one cultural ideal type of manhood called *hegemonic masculinity*, which is defined as the most honored and celebrated way to be a man. While the hegemonic ideals change historically, in western society ideal manhood retained the elements of heterosexuality, strength, power, and dominance (Connell 1995). It is this type of masculinity against which individual men symbolically position themselves. In doing such, men construct different versions of masculinity dependent upon their social status and position in the structure of gender relations.

In being a cultural ideal, hegemonic masculinity is not actualized by most men—it is normative, but not normal (Connell and Messerschmitt 2005). Rather, men construct their masculinity in relation to the ideal as they position themselves relative to hegemonic norms using the resources they have at their disposal—resources to which men have differential access. For instance, the masculinity of gay men is *subordinated* in relation to hegemonic masculinity as heterosexual men construct homosexual men as un-masculine. Other types of masculinity are *complicit*. While they do not reflect hegemonic masculinity per se, in not opposing or contradicting the cultural ideal type,
those who bear a complicit version of manhood benefit by gaining advantage from a patriarchal dividend that allots more power and resources to men at women’s expense. For example, advantages are allotted to all men through hegemonic masculinity’s propensity for violence and the threat thereof, even though most men do not act out violently towards women themselves (Connell 1997).

Marginalized masculinities exist across the intersection of different races, ethnicities, and classes given these groups’ differential access to power and resources. However, while masculinity entails power, that does not mean just because a marginalized group lacks authority that their prescribed manhood is not more reflective of hegemonic masculinity than the manhood embraced by a group of more powerful men. Connell notes, “this is not to say the most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity are always the most powerful people” (1995: 77). In fact, some of the masculinities closest to the hegemonic ideals are marginalized types from subordinate social groups called protest masculinities.

Protest masculinity is a marginalized masculinity, which picks up themes of hegemonic masculinity in the society at large but reworks them in a context of poverty … protest masculinity develops in a marginal class situation, where the claim to power that is central to hegemonic masculinity is constantly negated by economic and cultural weakness (Connell 1995: 114-116).

Protest masculinities develop in groups where individual men lack power but produce a façade of powerlessness by flaunting the extremes of hegemonic masculinity. In other words, protest masculinity is a perceived repression of weakness via a semblance of masculine strength and power (Connell 1987).

Connell develops the concept of protest masculinity by building upon the work of Freudian psychologists’ concept of masculine protest, which suggests that adolescents with absent fathers protest through self-destructive, hyper-masculine behaviors that include violence, aggression, and the inability to delay gratification through drinking and drugs (Adler 1956; Broude 1990). Psychological anthropologists used the concept to conduct cross-cultural research on childrearing practices (Broude 1988; Kock et. al. 1976; Monroe and Monroe 1989; Whiting 1965) and to explain high rates of juvenile
delinquency and crime amongst fatherless adolescents (Harrington 1970; Sullivan 1989; Taylor 2000). By examining the life histories of unemployed working class men who ride motorcycles and have been in trouble with the law, Connell’s (1995) argues protest masculinity is not necessarily the result of a fatherless childhood (Parker and Parker 2003), but is a defensive maneuver used by men who are in conflict, or insecure about their identity as men given their marginal, subordinate and thus disempowering social situation.

Because the southern rock revival is almost entirely a male domain, embracing southerness as an identity involves the groups’ construction and defining of their masculinity. The situation is likely analogous to inner-city Black men who as a response to endemic poverty, construct a cool pose and entwine that identity with their masculinity through their identity work. Thus, rather than explore just southerness as an identity, or southerness only as masculinity, in this investigation I will examine how southern rockers do identity work to construct what I call rebel manhood. By focusing on musicians and music, rebel manhood will be approached via two routes. First, as musicians, southern rockers will do identity work in order to interpret their artist status and the practicing of their craft. Secondly, in striving for authenticity, southern rock musicians will construct and affirm rebel manhood through their music so that their audiences can relate to what is being expressed. Concurrently, as I explore rebel manhood, I will avoid characterizing the southern rock revival as a subculture, thus limiting my findings about rebel masculinity only to those aspects that contradict or are in conflict with the larger society.
CHAPTER 2: SETTING AND METHODS

I begin this chapter describing the southern rock revival as a cross-genre musical community. Because of the diverse musical genres involved, unlike most subcultures named after the genre of rock they call their own, no single label is applicable to the whole of the revival. Thus, I call this cross-genre musical community that embraces the south the southern rock music revival because it revitalizes a similar movement of the 1970s. I then outline the research methods used for this investigation. First, I define the sample by explaining how and why different bands were either included or excluded from the study, which shows how the revival is a cooperative community of networked musicians. Next, I explain how I collected the data. Lastly, I describe how I used the grounded theory method to analyze the data.

The Setting: The Southern Rock Revival

There is no single label applicable to all of the genres that comprise the southern rock revival: country, blues, rock, punk and metal. In some ways the revival is a combination or conglomeration of musical genres; in other ways it is only a collection of all these different genres that exist independently alongside one another. There is also some ambiguity about what all these genre labels mean. Though some revival artists would fit within the generic label of country, technically their music would be best described as a rock-influenced country. The country music of the revival is very different from the mainstream country music, also known as the “Nashville sound.” Many artists of the revival can technically be labeled metal, though their metal is more rock and blues influenced than the “heavy metal” that came out of England in the early 1970s (e.g., Black Sabbath) or the Los Angeles “pop metal” of late 80s (e.g., Mötley Crüe). Some revival bands’ used to categorize their music as punk, although they no longer identify as such, they say, because corporations have transformed punk into pop music.

While doing this study I had the opportunity to talk to many southern rock musicians, and even they have difficulty placing their music into predefined genres. One musician stated,
I just really don’t know what to call it [my music]. You know what I mean? Its country but it’s definitely rock. It’s punk rock too. It’s a very hard – it’s just very billy … That’s what I call it. Billy.

Thus, this musician first uses the label country, then rock, and then punk to describe his music—finally settling on “billy,” which is short for the “hillbilly” or the poor, rural white music that collided with Black ‘rock-n-roll’ to “rockabilly.” Others described their music in very broad, generic terms. One noted his band’s music is:

just stripped down to its basics, rock and roll, with a semi modern tempo I guess. I try not to spend too much time worrying about how to describe and just let people hear it, and they either like it or they don’t.

It is easiest to just call this music, or these musicians by the larger generic label to which they claim to be part of: southern. However, like southern as a culture, there is also ambiguity in what is meant when “southern music” is referenced. After describing his music as basic rock-n-roll, the previous informant tied his own music to the traditional sounds of the southeastern region; blues and country. Another informant also reverted to “southern” when other labels failed to correctly categorize his sound.

I tell people we’re just a rock band, a southern rock band. Everybody seems to call us like southern metal, or southern doom or some shit. But really, it’s just blues rock, that’s all it is. Blues-based rock … The music, it’s bluesy. I think its real representative of the southern, Skynyrd and all that shit. Blues-based rock.

This informant ties southerness to rock and blues after rejecting the labels of both metal in the generic sense, and a specific type of metal known as doom. He also compares his own sound to that of a popular 1970s southern rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd. This band was part of a 70s musical movement called southern rocker, which in addition to Lynyrd Skynyrd included *The Marshall Tucker Band, Molly Hatchet, .38 Special*, and the *Charlie Daniels Band*.

Another interviewee connected his own band to the revival using Lynyrd Skynyrd by saying, “I think we’re just the next generation of southern rock.” After reflecting on this and further exploring the 1970s southern rock movement, I came to call the musical
community I am studying the southern rock music revival. Like its 70s counterpart, the music of the revival celebrates the south. And while rock is in some ways too limited a term, revival musicians who sometimes call themselves country, punk, blues, or metal agree that they represent a subgenre of rock or are rock-n-roll influenced. Much like the modern south rock I am studying, the 70s musical movement was also an eclectic compilation and combination of blues, country, and even hard rock from Britain (Brant 1999, 2002, Odom & Dorman 2002). Perhaps most importantly however, classic southern rock bands glorified rebel manhood. Nowhere else is this better illustrated than in Charlie Daniels’ Long Haired Country Boy’ where he sings:

People say I'm no-good, and crazy as a loon.  
Cause I get stoned in the morning, I get drunk in the afternoon.  
Kinda like my old blue tick hound, I like to lay around in the shade,  
An’, I ain't got no money, but I damn sure got it made.  
'Cuz I ain't askin' nobody for nothin', if I can't get it on my own.  
If you don't like the way I'm livin', you just leave this long-haired country boy alone.

Like contemporary southern rockers of the revival, in this song Charlie Daniels rebels by embracing a down home country persona, and by using drugs and alcohol. Another line about rebel manhood comes from Lynyrd Skynyrd’s classic song, ‘Sweet Home Alabama,’ who in response to a then popular Neil Young song about the race problems of the entitled ‘Alabama’ sings:

Well I heard mister Young sing about her, well I heard ol’ Neil put her down  
Well I hope Neil Young will remember, a Southern man don't need him around anyhow

The label of a southern rock revival is thus fitting given how contemporary southern rockers are reviving both an eclectic conglomeration of music, a celebration of a poor, rural, white culture, and a masculinity I call rebel manhood.

**Defining the Population of Interest**

Initially I interviewed any band that in some way identified with either the south, southern rock, or traditional southern music. While this strategy yielded a great number
of informants, it became apparent that southerness highly contested across different music communities and I needed to narrow my focus. For instance, during our interview Warren Haynes, known for his work with the first generation of southern rock with bands such as *Gov’t Mule* and *The Allman Brothers Band* distanced himself from the label southern rock because of the “vulgar” southerness it promoted. Another band Haynes introduced me to that I interviewed who celebrates a less vulgar southern heritage was *Lucero*. A Nashville-affiliated artist from Tallahassee, FL named *Johnny Fire* similarly embraced yet critiqued the south. Two other bands I interviewed from Austin, TX, *Asylum Street Spankers* and *2 Timin’ 3*, along with *Slim Cessna’s Auto Club* from Denver were musically southern, but do not embrace the south as an identity. When I interviewed Rick Miller from *Southern Culture on the Skids* I learned his group is best described as embracing the south as *camp*. In contrast to the aforementioned artists, my study came to focus on a community of musicians who explicitly identified with the south and who glorified a “vulgar” version southern masculinity I call rebel manhood.

**The Southern Rock Revival Network**

I used a “quasi-snowball” sampling method to choose study participants. I selected bands if they were both somehow connected to another band in the revival (defined as either appearing at the same concert or by having shared members), and had done regional tours throughout the southeast. This method of defining the population is not completely without ambiguity as two acts within the southern rock revival, *Unknown Hinson* and the *Legendary Shack Shakers*, could also be described as embracing southerness as *camp*. However, they were included within the revival because they tour with and play alongside other southern rock revivalists. Like other acts from Texas, the band *Reverend Horton Heat* and *Scott H. Biram* do not explicitly embrace southerness, but were included in the sample because they tour with revivalists and embrace rebel manhood.

It is more straightforward an endeavor to describe who southern rock revivalists are compared to describing what the revival sounds like. The southern rock revival is a community of networked musicians who comprise a diverse collection of music genres that exist within a single, regional music scene. The bands of the southern rock revival
are a networked, cooperating community because in addition to being friends with one another personally, many informants play concerts together, tour together, trade songs with each other, wear each other’s band merchandize like T-shirts and hats, and when the rebel masculinity described throughout the rest of this study “gets the better of them,” southern rockers even drive each other to the hospital, hide each other from authorities, and when that fails they bail each other out of jail.

The network of the southern rock revival is best outlined using a central artist as a reference point. Known as Hank Williams III or simply Hank III, Sheldon Hank Williams is the grandson of country music legend Hank Williams, and son of contemporary musician Hank Williams Jr. The youngest Hank is involved with many musical projects that span different genres. His most-well known endeavor is his solo country project, best described not as a rock-influenced, classic honky-tonk styling. For this project, he is backed by the Damn Band, which includes steel/dobro/banjo player Andy Gibson and fiddler Adam McOwen. Hank III almost always tours with his metal band, Assjack, who takes the stage after Williams’ solo country set. Sandwiched between these two sets is the “hellbilly set,” a punkish honky-tonk rock performed with an electric guitar alongside the classic country instruments of a fiddle and slide guitar. In addition to Williams on guitar, Assjack is comprised of Gary Lindsey, who also provides the vocals for the hellbilly set, and two members of Hank III’s Damn Band; drummer Munash Sami and bassist Joe Buck. Joe Buck also has a career as a one man band, and has toured with another one man musical act, Scott H. Biram. In 2006 Biram toured with The Legendary Shack Shakers, for whom Buck used to be the guitarist. The Shack Shakers for short, who describe themselves as ‘Southern by the Grace of God’ on their myspace page, are led by vocalist and harmonica player Colonel J.D. Wilkes. According to the Shack Shakers website, Hank III describes Wilkes as ‘the best front man in America.’

In addition to being involved with projects that span many different musical genres, Bob Wayne also fulfills the position of guitar technician on Hank III and Assjack tours. Wayne is involved with a rock/metal band called Manfall, and also has a solo career singing a western-influenced, folk-country backed by The Outlaw Carnies. Wayne along with The Carnies has filled the opener slot for both Hank III and Joe Buck’s solo tour. The Carnies line-up rotates, but often times Wayne performs with
Damn Band members Joe Buck and Andy Gibson, and/or members of the punk-metal band Zeke from Seattle, the city where Wayne is originally from.

Bob Wayne is just one of many acts who have filled the opening slot for Hank Williams III tours. The classic southern rock sounding Laney Strickland band opened for Hank III in the fall of 2005, and their bassist, Don Hill III was one of Hank III’s audio engineers on subsequent tours. Artimus Pyledriver, an Atlanta based band self-described on their website as “a combustible mix of hardcore riffing, southern guitar fireworks, and down home boogie … the AP boys don’t just write about the south, they live it,” opened for Hank Williams III in the spring of 2005. On several tours, Artimus Pyledriver has opened for hard rock act Nashville Pussy, the only southern rock revival band to both be nominated for a grammy and to have female members, including guitarist Ruyter Suys who although Canadian calls herself “a born again southerner.” Her husband, lead singer, and rhythm guitarist Blaine Cartwright is also a former member of a southern rock band by the name of Nine Pound Hammer. Nashville Pussy has also toured with Zeke.

J.B. Beverly, another musician who spans musical genres, has also filled the opening slot on Hank Williams III tours with two different projects. First there is the classic-sounding, 3-piece country act J.B. Beverly and The Wayward Drifters. In addition to opening for Hank III, this group took part in the 2007 ‘Murder in the Mountains Music Tour’ with Bob Wayne. The Wayward Drifters share bassist Johnny Lawless with a “psychobilly” band, Junkrod Joe and the Cadillac Hearst. J.B. Beverly has also toured with Hank III as vocalist for The Murder Junkies, one of the many bands who backed the now infamous singer/songwriter, G.G. Allin, who before dying of a heroine overdose in 1993 shocked audiences with his taboo lyrics and stage antics that often involved urine, feces, semen, and blood and onstage suicide attempts. Allin’s brother Merle is still the bassist for the Murder Junkies. J.B. Beverly also has two other projects, a punk band called The Little White Pills and an experimental rock/metal project Ghost Dance. Beverly describes himself as having a close friendship with another informant, “Hillbilly Swing” artist from Austin, Texas called Wayne ‘The Train’ Hancock, who has written several songs that both Hank III and Willie Heath Neal play. Neal also toured with the Legendary Shack Shakers in 2006. In addition to limited tours
around the southeast, *Joecephus & the George Jonestown Massacre* from Memphis, TN have shared concerts bills with Neal, Hancock, Biram, and the *Shack Shakers*.

J.B. Beverly is only one of many singers to “step in” for G.G. Allin’s *Murder Junkies*. Another informant, Jeff Clayton from the *ANTIseen*, a band who released a split record with Hank III, also fills in for G.G. Allin. Hank III has immortalized Jeff Clayton in ink, as seen in Figure 2-1. However, as also seen in this figure, Clayton is not the only artist Williams has inked on his body.

![Figure 2-1: Hank Williams III’s Ink](image)

To the left is Hank III’s tattoo of Jeff Clayton in his “rebel wrestler” costume. To the right is Williams’s tattoo of Unknown Hinson. In the center Williams pictured with Hinson and Clayton on each side. This photo posted on Antiseen’s MySpace page was taken after a concert featuring all three musicians.

Hank III also has a tattooed portrait of *Unknown Hinson*, the self-proclaimed “king of country-western troubadours” who despite claiming rock-n-roll is evil, writes and performs rock-n-roll songs to show how easily it is done. Hinson, whose real name is reported to be Danny Baker, is both a musician and character actor. Besides his musicianship, Hinson as a character is essentially indistinguishable from the animated character he voices for the Cartoon Network’s *Squidbillies*. Still, Hinson as a character is quite complimentary to this investigation on southerness as rebel manhood. Bob Mehr (2007) describes Hinson in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* as a:

*Dadaist satire of Southern masculinity and country music convention,*

Baker's portrayal takes the redneck stereotype to thoroughly absurdist extremes, adding some camp goth horror elements into the mix for good measure.
Another music critic describes Hinson as taking “the dark side of a certain kind of Southern masculinity, twists it even further through hell, and serves it up as burning satire (1999).” Thus, what Hinson says and sings was interpreted with caution given that he is half actor and half musician. Both Hinson and the Legendary Shack Shakers have filled the opening slot for *The Reverend Horton Heat*—the latter of whom has also toured with Hank Williams III.

In addition to almost constantly touring with both his solo act and Assjack, Hank Williams III is involved in numerous metal projects with members who embrace rebel manhood. Williams is the drummer for the New Orleans-based *Arson Anthem*, which also includes former *Pantera* vocalist Philip Anselmo and former *EyeHateGod* vocalist Michael D. Williams. Both of these bands are part of the preceding generation of 1990s southern metal which inspires the contemporary southern rock revival. *Pantera* was a rather successful heavy metal band of the late 1980s and early 1990s, who despite being from Texas still laid stake to southerness as rebel masculinity. Pantera entitled one of their albums ‘The Great Southern Trendkill,’ and guitarist Darrell ‘Dimebag’ Abbott’s signature series of ‘Razorback’ Dean guitars comes in the ‘rebel’ finish as shown in Figure 2-4. Darrell and his brother, drummer Vinnie Paul parted ways with Anselmo in the early 1990s to form a group called *Damage Plan*, who was active until a deranged fan murdered Dimebag during a 2004 performance.

While less commercially successful than Pantera, *EyeHateGod* is considered one of the central bands in the emergence of the New Orleans “sludgecore” or “swamp metal” scene—a scene that I consider part of the southern rock revival, but at the same time
retains its own unique identity as a local scene of internationally touring bands. Hank III took part in an EyeHateGod tribute album entitled ‘For the Sick.’

Williams and Anselmo partnered in a now defunct band called Superjoint Ritual, which included guitarist Kevin Bond, who during the course of this project, Artimus Pyledriver added to their line-up, announcing via Internet blog: “He’s a southern boy and fits right in.” In the past, Bond as also worked with Williams’s Assjack and other New Orleans bands including Crowbar and Soilent Green. As a drummer, Superjoint Ritual guitarist Jimmy Bower also works with Anselmo in a New Orleans metal group called Down. The guitarist for Down, Pepper Keenan, is mostly known as the vocalist for Corrosion of Conformity, or C.O.C. This group has toured with two other rock/metal bands who took part in this study: Suplecs from New Orleans and Alabama Thunderpussy from Richmond, Virginia. Keenan produced Suplecs’s most recent album, ‘Poutin’ on the Outside, Party on the Inside.’ These two bands, along with another southern rock revival band, Dixie Witch took part in what was called “The Southern Domination Tour” in 2001. Dixie Witch, from Austin, Texas, has a close working relationship with Artimus Pyledriver, which included a performance at their “CD release party” in the summer of 2005, a show that also featured Throttlerod from Richmond, Virginia. In turn, Throttlerod took part in a compilation album called ‘Sucking in the 70s’ with Dixie Witch, Suplecs and Alabama Thunderpussy. Alabama Thunderpussy guitarist Erik Larson, formerly the drummer for a rather successful punk band called Avail, also records and releases solo records.

**Strategies of Data Collection**

This investigation uses a multi-method approach of interviews, participant observation of concerts, and a content analysis of lyrics and websites in order to study to southern rock revival.

**Interviews**

Upon identifying a band of respondents, an interview request was made via email, letter or phone for the next time they perform in a near-by city. Requests included a brief description of the project and references, or informants I have spoken with who are likely to be familiar to the group I am soliciting. Although most classic southern rock acts
denied interview requests, all interview requests with artists of the southern rock revival were granted. Informants chose the location, so out of convenience all but three interviews were conducted at the concert venue either right before or immediately following their performance. The timing and setting of these interviews may have influenced responses. It is likely that both before, and immediately following performances musicians were “getting into character,” and their personal presentation probably involved some degree of posturing. However, given that I am exploring how southern rockers do identity work to construct and signify rebel manhood, informants’ posturing was beneficial in that musicians were especially cognizant to put their ‘southern rock’ selves on display through what they said and did. In total, I interviewed 30 musicians for this project. All but two were conducted via telephone as opposed to face-to-face. Follow-up interviews were conducted with five of the informants. A list of all informants is presented in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: List of Informants and Bands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Band(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J.B. Beverly &amp;</td>
<td>&amp; the Wayward Drifters, Little White Pills, Ghost Dance, Murder Junkies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matty Boh</td>
<td>Cadillac Hearse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Bond</td>
<td>Artiumus Pyledriver, Assjack, Superjoint Ritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott H. Biram</td>
<td>(one man band)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Buck</td>
<td>Assjack, Damn Band, One Man Banned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Clayton</td>
<td>ANTiSEEN, Murder Junkies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaine Cartwright</td>
<td>Nashville Pussy, Nine Pound Hammer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Delmar</td>
<td>Laney Strickland Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne Hancock</td>
<td>(solo artist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Heath</td>
<td>Reverend Horton Heat, Rev. Organ Drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown Hinson</td>
<td>(solo artist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junkrod Joe</td>
<td>Cadillac Hearse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 These counts do not include the 11 informants interviewed across 7 sessions that were excluded from the sample because their band’s southernness was distinct from the south as rebel masculinity embraced by the southern rock revival. Jonathan Williams, a music critic who writes for numerous Atlanta publications was interviewed for background information on southern music, but not included in the musician-only sample analyzed as data.
Because their own well-being is dependent upon their popularity, a compromise was made between the researcher’s need for accurate and unbiased responses and the musicians’ desire to promote themselves. I explained before the interview began that although their specific answers will be kept anonymous, I would identify those interviewed for the study. This allowed musicians to perceive their participation as a career enhancing opportunity, while decreasing the likelihood they would spin any particular answer in ways calculated to boost record sales. I attributed my need for anonymity to the nameless, faceless, lawyers of the University Human Subjects Review Board (see Appendix A and B). This helped establish rapport with many interviewees who held anti-establishment values. Also to establish rapport, I tried to relate my own experiences as a touring musician in the early portion of the interview. With informants’ permission, all interviews were recorded for later transcription.

I asked informants questions about a variety of topics. I usually started the interviews by asking interviewees about their backgrounds and how they came to be 

---

Table 2-1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Band/Lineup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joecephus</td>
<td>&amp; the George Jonestown Massacre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnny Lawless</td>
<td>Wayward Drifters, Cadillac Hearse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Larson</td>
<td>Alabama Thunderpussy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad Leal</td>
<td>Dixie Witch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayton Mills</td>
<td>Dixie Witch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willie Heath Neal</td>
<td>(solo artist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny Nick</td>
<td>Suplecs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis Owen</td>
<td>Artimus Pyledriver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Peavey</td>
<td>Laney Strickland Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry Rapp</td>
<td>Laney Strickland Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave Slocum</td>
<td>Artimus Pyledriver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laney Strickland</td>
<td>Laney Strickland Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruyter Suys</td>
<td>Nashville Pussy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Wayne</td>
<td>&amp; the Outlaw Carnies, Manfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin White</td>
<td>Throttle Rod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt Whitehead</td>
<td>Throttle Rod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. J.D. Wilkes</td>
<td>Legendary Shack Shakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hank Williams III</td>
<td>&amp; the Damn Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assjack, Superjoint Ritual, Arson Anthem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
musicians. I would then inquire into their music, their lives as traveling musicians, and their thoughts about mainstream popular music. This often led to discussions about topics entwined with music: sex, drugs, and alcohol. I also discussed southern stereotypes with many informants, which inevitably led to discussions of religion, race, class, region, and violence. At the end of the interview, I always gave informants the opportunity to add their thoughts about anything we did not discuss.

The interviews conducted early in the data collection phase of this study were done using a strict outline of questions. However, through trial and error it was discovered a stringent interview structure was best avoided as it was too constraining and seemed to make informants feel uneasy and defensive. A new strategy was developed heeding the warnings of Michael Schwalbe and Michelle Wolkomir (2002) who note that masculinity and behaviors to affirm manhood cannot be separated from an interview session—an experience often threatening to male informants. Schwalbe and Wolkomir’s strategy makes respondents feel in control, or in power during the interview. Rather than follow a strict outline, a checklist of topics to discuss was developed. The sequencing of questions is adaptable to statements made by the informant—allowing me to make the informant feel in control by transitioning to topics through statements like “since you brought it up,” and asking for further insight about related information (Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2002). For instance, in one interview with an informant from Texas, I probed the informant for more information when he mentioned singer-songwriter Kinky Friedman’s candidacy for Texas governor to explore this musician’s political views.

Some elements on the checklist of topics are standard to all interviews, including questions about demographic backgrounds, their life as a traveling musician, the characteristics of their fans, the sound and meanings of their music, and topics related to the stereotypical south such as racial tensions, fundamental religion and conservative politics. Other interview topics were tailored to the informant after exploratory research on the participant and their band. For instance, it was discovered one informant was previously incarcerated, so prison was included in the checklist for that particular interview.
**Participant Observation of Southern Rock Concerts**

I attended as many southern rock concerts in as many cities as time and resources allowed for. While the number of concerts I attended and performed at prior to starting the project numbers in the hundreds, as a formal researcher I observed 20 southern rock concerts in 9 different U.S. cities. While in attendance I documented these performances with audio recordings along with digital video and digital pictures of the bands performing. I was especially conscious to capture musician’s statements made to the audience between songs. While I conducted many formal interviews both before and after performances, concerts also gave me the opportunity to informally interact with informants. When they would say something especially intriguing or pertinent in casual conversation, I would retrieve my recorder and ask them if they were comfortable repeating their statement into the microphone. I also used recorder to take notes throughout concerts. I consciously purchased a recorder that is almost indistinguishable from a cell phone so that I could inconspicuously talk into it and not alert anyone to my role as a researcher. Upon leaving the field, I would use my audio records to type up field notes at the earliest convenience.

**Lyrics**

I also analyzed southern rockers’ lyrics. All efforts were made to collect, catalogue, and transcribe every piece of music recorded by informants by purchasing their albums using a grant issued by the Florida State Office of Graduate Studies. Most albums were purchased over the internet, though some had to be bought directly from the artists as they consisted of no more than a self-produced CD labeled with permanent marker. Since many artists use a “do it yourself” production method early in their careers, some albums were simply unavailable. This was the case with Hank III’s, ‘This Aint country,’ which Curb Records refused to release. However, I was still able to secure the lyrics to the songs on this album because the music has trickled out across three bootlegs available for internet download. There was one instance of lyrics being collected instead of the music. The ANTiSEEN have been active since 1983, and have upwards of 15 full length albums—and this does not included their 30 plus EPs. Instead of trying to secure all of these albums, I simply purchased a copy of a book called
Destructos Maximus, which includes lyrics to all ANTiSEEN songs written prior to 2003. I complimented this book with their one subsequent release, the 2004 Badwill Ambassadors.

While there are some duplicates because artists sometimes record multiple versions of the same song and re-release songs previously recorded by other southern rockers, in total 683 songs were collected as data. A complete list of all southern rock albums collected for this study is available in Table 2-2. However, not every song yielded lyrics for analysis. Some songs are instrumental. Also, because of unclear recordings, southern rock revival lyrics were not always readily transparent. Whenever possible my lyrical transcriptions of unclear lyrics were checked by the artist himself, or failing that I would compare my own transcription to that of others on websites where fans post their own transcriptions. Still, the lyrics to some entire, and some partial songs were ultimately incoherent and were not included in the lyrical analysis.

Table 2-2: Southern Rock Albums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Album</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>No. of songs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama Thunderpussy</td>
<td>Fulton Hill</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Relapse</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staring at the Divine</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Relapse</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constellation (Re-Release)</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Relapse</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constellation</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Man's Ruin</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rise Again (Re-Release)</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Relapse</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rise Again</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Man's Ruin</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiseen</td>
<td>Badwill Ambassadors</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Steel Cage Books</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Destrucus Maximus</td>
<td>1983-2003</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artimus Pyledriver</td>
<td>Artimus Pyledriver</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Buzzville</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Wayne</td>
<td>13 Truckin' Songs</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blood to Dust</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dixie Witch</td>
<td>Smoke &amp; Mirrors</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Small Stone</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One Bird, Two Stones</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Small Stone</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Into the Sun</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Small Stone</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist, Band Title</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Label</td>
<td>Track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hank Williams III &amp; Assjack</td>
<td>Straight to Hell</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Bruc</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lovesick, Broke &amp; Driftin'</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Curb</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bootleg # 3</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bootleg # 2</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bootleg # 1</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risin' Outlaw</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Curb</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.B.Beverly &amp; the Wayward Drifters</td>
<td>Dark Bar &amp; a Jukebox</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Hell Train</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Live From the Heartland</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Catchin' out Tunes</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Buck</td>
<td>Joe Buck Yourself</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One Man Banned</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jocephus &amp; George Jonestown</td>
<td>[MySpace Songs Only]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massacre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junkrod Joe</td>
<td>Hornswaggled</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Red Hatchet</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laney Strickland Band</td>
<td>Hung out to Dry</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Wingrass</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roots</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legendary Shack Shakers</td>
<td>Pandelirium</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>YepRoc</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cockadoodledon't</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Bloodshot</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little White Pills</td>
<td>All Strung Out</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>WP</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville Pussy</td>
<td>Get Some!</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Split Fire</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Say Something Nasty</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Artemus</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High as Hell</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>TtT</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott H. Biram</td>
<td>Graveyard Shift</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Bloodshot</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Dirty Old One Man Band</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Bloodshot</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superjoint Ritual</td>
<td>A Lethal Dose of America n</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hatred</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use once and Destroy</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suplces</td>
<td>Powtin' on the Outside, Party on the Inside</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Nocturnal</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown Hinson</td>
<td>The Future Is Unknown</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rock-n-Roll is Straight From Hell</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35
Table 2-2 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wayne Hancock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulsa</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Bloodshot</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swing Time</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Bloodshot</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Town Blues</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Bloodshot</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Free and Reckless</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Ark21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunderstorms &amp; Neon Signs</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Ark22</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That's What Daddy Wants</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Ark23</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willie Heath Neal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonesome</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Chicken Ranch</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live from Somewhere</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Chicken Ranch</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; the Damned Old Opry &amp; His Cowboy Killers</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Cargo Music</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Cargo Music</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number of Songs:</strong></td>
<td>683</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Websites

The *virtual* southern rock scene (Bennett and Peterson 2004), or how the revival exists in cyberspace, is analyzed through a content analysis of southern rockers’ web spaces. Before conducting an interview, I downloaded a copy websites for inspection. This helped me develop interview outlines, and later the downloaded copy of the web space was coded during the data analysis portion of the project described in the following section.

While some informants’ websites yielded interesting data, much more illuminating were band *MySpace* pages. *MySpace.com* is an online community that provides both individuals and bands with a user-friendly Internet platform communicate with one another. During these communications, bands essentially perform identity work by constructing who they are through the posting of just about any type of digital media including music, video, concert dates, and text, including online diaries called *blogs* and *bulletins*, which are messages sent to the personal pages of one’s *friends*—people who add each other to their own personal network of acquaintances with whom they can communicate easily. *MySpace* pages give bands easy and free opportunities to interact with audiences—audiences who choose to be interacted with by virtue of adding a band as a *friend*. In order to assess how MySpace works from the perspective of musicians, I created my own page for one of my now dissolved bands. Since *MySpace* is difficult to describe, Figure 2-3 pictures and describes my own page used in this investigation.
Figure 2-3: My Myspace Page

This is the MySpace used during this study. In the top left is the picture I uploaded and choose as my ‘profile image,’ which is what others see when they add me as a friend. At the bottom right are informants as my friends. Just above my friends, on the top right is where I post my blog. Working up from the bottom left are my interests, then above that is where I am able to post a song from another band’s MySpace page that plays when people visit my page. Above this are different communication options, including the option to add me as a friend. If you clicked on any of the pictures in my friends section, it would take you to the bands’ page, which looks similar except there is the option post up to 4 songs, and a section to list upcoming performances.

Since MySpace bulletins recycle every 14 days, at least once every two weeks I cut and pasted any bulletins and blogs posted by bands into a Rich Text Format word processing document, which I then imported into Atlas Ti software for analysis. The URL addresses for all web pages analyzed by this study, including informant MySpace pages, are listed in Table 2-3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 2-3: Southern Rock Internet Pages</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alabama Thunderpussy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANTiSEEN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artimus Pyledriver</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bob Wayne</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dixie Witch</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hank Williams III &amp; Asskjack</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J.B. Beverly &amp; Wayward Drifters</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Joe Buck</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Joecephus &amp; George Jonestown</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Massacre</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Junkrod Joe &amp; Cadillac Hurst</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Laney Strickland Band</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legendary Shack Shakers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Little White Pills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nashville Pussy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reverend Horton Heat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scott H. Biram</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suples</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unknown Hinson</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wayne Hancock</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Willie Heath Neal</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis Procedures

Transcriptions of interviews with musicians, the lyrics to their music, their band’s website, and their Myspace pages were analyzed via the grounded theory method using Atlas Ti software. Charmaz (1983) describes the grounded theory method as a multi-phase data coding that is entirely inductive, building ideas and theory up from the data as opposed to a purely deductive practice of testing ideas and theory. The first step in the coding process is initial coding, which is where recurrent themes are identified using shorthand codes identifying reappearing thematic categories. The initial coding is followed by focused coding, where recurring themes are further refined through specification.

The grounded theory method allowed me to induce how southern rockers’ signified rebel manhood in doing their identity work via interviews, lyrics, and virtual presence on the internet. For example, in initial coding a category of religiosity emerged. In the focused coding, it was revealed two themes within religion emerged: sin and the devil. I then realized in looking at the relationships between different codes, religious categories were overlapping with categories of alcohol, drinking, and casual sex. Closer analysis revealed informants were characterizing their drinking, drug use, and sex in religious terms, either directly as sin or metaphorically as being tempted by the devil. By framing such activities in religious terms, they engaged in an identity work strategy that maximized the perceived rebelliousness of their masculinity. Another code I initial code I used was rural, but upon further refining it I realized it was not rural as an environment that was emerging, but identity work strategies signifying things men do in rural environments like hunting, fishing and farming. The next chapter describes another theme to emerge from the grounded theory method; authenticity, which became apparent as southern rockers did identity work that legitimized themselves as artists with a meaningful, substantive message about the American experience to express to others.
CHAPTER 3: CLAIMING ARTISTIC AUTHENTICITY

While the revival is unique among most music communities in that it is comprised of varied music genres, all southern rockers are similar in being marginalized by the political economy of the culture music industry. Unable to compete with the producers of mainstream popular music, southern rockers are forced to exploit a niche market in the musical underground by touring from city to city. While mainstream artists perform for tens-of-thousands at a time and sell records by the millions, southern rockers are lucky to play for a crowd of a few hundred, and to sell enough of their albums any given night to secure enough gas money to make it to the next show.

The status of southern rock musicians is a direct result of the culture industry’s monopoly of popular music production and distribution. Because of media consolidation, the culture industry has almost control over what music is distributed to audiences. Southern rockers, who as artists do not fit the star principle image or write standardized songs, have great difficulty diffusing their music to audiences of significant sizes. A lyrical example even speaks to this marginalization. In describing how he prefers a “jukebox over a radio,” J.B. Beverly notes how mainstream country stations …

won’t play Dale Watson, they won’t play Wayne the Train.
The never play ol’ Hank III, and they don’t know my name.

This song describes how marginalized artists are denied radio play, which is one of many reasons why southern rockers are unable to compete with the artists whom have industry support. Instead, southern rockers are forced to practice their craft in a much smaller, much less economically rewarding, underground niche market.

Southern rockers’ identity work helps them salvage a positive sense of self despite minimal popularity and economic successes. Unable to define the self favorably through their career accomplishments, southern rockers develop an alternative value system to construct a positive identity that counteracts their marginalized status. This includes minimizing the importance of money and maximizing the intangible values of living an unconstrained life. This alternative value system also constructs the culture industry as corrupt, dishonest, and more concerned with money than music. Southern rockers are
critical of what they perceive as the *commercialization* and *pop-ification* of traditional American music. They perceive the products of the industry as tripe and lacking in sustenance. They then construct their own identity by disaffiliating themselves from the business of mainstream music (Hadden and Lester 1978).

Southern rockers do identity work to construct themselves as the *authentic* artists with a true or genuine expression of the American experience. Emerging out of interactionist emotion research, authenticity as a social scientific concept refers to the sensation of feeling true to oneself, or feeling as if one’s identity is actualized (Erickson 1995). As musicians, southern rockers identity work does entail striving towards authenticity—feeling as if they are artists with a voice others need to hear. However, in the popular culture literature, the concept of authenticity comes with a wrinkle given the conflict between which musical producers can stake claim as the authentic creators of a people’s music. In a review essay of three books about musical authenticity, Robert Owen Gardner (2005) writes:

> With the rise of “pop” culture and its related industries in the contemporary period, fans increasingly have sought out folk and traditional music as an “authentic” alternative. Folk or traditional culture, it was argued, by its very nature mediated through aural and oral traditions grew from the grassroots and was a genuine reflection of the voices, lives, and experiences of people in ways that mass and “pop” culture was not. Today, authenticity is frequently tied to identity and articulates the desire of consumers to differentiate themselves from the masses . . . Listeners often view the “authentic” in popular music as something new, fresh, and exciting, something that grew from the grassroots (usually in a band member’s garage) and from an untainted cultural tradition (e.g., Appalachian) and whose performers were “discovered” before their introduction to mass audiences. As the rise of punk rock and independent record labels illustrates, authenticity in rock and other forms of popular music is often constructed by their subaltern position in relation to the culture industry.
For southern rock musicians, claiming authenticity has to do with differentiating both themselves, and their music from the products of the culture industry. In attempts to authenticate themselves, southern rockers claim culture industry products are produced not to communicate meaning and emotion, nor to push the limits of creative expression, but to generate profits. In doing identity work, through juxtaposition with the culture industry southern rockers signify themselves and their music as superior to that of the mainstream.

Southern rockers engage in many identity work strategies to construct themselves as authentic artists with a legitimate aesthetic expression. As this chapter will describe, they celebrate other established musicians from past eras as heroes in order to stake a claim to an American musical legacy. They claim contemporary mainstream performers are popular not because of their song writing or musical abilities, but because of their physical looks and dancing abilities, which they deride as effeminate. Southern rockers use these strategies every sub-genre of the revival, including country, metal, punk, and rock-n-roll. The symbolic sources of their frustrations are different, however, sometime differ. The more country music influenced artists of the revival attack the Nashville establishment, while rock and metal influenced southern rockers critique MTV.

This chapter also details how southern rockers use their lifestyle in their niche market to construct, negotiate, and signify their rebel manhood. They embrace their relative autonomy as to construct the self as un-tethered and independent—attributes central to rebel masculinity. They also represent themselves as strong and courageous because of their willingness to confront the uncertainty of a non-sedentary lifestyle, and through their ability to survive the open road with little resources. At the same time southern rockers distance themselves from a more standard life course of education, work, and family.

**Vilifying Commercialization**

Southern rockers are highly critical of both the culture industry that marginalizes them as musicians and the musical products the business produces. One lyrical example of critiquing mainstream music comes from Hank Williams III’s ‘Thrown outta Bar,’ where he sings about “hanging out with his good friend George Jones,” “stayin’ up all night, talkin’ ‘bout the good times and how country music’s lost its soul.” This “soul” is
“something” almost transcendental in nature that mainstream or popular country lacks. This critique de-legitimates the authenticity of popular country music by constructing it as empty.

Willie Heath Neal speaks negatively about how popular country music lacks the ability to fill a “void” in a person. On his live album he comments:

Let’s get back to the personal help seminar we got going here. Yep.
Nothing fills that void in your life like country music. And not that Brad Paisley, shit. I mean real Merle Haggard, Johnny Cash country music.

Both Williams and Neal speak either to something abstract that country music has lost, or something that it is unable to provide to the listener. Most likely they are referring to the authentic “realness” or “genuineness” country music possessed as a folk music before the genre was co-opted and commercialized by the culture industry and singer-performers such as Brad Paisley. This is also a distancing technique, in which they separate themselves from the culture industry by embracing the “real” or authentic country of an earlier time period—music from artists such as George Jones, Merle Haggard and Johnny Cash. Other southern rock identity work strategies that critique the culture industry are more specific and direct, with some even speaking directly to the production methods detailed by Adorno.

**Critiquing Standardization**

While it is doubtful any informants are familiar with the academic work of the culture industry, many speak to the *standardization* of mainstream music. For instance, when probed about what he meant with the phrase “manufactured rock” one informant replied:

Well you have to admit that so much of what [music] we hear on the radio is contrived and generic sounding. The chorus and the verse is predictable, and then there’s the big hook. And I just think that there are real rock bands that play with the kind of attitude: “This is what we do because we want to do it, it’s not necessarily in style right now, but we can make it in style.”
This informant constructs mainstream music unfavorably using terms such as “manufactured” and “contrived,” which are typical of the adjectives relayed when most southern rockers are asked for their opinions about mainstream music—whether that music be commercial rock or popular country. Many imply the concept of standardization dictated by Adorno’s theory of the culture industry—qualities southern rockers then juxtapose themselves against in their identity work strategies used to construct themselves as authentic artists.

Many informants critique the culture industry lyrically in such a way that identity work is performed by positioning the self. In his song ‘Trashville,’ Hank Williams III speaks both to Nashville culture industry in the form of an abstract ‘they’ and the music ‘they’ create. He sings:

Now playin’ country music, it ain’t like it used to be.
I’m so tired of this new stuff, they’re tryin’ to get me to sing.
That ain’t no country music to me.

Well, I used to think that country, was out of Nashville Tennessee.
But all I see in Nashville, is a bunch of backstabbers takin’ you and me.
They don’t care about the music ya see.

In this song Williams twice refers to “they,” both in how “they” try to get him to sing a certain type of music he considers non-country, and that “they” have no concern for the music, only for making money or “takin’” him and the consumer. He implies a cowardly immorality on the part of the industry by labeling them “a bunch of backstabbers.” At the same time he engages in identity work by distancing himself from the industry, noting that “they” have failed in their attempts to get him to sing the “new stuff.”

Many artists speak of the culture industry in terms of the abstract “they,” or in terms of “Nashville,” the city from which most mainstream country comes. However, one informant was more careful to differentiate Nashville as a city and Nashville the music industry.

Well, I don’t have any disdain for Nashville as a city. I think it’s a great little town. I have no problem with the city itself. There’s a lot of great people, a lot of great pickers, and a lot of good cultural things to partake in
Nashville. What I have a problem with is the beast that lives in Nashville, as in the country music industry. I think that it’s a sad statement when a form of music that was based on culture, and purity, and people and on lifestyle has been diluted into the same kind of bubble gum horse shit that you hear on pop radio. I have a great deal of disdain for the industry.

This informant graphically describes the country culture industry as a “beast” that “diluted” a “pure culture” into “bubble gum horse shit,” meaning it is both animal refuse and like chewing gum; it might taste good but quickly looses its flavor and ultimately leaves one unfilled and desiring more. This informant also engages in a distancing identity work strategy by stating how he “disdains the [culture] industry.”

The Laney Strickland Band lyrically critiques the mainstream country from Nashville. In the song ‘Ca$hville’ they speak to both standardization and the star principle:

They don’t care, if you can sing.
They just wonder if you will sell.
“How tall how are you? How old are you?”

Fuck Nashville, burn that mother down.
Fuck Nashville, till they start it all over again.
Just call it, Ca$shville.

They just send it on down the assembly line,
It’s like soup in a can.

This song engages a frame similar to Adorno’s standardization by comparing Nashville’s products to cans of soup produced on an assembly line. Laney Strickland also reifies the industry by repeatedly using the non-specific word “they” to refer to the gatekeepers of the industry, and how “they” are more concerned with a marketable image than “they” are with voice talent. Thus, this song shows the glamorization and star principle of the culture industry construction of an “image,” or a façade is a concern for southern rockers.
**Feminizing Pop Stars**

Many informants spoke negatively about the glamorized façade of mainstream music. Some of these southern rockers are more conservative in their critiques and simply argue the industry is more image than substance. One example of a more conservative critique of the façade of mainstream music framed in terms of the abstract “they” reads:

They make their image and their lifestyle a reflection of what they think the music’s supposed to be. You see what I’m saying? They’ve got it backwards. You’ve got the weak leading the strong in that respect, and it’s not how talented a singer you are. It’s not how talented a songwriter you are. It’s how good do you look in tight jeans and can you scoot your ass across the stage, and I have no respect for that. I’m not a model. I’m not a prostitute. I’m a songwriter.

This informant undermines the authenticity of the culture industry by claiming a true music would be an image of a culture, not an idealized cultural image. In addition to chastising the industry for emphasizing looks and dancing ability over musical talent and songwriting ability, this informant distances himself from Nashville by noting he is a songwriter, and neither a model, nor a prostitute.

Another informant places “Nashville good looks” into the history of country music in order to construct mainstream music as inauthentic because it lacks the depravity of many life events:

It is a lot about how people look, how good looking they are, and the ugly people don’t seem to make it in country music very far. I don’t understand that. Country music seems to be based on all the ugly things in the world. You get it fucked up: losing your wife, losing your life, getting on drugs, getting on booze. Doesn’t make any sense, does it?

This informant speaks not just to the image of popular country music, but also to the “happy and pretty” subject matter of pop country. Implicitly, this informant both distances himself through his claim he “doesn’t understand” the industry, and how it “doesn’t make any sense.”
Reserved critiques of mainstream music speak only to the façade of the performers and the industry’s lack of concern for song substance. However, other southern rockers go one step further critique the culture industry’s glamorization of performers; they accuse them of homosexuality. For instance, in ‘Dick in Dixie,’ Hank Williams III sings:

Well some say I'm not country, and that's just fine with me. 'Cause I don't wanna be country, with some faggot looking over at me. They say that I'm ill-mannered, that I'm gonna self-destruct. But if you know what I'm thinking, you'll know that pop country really sucks.

Later in his song Williams captures what he feels is the inauthentic superficiality of Nashville music with his comment about a “manufactured town.” The above passage, shows how Williams also critiques pop country performers by attacking their sexuality using the derogatory label applied to homosexual men; “faggot.” He follows up this homosexual reference by engaging an identity work strategy that distances himself from pop-country standards by signifying his own self as “ill-mannered” and going to “self-destruct.” Through juxtaposing Nashville performers to his own self, Williams constructs mainstream stars as well-mannered and cautious—two characteristics opposite to the vulgar and risk-taking persona indicative of both hegemonic and rebel masculinity.

Williams is only one of many artists to accuse popular performers of homosexuality, though most southern rockers only imply a pop star is gay by labeling them feminine. This strategy of othering is used by J.B. Beverly in his song “Dark Bar and Jukebox.” Two phrases in this song, “washed up fashion show” and “runway cowboys,” feminize Nashville performers by metaphorically comparing popular country to an enterprise perceived as being comprised of only women and gay men: the fashion industry.

Othering mainstream performers as effeminate homosexuals is not limited to just the country sub-genre of the revival. In a song about the popularization of punk called ‘Fuck the Kids,’ ANTISEEN sings:

This is for the crusty, dirty little shits. Lame ass losers and pathetic twits. This is for you ‘Mr. better than me.'
My shit don’t stink, ‘Mr. squat when you pee.’

The line “Mr. Squat when you pee” feminizes who the ANTiSEEN perceive as a pretentious and over stylistic generation of punk rockers sold a watered down, image conscious type of punk that lacks “the brutal truth.” In this same song he also slurs this group using homosexual references, calling them “emo fags” and “PC queers.”

The strategy of feminizing and/or accusing industry performers of homosexuality in order to construct the rebel masculine self through a juxtaposition is also engaged by informants during interviews. In describing Hank III, one informant compared getting involved with the Nashville music industry to a homosexual sex act:

Yeah, ya know what [Hank III] said to me, dude? He could be sucking that pop country cock and ruling the airways if he wanted to. He’s got the name of royalty. He said “fuck those guys ... just take the low road, that’s where the pride and respect was. Just pay respect to the people that brought you here and the people you admire and when you got to Nashville.” I knew him before I came to Nashville. That’s part of the reason I came. [I] Came to Nashville, there were two lines. There was the ditch line, going downtown and doing the live bars in the ditches and there was the fucking cock sucking line that all the pop stars were standing in. I chose the low road because of guys like him [Hank III].

Twice in this passage this southern rocker compares involvement with the Nashville music scene as performing oral sex on another man. He then distances both himself and Hank III from the industry through their decisions to “take the low road” of playing live in front of bar crowds. Implicit in these statements is an identity work strategy that constructs the self as not gay, and thus indicative of perhaps what is the central component of hegemonic masculinity: heterosexuality.

Undermining the manhood of others by labeling them homosexuals is fitting with Connell’s (1995) description of the power relationships between dominant and subordinate masculinities. In embracing hegemonic masculinity, many men stigmatize, marginalize and undermine other types of masculinity, especially the masculinity of gay men. Part of the subordination of gays by straight men involves the imposition of
feminine characteristics on homosexual men. Such an identity work strategy is a type of defensive othering (Schwalbe et al. 2000) because a marginalized group is empowering their own sense of self by stigmatizing another subordinated group.

**Constructing Nashville and MTV**

Southern rockers also do identity work that frames the culture industry as unethical and corrupt while simultaneously constructing their own selves as morally superior. This enables southern rockers to retain a positive sense of self by justifying their lack of economic success—a measure of a man’s worth for many men—by staking claim to a musical movement that is bigger and ultimately more important than their own personal careers. One musician used personal ethics to justify his career choice:

> I would like to say one more thing about navigating the mainstream. I think as long as--[at least for] me personally--as long as you can wake up everyday and feel comfortable with the decisions that you made, then you’re right, by yourself and other people.

This informant describes the culture industry as not just personally corrupting to musicians, but inherently problematic for our entire society. Thus, he is comfortable with his decision to avoid the mainstream because he can wake up everyday and know he “did right” even though he has only minimal economic success as a musician. This identity work strategy thus rationalizes marginal his status.

Echoing others, another interviewee claims he has no respect for artists who become a part of Nashville:

> Everybody’s got to make a living, and people do what they’re comfortable with, and some of these people—I won’t name names—might be comfortable being the equivalent of Nashville’s answer to the Backstreet Boys. But I could never do that, and I have no respect for it.

He thus distances himself from Nashville by using southern rockers’ value system that establishes a boundary between himself and popular performers. This identity work strategy implies his own craft is deserving of respect, perhaps because it is not pop music like the Backstreet boys and therefore is authentic.
As the previous quotes imply, southern rockers often claim that even if offered acceptance into the mainstream they would decline. One informant proudly expressed a stand one band took against MTV:

Some friends of ours want to make a video, but they don’t want to play it on MTV. Here’s the story. Basically, they played New York and MTV people were there to see them, as well as people from Fuse, and they were talking to my friend who’s the guitar player, and they’re like, “We should do a video. We really want to do a video.” He was like, ”Well who are you guys?” Well, the one person was like, “I’m from Fuse,” and the other guy was like, “I’m from MTV.” He was like, “Fuck you, we’ll never do a video for MTV. Fuse, maybe. I just don’t want it sandwiched in between commercials for the Army and shit.” They’re like, “Well you don’t want to do a video for Fuse either.” And he was like, “All right.”

This informant engages in a distancing strategy that constructs the two most popular music video cable channels, MTV and Fuse, as amoral and unethical because of their commercialization. This shows how an alternative value system, a southern rock ethical code, has developed as a response to their marginal status. Using this code southern rockers both distance themselves from, and maintain a boundary between the culture industry and their own “ethically superior” selves. At the same time, in not making videos for television, in-group solidarity is reinforced as southern rockers police themselves from infringement from the culture industry.

I should note that a small minority of southern rockers are not as critical of the culture industry as those quoted above. One southern rocker, for example, candidly expresses his aspirations:

I’d love to be on MTV and fucking have a million dollars, but . . . I’m definitely in the minority … Man, when I was a kid growing up in Virginia … there wasn’t no Internet then, … the only way I figured out who bands were was from fucking Hit Parader, Metal Edge, and Fucking Head Bangers Ball. They’ll [MTV] suck ya dry music-wise, and play your shit way too much, but if you want to sell … everybody wants to sell records … Fuck yeah I want to be on the TV. I want my own TV show.
That’s what I want, I want my own damn TV show … I’d buy my momma a big house.

This informant knows his opinions are unpopular, describing himself as “in the minority” amongst southern rock musicians. He also notes the culture industry can be problematic, or would “suck you dry,” and not always work in the musician’s best interests. Most southern rockers have only modest career aspirations. “I’d just like to make a living doing it, but that’s it,” explains one interviewee. Echoing others, another claims “I don’t have some arena rock aspirations of being a big commercial hit.” Most men I interviewed want their bands to be successful enough so that they could support themselves playing music. Instead of working “day jobs,” they aspire to make a living solely by touring and selling records. In other words, most southern rockers aspire to a subsistence existence in the margins of American music.

Another informant was not only accepting of his marginal status, but also distances himself from the mainstream by claiming he does not want the “rewards” of mainstream success because of the ethical complications success entails:

I can only speak for myself and not the rest of my band mates, but I don’t play music to be famous, I don’t play music to be rich, I don’t play music to get laid or do drugs. I play music because, first and foremost, it makes me happy, and I hope it enriches other people’s lives, in a substantial way… Its fine if it’s superficial, people just like to rock out to my band, that’s awesome too. I like to do the same thing. But I hope that maybe it will [make people say], “Man, that song really got me through my divorce,” or “That song really got me through when I lost my job,” or “It reminds me of this great time hanging out with my friends in the summer at the beach.” Ya know, it’s like I’ve always said, that all I ever could hope for from being in a band, is that 20 years from now when I’m fucking bald, and fat, and stupid, and drunk or whatnot, there’s like a group of dudes, or chicks, hanging out drinking beer and listening to my records going “Damn, this band was Baaaaaddddd Aaaassss!”

This informant distances himself from the industry by claiming he does not play music in order to secure the rewards of mainstream success: fame, fortune, drugs, and sex. Rather,
he feels fulfilled simply by doing what makes him personally happy and imagining that he may be enriching others’ lives.

Almost all southern rockers distance themselves from the culture industry in order to construct virtuous selves. Even those striving for mainstream status must accept the industry as problematic. These distancing strategies are based on a southern rock value system framing the industry as corrupt, amoral, and unethical primarily because of its pursuit of profit and image at the expense of the music.

Valorizing Southern Rock and Southern Rockers

Unable to compete with the more powerful culture industry, southern rockers exploit a niche market in the margins of American culture; but this market offers little economic compensation, social prestige, or opportunities for future success. A southern rocker is typically a white man in his mid-30s without steady employment, marketable skills, a home or family. He spends the majority of his time inside, or traveling to or from bars. Many cannot even afford hotel rooms, so when they have no friends to crash with in a city they often stop to sleep in the back of a van at rest stops. In our individualistic society in which people’s worth is measured in terms of economic success, southern rockers are symbolically marginalized or “stigmatized” (Goffman 1963).

Southern rockers believe they are stigmatized, but their identity work recasts themselves as virtuous outcasts by infusing rebel masculinity with individualist pride. They are independent men who answer to no one and do as they please despite the protests of others. A lyrical example comes from Dixie Witch, who in a song about living on the road sings, “Some say there’s another way we can live … but I’m choosing the sun, the moon, and the stars.” In celebrating their life on the road, southern rockers signify their rebel manhood by constructing the masculine self both independent, and as willing to take risks and confront the challenges that accompany a drifter’s life.

Glorifying Autonomy

In order to explore how southern rockers perceive their own lives, I made certain to ask each informant what they liked best and least about being a traveling musician. Most spoke to how they enjoy seeing the country, how they like making new friends in different cities, or how they like being in a different place every day. However, one
informant more than any other captured how his life on the road is entwined with his self-conception of his identity as a rebel man.

Playing rock-n-roll and going around the country is kind of a free way to live. We’re not obligated to some kind of job or mortgage or life like that, being stuck in a life. We kind of have the freedom, a gypsy freedom almost … ya know, gypsy life versus structure, mortgage, debt.

This informant interprets his lifestyle positively because it is the inverse of the “standard life course” prescribed by society where one comes of age, gets a job (usually after being educated), gets married, buys a house, and rears children. Whereas most see work, home and family as life goals, this informant constructs them as metaphorical prisons. Like many southern rockers, he describes independence and freedom from the “burdens” most individuals are tethered to. Southern rockers prefer their mobility, or the “freedom of the road” to the limitations of a sedentary lifestyle. Also, in distancing themselves from others, themes of rebelliousness emerge as southern rockers reject a more standard life course.

Because “freedom of the open road” is indicative of rebel manhood, informants do identity work to signify themselves as “men of the road.” This identity work strategy is seen in some of the names southern rock artists give themselves, such as ‘The Wayward Drifters,’ ‘The Outlaw Carnies,’ and Wayne ‘The Train’ Hancock, with railroads being a traditional symbol of frontier travel in country music. Travel, usually without definite destination in terms of wandering or drifting is a common lyrical theme. Willie Heath Neal’s ‘Each Road Gets Twice as Long,’ ‘Pain Train,’ and his version of Steve Earle’s ‘Guitar Town’ are all songs about traveling. J.B. Beverly’s songs ‘Highway Blues,’ ‘Train Song,’ and ‘Wayward Drifter’ all center on travel—the last of which contains a guest vocalist called Dixie Coon who sounds like, and is rumored to be Hank Williams III. Williams also sings about travel in ‘7 Months, 39 Days,’ ‘Crazed Country Rebel,’ and ‘Broke, Lovesick and Driftin’.’ Hank III also recorded his own versions of two Wayne Hancock songs about the open road, ‘87 Southbound’ and ‘Thunderstorms & Neon Signs.’ In fact, traveling and travel to different places are themes in almost every Wayne Hancock song—themes which can be noted in a brief survey of some of his song titles; ‘Man of the Road.’ ‘Track 49,’ ‘Route 23,’ ‘Railroad
Blues,’ ‘Route 66,’ ‘Highway 54,’ and ‘Highway Blues.’ Travel and life on the road are also themes in the non-country portions of the southern rock revival. The road and far away places are themes in almost all Dixie Witch songs, which can be noted by survey of their songs titles; ‘Freewheel Rollin’, ‘Goin’ South,’ ‘The Wheel,’ ‘Driftin’ Lady,’ and ‘Travel.’ On southern rocker even said he fears that his band’s lyrics are too focused on life on the road. But he also added that they can only write lyrics about what they experience, and all he and his band have experienced for several years is the open road.

While a select few southern rock songs speak to being homesick and to the loneliness of the road, most are celebratory of the freedom and autonomy indicative of a non-sedentary lifestyle. In glorifying their lives as traveling musicians, southern rockers do identity work that constructs the self not as lonely, homeless drifters with nowhere to call home, but as rebel men free to go where they want, when they want, while making sure to enjoy themselves both on the way and once they arrive.

Conquering the Open Road

Southern rockers signify rebel masculinity by doing identity work that constructs themselves as free and independent, while distancing themselves from the “prison-like” existence of a sedentary life. Bob Wayne’s ‘Road Bound Man’ makes the case:

I’m a low down, wound up, road bound man.
Go ahead and chase me, sucker, catch me if you can.
I’ll never be a worthless lying, politician man.
You won’t catch me in no college classroom, rather live off of the land.
To the devil’s face we made our peace, and now I’m on the loose.
I slipped out on your daughter, like I slipped out of your noose.
I ain’t never been afraid of death, I’ve been kicked, and shot and stabbed.
I’m the best you’ve ever seen, I’m the worse you’ve ever had.
As far as staying here goes, girl I think I’m gonna pass.
Now if that ain’t country, I’ll kiss her fucking ass.
This song is part metaphor, yet grounded in figurative, literal examples. First, Wayne performs identity work by declaring himself *a man* bound to the road, and then tells the listener to go ahead and chase him. The chase is metaphorical, as we later find out what is actually trying to catch Wayne: education, jobs, and relationships with women—the last of which is expressed both literally in “as far staying here girl, I think I’m gonna pass” and the metaphorical “I slipped out on your daughter, like I slipped out of your noose.” It is also significant that the woman stays rather than joins Wayne on his travels, implying the road is the domain of men. Thus, the core theme of this song is how Wayne defines his manhood through his freedom, symbolized by the road, and his ability to maintain his freedom despite different threats—threats of the more standard life course of education, employment, and family.

Bob Wayne’s ‘Road Bound Man’ captures another way southern rockers use the open road to define their manhood: “I ain’t never been afraid of death, I’ve been kicked, and shot and stabbed.” This too is metaphorical of what can happen to southern rockers while on the open road. Very few southern rockers have established careers that allot them comfort and security on the road. For example, Figure 3-1 shows not just how Bob Wayne travels, but his actual home. This photo was taken while Wayne ran an extension cord into the bar he was playing so he could power his trailer and burn CDs to sell later that night. Wayne is not the only southern rocker to travel in an outdated vehicle. Artimus Pyledriver posted a MySpace bulletin that read: “Sorry to you folks in the NY, BOS area. Our motor blew up in the RV, so we had to limp it back home.” The road brings certain challenges and risks, but their courage to confront those risks and challenges signifies their masculinity.
Many southern rockers developed a discourse about their life on the road that constructs the masculine self as strong because of their ability to cope with hardship, things such as, “drink way too much,” or “it’s just tough dude, physically demanding,” or “you’re sleeping weird, ya know, we’re not at the level yet where we can have hotels and a nice bus.” These statements indirectly convey rebel manhood by speaking to the strength needed to confront the challenges of being a traveling musician. One informant even compared himself to a pirate to describe his masculine survival ingenuity on the road:

Free feeling man, you feel like a pirate. It’s just constantly going. That’s what I like about it … You always pull into town and you pillage. You know what I mean. You scrounge up. You get everything you can for free and leave.

In the interview clips of J.B. Beverly’s ‘Live from the Heartland,’ bassist Johnny Lawless directly and explicitly connects masculinity to life on the road when he proclaims, “It took a lot of balls to take off in a van and fucking go across the country on your own and do that. Ya know, and we did that.” As Johnny Lawless metaphorically implies, touring requires one of the most culturally defined elements of manhood: testicles.2

Southern rockers’ identity work not only rejects the culture industry as a corrupting and unethical, but also valorizes both their musician selves and their free, autonomous way of life. In celebrating the open road, southern rockers distance themselves, or rebel from a more standard life history of schooling, employment, and family. At the same time, southern rockers measure their status as men through their ability to survive a challenging life on the road. Life on the road becomes not just a lifestyle, but also a symbolic resource that southern rockers use to construct rebel masculinity.

2 This was not the only instance utilizing testicles to symbolize rebel manhood. While in a small, cramped, and crowded space backstage, one southern rocker asked one of his crew to hold something for him so he could make coffee. To this the crew member replied, “Do you need me to hold your balls too?” The rocker replied, “Yes, just stick them in your purse.” Exchanges like these were common where southern rockers playfully and humorously undermined each other’s masculinity.
Constructing Work as Slavery

Because steady employment threatens their rebel masculine identity, southern rockers construct and then distance themselves from “work as slavery.” This construction is explicitly stated in an Alabama Thunderpussy song entitled ‘Wage Slave:’

Quick glance into the never, mind bent on saving time.
Bold sense of dunce bravado, it’s your ass on the line.
Poor pig with nothing on you, scraping and scratching for a dime,
to buy back the soul you sold there, but the truth of the matter it’s just a lie.

As hope dissolves, you fall away.

Nine tenths of what you borrow, won’t help you get through tomorrow.
Crime becomes a tempting option, to release you from the strain.
Here comes the craven wage slave, dripping with sweat, bad blood, and tears.
Looking to get out, up above and over chipping away yet chained to fear.
The system fails, you once again.
One fact prevails, the only war is class war.
Rise, and burn this fucker down.
Organize, and turn yourselves around.
March on, hold the torch of hope.
Fight, Fight, Fight.
Don’t let them destroy you.
It’s your choice, it’s your voice.

One struggle binds us together, not going down without a fight.
This storm together we’ll weather, at least we’ll have our pride.

While mention of a working class revolution is unique to this southern rock example, Alabama Thunderpussy also captures how most southern rockers perceive work and employment: as exploitation if not outright slavery, either of which is a threat to the free-willed and independent rebel masculine self.
I often asked southern rockers if they “could ever see themselves working a 9-to-5,” or working a “day job” full time. In their own way, all described traditional work arrangements as too oppressing and constraining to their independent and autonomous character type. When probed about his “inability” to work full time, one informant noted:

Just that man, having a shitty boss and being a slave basically. “Oh, you need Saturday off, well I need you to come in and do this for me,” like that movie ‘Office Space’ almost. “Yeah, I’m gonna need you to come in on Saturday.” “But I had plans.” “Well you don’t anymore.” Just like a wage slave.

This informant used the word slave twice to describe how work conflicts with one’s free will. To a southern rocker who constructs his rebel masculinity through his autonomy and independence, forced to be somewhere and to do something against his will is especially insulting and degrading. Another informant expressed similar sentiments about his past experiences with work.

No, man. I was doing that [working a traditional job]. I had a good job and career. Left it. Just couldn’t do it … It’s very manipulative. Lots of backstabbing. I was going through my divorce and shit. My music career was just starting. I was still working this job. Good job, man. Fortune 500 company and I was making better money than I had ever made in my life. But I was going through a divorce, my life was falling apart. I had this music thing going. The bigwigs would come in and they all hardly ever did anything and they are taking all the salespeople out drinking. Only thing I’m thinking is I’m a little guy on the bottom of the boat, rowing and that motherfucker is beating the drum. He don’t give two shits about, I wish I was dead right now. I just realized I don’t want to work for any motherfucker. I just want to be free and this is how I was going to do it. I wanted to be my own boss and just be alive and not wake up and punch a clock.
This southern rocker uses the term “freedom” and the phrase “be my own boss” to describe avoidance of authority in addition to framing the working world as corrupt, amoral and degrading. By constructing traditional work arrangements as amoral and constraining, and then by distancing himself from such an arrangement, he signifies his rebel manhood and constructs the self as superior to those involved with a corrupting, unethical company.

Because of their aversion to work, the rebel masculinity of southern rock musicians is in conflict with traditional working class masculinity that defines a man through his acquisition of skills and an “honest day’s pay for an honest day’s work.” Southern rockers perceive salary as not worth the sacrifice of hard work. Still, because working class masculinity values self-efficacy and autonomy, it is not completely contradictory to southern rock masculinity that celebrates the freedom of answering to no one but oneself (Connell 1995; Horowitz 2001).

Because southern rockers need to relate to their working class fans, work and working is one arena in which their interview statements differed from both their lyrics and on-stage claims. In ‘Quitin Time,’ Joecephus and the George Jonestown Massacre sing to their boss, “sick of you telling me what to do so I got two words, fuck you.” Later in the song the singer claims that he, “represents a lot of people out there who aren’t getting their fare share.” While on stage Hank Williams III made a “Marxist-like” statement to the crowd: “All you 9to5ers, hard working motherfuckers, you’re bustin’ your balls and no matter what they’re still trying to take something from ya it seems like.” Artimus Pylesdriver commented how they were pleased with Buffalo, NY because it “seems like a working man’s town.” Another informant described their music as “the whole blue-collar thing really.”

Many southern rockers glorify work and workers in song despite their own aversion to steady employment. Bob Wayne, Hank Williams III, J.B. Beverly, The Legendary Shack Shakers, and Scott H. Biram all have songs about truck drivers. In concert Bob Wayne compares himself to a truck driver, noting how “they share the road with him,” which is way to glorify both on the road lifestyles. While truck driving is the most common occupation glorified in songs, it is not the only working class job to be lyrically celebrated. The Legendary Shack Shakers have a song entitled ‘Something in
the Water,’ which describes Joe, a “cold war hero,” who ended up giving up his life for his job burying nuclear waste. In ‘Graveyard Shift,’ Scott H. Biram describes his preference working third shift because he sleeps all day and is up all night, while in ‘Work’ he notes how his father taught him how “workin’” life is hard, but it “buys a man his dinner.” On weeknight shows, it is common for musicians to thank people for attending even though many have to work in the morning. During our interview one informant proclaimed how he admired me for my ability to hold down a regular job and “stay in place all the time.” Even though work conflicts with the rebel masculinity, southern rockers celebrate the working class jobs of their audiences. This is not the case with white collar occupations, as southern rockers distance themselves from these positions and the people who fill them.

Overall, southern rockers perceive working a traditional job as a threat to their rebel manhood, but they publicly celebrate rather than degrade working class men. Some southern rockers frame work as slavery and others define themselves as unable to submit themselves to the control of others. However, they also publicly honored working class men in song and symbolically stood with then when railing against over-demanding, under-appreciative bosses.

**Distancing the Self from Education**

Rebel manhood is in direct conflict with middle class masculinity that celebrates education, intellectual over menial labor, authority over others, and materialism as these non-rebel men define their masculinity through their employment positions and earnings (Willott and Green 1997). Southern rockers reject middle class masculinity using oppositional identity work that undermines the importance of education, materialism, and authority over others.

Interviewees were often curious about what I did as an academic, and this often led to discussions about college and education. Many informants revealed they had attempted post-secondary education, some even finished with associate or bachelor’s degrees. Each, however, downplayed their education’s usefulness. For example, one informant noted:
Like I’ve said, I’ve been playing in bands for 20 years and touring for going on 15 years of that. So, it’s kind of really all that I know how to do. I don’t have any skills. I have a worthless degree in Religious Studies … I didn’t want to learn someone’s opinion I just wanted to learn the general knowledge that was out there and form my own opinions on things. So I didn’t go to school to get a job. I went to school to more or less become part of like world consciousness, the collective mindset or whatever.

Another informant expresses similar sediments in describing how his Bachelor’s degree in art qualified him to paint houses. One informant describes himself as happy to have attended college because, “I wouldn’t have ever tried a beer bong or any other kind of bong if it hadn’t been for college. Well, I take that back, I was smoking out of a bong in high school.” Yet another southern rocker seems to celebrate how he was not educated, proudly revealing how he stopped at 8th grade. After being handed the waiver to participate in this study, one informant commented how he couldn’t read.

Devaluing education in conjunction with the rejection of work and materialism compliments southern rockers’ rationalize of their low socio-economic position done to salvage a positive identity even though they lack human capital skills. Still, most southern rockers admit music does not, nor ever will, “pay the bills.” Bob Wayne’s ‘Cardboard Blues’ describes the lowest point a southern rocker can find himself in economically; panhandling.

Well, I’ve been working my time, since quarter past five.  
I ain’t got no shoes and I ain’t got a dime.  
But I do got, the cardboard blues.  
I worked all my life, well it’s my right to choose.  
Hey there mister, I ain’t gonna lie.  
I don’t need no food, just a bottle of wine.  
So I can drink away my, cardboard blues.  
I’ll be working till five, I ain’t got nothing to lose.  
Let’s Boogie-Woogie, C’mon!  
Hey there Ma’am, I don’t give a damn.
Get your ass over here and fill up my hand,
with nickels, dollars quarters, anything you choose.
Just so long as I get rid a, these cardboard blues.

Well I’m hungry and I’m broke,
and I’m fresh out of smoke.
And I la, la la ………
Boogie woogie … Ye hah.

Let’s all get rid of these cardboard blues.
As Wayne notes, southern rockers “choose” music because “the freedom of the road” or
the “love of rock-n-roll” is worth sacrificing the more comfortable, secure lifestyle steady
employment can offer. In a typical fashion, this constructs rebel masculinity, because
while they may sacrifice economically for the career choices they have made, they are
free from the “slavery” of work. Such identity work also justifies the life they have
chosen. In either case, southern rockers celebrate their meager economic status and
lifestyle in the margins of American music in such a way that that they do not alienate
their working class fans.

**Southern Rock Saviors**

Southern rockers construct themselves as the saviors of southern rock by
signifying selves as sacrificial musicians committed to authentic expressions of the
American experience. They describe themselves as nobly pursuing something more
important than their own individual success as a musician. For instance, one informant
noted:

I want it to stay part of our culture, and I’m willing to do whatever I have
to do to help preserve it. And if I spend the rest of my life out here
playing these small bars for small crowds, then so be it. I don’t really give
a fuck.

This informant accepts his place in the margins, or “playing small bars for small crowds”
because he perceives doing such will help “preserve” American culture. Southern
rockers thus sometimes present themselves as cultural ambassadors who create meaningful music for audiences.

This strategy is reflected in one informant’s offense as to how Nashville categorizes “their music” under the country label:

It’s like all that stuff Shelton [Hank Williams III] talks about all the time with the Pop 40 country stuff. It’s like, to guys like these guys, like all these players, Andy [Gibson] and Adam [McOwen], that ain’t country music. These guys are like raised on that shit, or raised on real country music. And to them, that’s Pop 40. So call it Pop 40, don’t call it country.

This southern rocker used the adjective “real” in order to stake claim to musical authenticity. In addition to de-legitimating the authenticity of cultural industry products as image based tripe, southern rockers do identity work to construct their own selves as bona fide artists and musicians who create an authentic, legitimate musical expression.

J.B. Beverly and The Wayward Drifters ‘Live from the Heartland’ album contains interview clips with the band, one of which speaks of Nashville:

I don’t think Nashville is all bad, but I know there are interests in Nashville that are certainly afraid of bands like us, and like, Dale Watson and the Lonestars, and Hank III and Wayne [Hancock] because we’re blurring boundaries in an honest way, it’s not a financially driven way. No one told J.B. he should have a Banjo in the band because it would make a lot of money, and if someone came to J.B. and said you “really need to ditch those two scary sidemen and get someone younger and prettier,” who happened to play lead guitar and fiddle, yeah, J.B. would give them the stiff middle finger and say “get lost.”
In this clip, Wayward Drifter banjoist Dan Mazer connects the glamour and profits of the Nashville culture industry and then contrasts it with the “honest” (and therefore authentic) music he and other “scary looking” informants create. In calling him and his band mates scary looking, Mazer distances himself from the image-conscious Nashville (See Figure 3-2).

Another informant claims his fans are attracted to his music because of its authenticity. When asked about his band’s typical fan, one informant attributed his following to the “realness” of his music compared to that on country radio:

Well, our typical fan seems to be folks that miss that reality to their country music. We get more and more folks that are tired of turning on the FM dial and hearing, you know, the boot scooters and the pop acts. They want real songs about real things and real people. Even if it ain’t about me, it’s things that people can relate to, you know, and that’s what they want. They want that real connection, and so our average fan is – whether it’s a man or a woman, or older or younger, rich or poor, they want that which is missing from the FM dials, really more than anything.

This informant uses the word “real” to describe his songs’ subject matter, while distancing himself from the mainstream acts on the radio. He deduces his diverse audiences are attracted to his music because they are not getting what they want from the songs on the radio. Another informant authenticated his music in terms of “honesty” by describing how all successful music, whether punk, metal, rock, or country, is written according to the “fundamental formula” of “three chords and some brutal honesty.”

Another musician stakes claim to an authentic musician identity by comparing the topics of his songs to the themes of mainstream music. This identity work positions the self through his craft:

So man, I just write about what I know. I’ve seen guys singing songs about the rodeo and shit and it’s like man you’ve never been in a rodeo.

Just write about what you know. That’s all you do. That’s all I do.

This artist stakes his identity claim by pointing out he writes what he knows as opposed to depicting a fantasy reality.
Other southern rockers are more idealistic in their identity work strategies that authenticate themselves as musicians. Many celebrate being part of a musical movement that is bigger than they are—a movement with a noble cause. I often heard Hank III referred to as “country music royalty” by informants and fans alike, but one southern rocker went further and describes Williams as a savior:

A godsend. He is definitely; he is a reluctant messiah man. He has saved country music for so many people. He just wanted to play, man. And he had the weight of the world on his shoulders because every eye was on him, man . . . Man, he’s a godsend. He wasn’t really the first [to incorporate punk into country] but he is the guy that gave it authenticity. Because, like I said, he’s got the royal blood in him, man. And when he did it that way, you know its okay. He gave it legitimacy.

Not only does this informant compare Williams to “royalty,” but metaphorically describes him as a “savior.” He also engages the words authentic and legitimate to describe Hank III and his cross-genre, musical efforts.

After offering appreciation to me for listening to what he had to say, another informant described himself and other artists of the revival as “real:”

I appreciate you supporting, I appreciate you taking the time to listen to my mess and what I say because there are real, what I consider fellow troubadours out there today. Hank III, without saying, he is a fellow troubadour for obvious reasons, and ah, Reverend Horton Heat, them boys, they [are] kindred spirits. I toured with them to and Hasil Adkins. Colonel Bruce Hampton, he’s a fellow troubadour, he’s still out there doing it. We all feel the same, as long as we’s alive we’ll be doing this man, as long as anybody will listen—god bless the people who will listen.

Similar to others, he authenticates himself and other revival artists using the label “real.” Another man noted that while he won’t ever achieve “rock star status,” he will always be able to say, “Hey man, I’ve traveled the world playing music, and some of the most respected people I know, like Dale Watson and Wayne Hancock or Hank III, you know, love, respect, and support what I do.”
Like many southern rockers, the last informant legitimates and glorifies the revival in order to authenticate his own self and justify his status in the underground margins of American music. This identity aligns values to signify the self as part of a movement saving American culture—a movement worth sacrificing his own economic well-being for. This identity work strategy is also fitting with rebel manhood, signifying the self as willing to sacrifice and even suffer for a musical movement trying to salvage an authentic expression of the American experience from the corrupting forces of the culture industry.

**Celebrating Music Heroes**

Glorifying revival artists as not just authentic musicians, but as the saviors of American music helps southern rockers construct virtuous selves despite their minimal economic success. Another identity work strategy that signifies themselves as authentic musicians involves symbolically connects their own identity to musical heroes who have already legitimated themselves as cultural icons. For example, in ‘Dark Bar and a Jukebox’ J.B. Beverly sings:

> They forgot ol’ Hank’s sorrow, they’ve lost the man in Black,
> and they won’t give ol’ George a chance to get his darlin’ back.
> I don’t need me no Opry, I don’t need music row,
> just six strings and some heartache and I’ll be good to go.

> Give me a dark bar and a jukebox over that radio.
> Yeah, Toby just don’t cut it give me Haggard, give me Coe.
> I’m tired of watchin’ Nasvhille and its washed up fashion show,
> ‘Cause you won’t find no country on country radio.

Beverly begins his song by describing how country radio abandoned particular artists using a code speak only those familiar with a particular genre of outlaw country could interpret. By saying “Hank’s sorrow,” Beverly references Hank Williams Sr. and his blues-based lyrical style focused on life’s misery and misfortune. The “man in black” refers to Johnny Cash, an artist who almost always dressed entirely in black to remind others about the ever-persistent suffering, misery and death in the world. While there are
many Georges in country music, the lyrical follow-up about giving him “a chance to get his darling back” means Beverly is speaking of George Jones who is known for heartbreak and heartache ballads of loves lost to other men. In the chorus of ‘Dark Bar and a Jukebox’ Beverly mentions two more country music heroes by last name, “give me Haggard, give me Coe.” Merle Haggard is famous for his songs about the hopelessness of the American underclass, while David Allen Coe is known for his “redneck biker-punk” identity and his coining of a phrase repeated by both other country musicians and southern rockers alike, “If that ain’t country, I’ll kiss your ass.”

With the exception of Hank Williams Sr., who predates modern country music, the aforementioned artists in J.B Beverly’s ‘Dark Bar and a Jukebox’ belong to “the outlaw country movement” of the mid 1970s. This movement is part of a larger and much older country music genre called hard country (which includes Hank Sr.), that originated with 1920s honky-tonk that focused on themes of bar life, violence and infidelity. Hard country musicians are celebrated in southern rock almost as much for their songs about “being wrong” as they are for their real life “wrong” behaviors (Ching 2001) because in any given time period, hard country musicians and their music stand in contrast to the mainstream soft-shell country (Peterson 1999) or countrypolitian (Jensen 1998) artists.

Hard country artists are held in great esteem by southern rockers because of their non-commercialized songs about drinking, drugging, violence, and criminal punishment that follows are almost always based on real life experiences in which hard country artists found themselves injured, in jail, or dead due to substance abuse and aggressive, violent behaviors. For example, many believe substance abuse problems led to Hank Williams Sr.’s early passing (Hemphill 2005). In addition to being arrested for drug possession early in his career and kicking out the stage lights at the Grand Ole Opry, Johnny Cash mounted an anti-Nashville crusade in the late 1990s that culminated in a full page ad in Billboard magazine where he “acknowledged” the Nashville music establishment with a picture of himself giving the middle finger (Stressguth 2002). Merle Haggard’s career included several stays in prison, while both Waylon Jennings and George Jones’s drug and alcohol addictions, along with violent outbreaks nearly ended their careers, if not their lives (Ching 2001).
Beverly’s ‘Dark Bar and a Jukebox’ is not the only example of southern rock musical hero celebration. Hank Williams III has a song entitled ‘Country Heroes’ includes the verse:

I'm drinkin' some George Jones, and a little bit of Coe.
Haggard's easin' my misery, and Waylon's keepin' me from home.
Hank's givin' me those high times, Cash is gonna sing it low.
I'm here gettin' wasted, here with my country heroes.

In this song about drinking in a bar, Hank III pays tribute to his “country heroes.” He notes Merle Haggard “eases his misery,” while Waylon Jennings—known for his songs about travel—“keeps him from home.” Williams also references Johnny Cash’s low voice, and pays tribute to his grandfather’s substance abuse problems. Hank III references David Allen Coe in the chorus and in the second verse by singing he is drinking whiskey and “if that ain't country, boy, you can kiss my ass.”

Southern rockers musically celebrate artists they admire by performing and recording their songs. Both Hank Williams III and Willie Heath Neal have recorded versions of Johnny Cash’s ‘Cocaine Blues,’ which they also play on stage. Songs from Alabama Thunderpussy, Dixie Witch, and Throttlerod are featured on a Small Stone Records compilation called ‘Sucking in the 70s,’ an album that celebrates 70s hard rock. The Laney Strickland Band’s album ‘Roots’ is comprised almost entirely of re-recorded versions of songs written by other southern rock artists including Hank Williams Jr. and Merle Haggard. Also, one of the self-authored songs on this Strickland album, ‘You Ain’t Worth a Dime,’ states “I know all about you’re cheating” heart cause Hank [Williams Sr.] said it best.” The first song on this album pays tribute to a band that is extremely influential to southern rockers, Lynyrd Skynyrd, who after a short career filled with public episodes of drugs, violence, and womanizing tragically lost lead singer Ronnie Van Zant and two other members in a plane crash. The first verse reads:

In '77, he went to heaven, on a cold October night.
But the free bird flies, still in our hearts, in our souls and in our minds.
He sang songs of truth, and songs of life, songs about wrong, songs about right.
And if he could write, just one more song, what would he say? What would say?

I had a dream that I saw Ronnie, he had his mic stand in his hand. He was signing about the free bird, with the boys in the band. Have you ever wondered, would it be the same if he was here today?

Laney Strickland is not the only band to celebrate Lynryd Skynyrd. Artimus Pyledriver named themselves after a wrestling move and Skynyrd’s drummer Artimus Pyle. This is not the only southern rock band named after another artist. The George Jonestown Massacre uses a play on words that incorporates the name of country music outlaw, George Jones. Nashville Pussy named their band after a song by Ted Nugent—a guitarist known almost as much for his hunting and rural survival skills as he is for his songs. Naming a band after a musical legend is not only a marketing strategy; it is also an identity work strategy that authenticates a musical act by staking claim to a musical legacy.

Southern rockers also pay tribute to their metal and punk influences. On some tours Hank III is joined onstage by his guitar tech, Bob Wayne for the ‘Pentagram Tribute,’ the celebration of a doom metal band that has been active since the early 1970s. In the punk portion of the revival, ANTiSEEN has been active so long that other artists celebrated them with a tribute CD featuring 57 of their songs, each by a different artist or band—including Hank Williams III and Zeke.

Country outlaws, classic or first generation southern rockers, along with a host of 1970s rock, metal and punk artists are celebrated and glorified as heroes by southern rockers. This is an identity work strategy done to authenticate and legitimate their own identity stake as musicians by claiming to be a part of a celebrated American musical legacy honored both inside and outside the revival. Music heroes are glorified not just for their music, but because their personal lives are filled with tragic tales of drifting, drinking, drugging, womanizing and violence. In celebrating artists who have long such established their own authenticity and legitimacy as musicians, southern rockers authenticate their own identity and own music by staking claim to the appropriate southern rock lineage.
Conclusion

Although there are different musical styles or genres within the southern rock revival, all are marginalized by their popularized commercial counterparts produced by the culture industry. Southern rockers adapt to their economic exclusion by exploiting a niche market that only offers meager rewards, but does still provide the opportunity to play music and travel the country—or the world in some cases. Southern rockers rationalize their niche situation by vilifying and de-legitimating the culture industry that marginalizes them. They also construct their own identity as the authentic and legitimate musical artists by positioning the self relative to the inauthentic and illegitimate culture industry.

Themes of rebel masculinity are present as southern rockers construct a positive self identity as musicians. Part of de-legitimating and distancing the self from the Nashville music industry involves undermining the masculinity of popular country performers, chastising them as in-unauthentic, while feminizing them as glamorized, homosexual fashion models with limited musical ability. Southern rockers develop an alternative value system that allows them to rationalize their own status in the margins of both the music industry and society in general. For example, southern rockers come to celebrate their life on the road because of the freedom and independence it offers. At the same time, they define themselves as men because they are unrestrained and have the courage to confront the challenges, risks, and uncertainty of life on the road.
CHAPTER 4: RECLAIMING WHITE TRASH

This chapter describes how southern rockers do identity work to construct and signify the self as rural, poor, and white. To construct the self as rural and masculine, southern rockers signify their mastery of activities such as shooting, fishing, and farming. Southern rockers also embrace identity labels such as hillbilly, redneck, and white trash used by others to stigmatize and degrade rural whites in order to flaunt their rebelliousness. Southern rockers also embrace a low economic status—a status entwined with their embodiment of country life in the celebration of rural poverty. Southern rockers also celebrate whiteness as an ethnicity through their display of the confederate battle flag.

Stigmatized Rural Poverty

Southern rock musicians perceive themselves as the ambassadors of a larger group of white men whom are unfairly stigmatized because they happen to be poor and rural (and southern). Much of this perceived stigma is thought to be perpetuated through the representation of poor, southern, white, rural men in the mass media. As one southern rocker notes:

The southern white man is the only person that you can lampoon in the mainstream media and still be politically correct in doing so. The only thing you can really make fun of and shit on is the southern white male.

So that’s not cool with us.

Examples of this stigmatization in the mass media to which this southern rocker speaks are plentiful, with one of the most popular being the Blue Collar Comedy enterprise. This enterprise consists of four comedians who parody a poor, rural, white culture through a variety of mediums, including television, film, stand-up comedy, and even books. One of these comedians, Jeff Foxworthy, built a career using an extensive collection of “you might be a redneck” jokes about poor, rural life delivered via southern accent. Another of these Blue Collar comedians, the confederate flag wearing ‘Larry the Cable Guy’ has moved beyond television and onto films. Like many other films and television shows that depict poor southerners, his movies juxtapose stereotypical personalities and behaviors of southerners with white, non-southern, upper to middle
class Americans. When asked about these media representations of white southern men, most southern rockers reacted negatively. One informant refers to Larry the Cable Guy as;

a fucking jerk off. I think he’s a fucking fake. I swear to god I think he puts on that accent, and he may be like a redneck or whatever, but I think his accent is put on, and I think he’s a jack ass. I don’t think he knows shit about what the hell he’s trying to get people to think. I hate that son of a bitch.

Although others do not respond as emotionally as this southern rocker, they similarly express reservations about propagating troublesome stereotypes through the media representations of poor, southern white men who live in rural areas. There is even a lyrical example from the Laney Strickland band that speaks to the stereotypes of southerners; “I know they’re some folks who think we’re all real dumb, ’cause we speak with a southern drawl and work all day in the southern sun.”

As poor, rural, white men from the south, southern rockers perceive themselves stereotyped and stigmatized by the larger culture. For example, one interviewee says he has “been fighting those stereotypes my whole life.” Southern rockers are not alone in this perception, as even the renowned rock critic Greil Marcus explains: “there was one group I somehow got the message that is was okay to be bigoted about, and those were the backward, white Southerners (Hartigan 1997).” Poor, white southerners from rural areas are stereotyped and stigmatized as being lazy, violent, drunken, racist, and essentially backwards or behind the times in regards to religion, education, work, hygiene, high or polite culture, and politics.

Celebrating Rural Poverty

Instead of distancing themselves from the stigma of rural poverty, southern rockers celebrate being both poor and from the countryside. One strategy involves signifying rebel manhood by valuing rural survival skills. Complimentary strategies

3 Not all media examples that could be perceived as perpetuating a stigma against southerners focus only on men. Other media examples that create comedy at the expense of poor, white southerners of both sexes include but are not limited to the films *Sweet Home Alabama*, *The Waterboy* and the television show *The Simple Life*.
redefine poorness as indicative of an ability to negotiate life without financial resources. For example, Hank Williams III begins his song ‘Smoke and Wine’ with the lyric: “Well I ain’t got no money, but I am doing fine.” This line rather concisely describes southern rock’s general perception of money; it is nice to have, but if a man is clever, industrious, and willing to make certain sacrifices, he can do without it.

Southern rockers construct their identity as rural, even though almost all informants now reside in urban areas. Despite a widespread glorification of the countryside only one southern rock band in this study resides in a city with a population of less than 50,000: The Laney Strickland Band resides in Valdosta, Georgia. However, many southern rockers do have rural roots, spending their childhoods in rural settings. A typical response to a question about where an informant grew up is, “I live in Austin now, and actually before that I lived in an even smaller town in the middle of nowhere … I only went to 5th grade and then moved to another town with better educational possibilities.” Like many southern rockers, this informant relocated from a small, rural town because either he or his parents were in search of opportunity.

There is a contradiction given how most southern rockers celebrate the rural areas where they are originally from, not the cities in which they currently find themselves. And despite being urbanites, most southern rockers lyrically signify their identity as rural or “country.” When asked about this contradiction, informants noted they write songs about what they know, and what they claim to know is rural as opposed to urban. For instance, one informant describes:

It sounds real cliché to say it, but pretty much everybody in the band is real southern, it’s all like hot rods, and cars and fishing, shit like that because it’s who we are. I grew up on a farm ... I could tell ya all there is to know about tobacco farming.

It is notable how this informant defines southern as rural and in terms of self-built cars or hot rods, fishing, farming, and “shit like that,” thus serving as a reminder that from the perceptive of southern rockers, rebel masculinity is simply southerness. This southern

\[4\] The one exception is the city of New Orleans, which is celebrated by a network of rock/metal or swamp metal bands including Suplecs.
rock musician also worries of sounding cliché in describing the south as rural, and there are an abundant amount of lyrical examples that would make this informant think such. Some of the many lines celebrating a rural environment in Hank Williams III’s lyrics include “I ain’t got a gun but I wish I had cause I’m down in a one horse town,” “sitting in the bayou country, just me and my fishing line,” “I always carry round my loaded shot gun,” and “I like to drive my truck down a muddy dirt road.” In each of these songs Hank III signifies his identity using “I” to indicate he is doing something in a rural area, or in possession of something found predominantly in a rural place, like a shot-gun or horse.

Similarly, in ‘Evil Motherfucker from Tennessee’ Joe Buck describes himself “from a country boy to a thrashing machine,” thus showing how his identity transition from a rural child to a metal musician. In ‘I Cleaned Out a Room in my Trailer for You’ Unknown Hinson sings about his rural, mobile domicile in great detail, including it’s “Honda Generator,” “a Sterno stove,” a “creek out back for bathing and cleaning,” and so secluded that “we can run around naked without a fear, the law knows better than to come out here … they know what happened last time.” Artimus Pyledriver makes regular use of rural themes in their song writing, including dirt roads, pick-up trucks, camping in places where there is “no one for a country mile,” learning to “swim in a river” and “night fishing under the southern sky.” In ‘Plow you Under’ Scott H. Biram describes farming, or “turning up some ground” with a “mule driven plow.’’ The Legendary Shack Shakers use a variety of rural images in their lyrics, including “blood on the bluegrass,” “hallowed hunting ground,” and “buck-shot kerosene.” Junkrod Joe and the Cadillac Hearse sing about guns, though they call them “Walmart Specials.”

As shown in Figure 4-1, fiddler Adam McOwen incorporates a shotgun into the imagery displayed on his website, Hotfiddle.com.
Reclaiming White Trash

Another identity work strategy ads an element of rebelliousness to the celebration of the rural countryside. Southern rockers embrace labels used to stigmatize individuals from the country such as “hillbilly” and “redneck.” This identity work strategy renegotiates the meanings of these terms into a positive, even celebratory definition that also signifies the self as defiantly individualistic in regards to how others view them. In other words, this identity work strategy involves the embracement and flaunting of a spoiled or stigmatized identity (Goffman 1963).

“Hillbilly,” or its related southern rocker term “hellbilly” is a common label embraced by southern rockers to celebrate their stigmatized, rural identity. In ‘Hillbilly Pride’ Joe Buck not only describes the experience of rural poverty, but he claims “hillbilly pride going nation-wide.” Hank Williams III sings about how his uncle taught him to be “real proud of my hillbilly ways and my outlaw style,” and in another song entitled ‘Smoke and Wine’ he is “a hillbilly hell-raiser.” On their album ‘Roots’ The Laney Strickland band recorded a song about how an individual needs some “re-hillbilly-tation” and “redneck therapy” after spending too much time in “the big city.” This uses another label to embody a stigmatized rural identity: “redneck.” The Laney Strickland Band also uses this label to describe their fans on almost every My Space bulletin they post which opens with the greeting: “O.K. Rednecks.” Also, “redneck rock” is a synonym for southern rock. One informant even used the term “redneck” to describe his band’s fan base across both the north and south: “Ya know, there are rednecks and everything, but there are rednecks up here too [In Cleveland].” Lyrically, the Legendary Shack Shakers connect “redneck” to the working class by singing of “a redneck ring around a blue collar” in a song entitled, ‘South Electric Eyes.’

One song juxtaposes a poor, rural self with an abstract other using stigmatizing labels. In ‘Backwoods, Country White Trash’ Willie Heath Neal sings:

Your daddy said before how he don’t care for me,
He don’t like a single thing I do.
He don’t like tattoos and he don’t like drinking booze,
He don’t even like cowboy boots.
He said ‘son leave my girl alone, you gonna wind up with some broken bones, told that girl a hundred times that I don’t like your kind … and to leave that backwoods, country white trash alone.’

In this song Neal not only embraces a “backwoods-country” identity, but he also highlights the differences between himself and a rich other who does not drink, wear cowboy hats and boots, and then later in the song: spend time in jail. This song captures southern rockers’ celebration of their country origins even though others stigmatize them, or “doesn’t like their kind” as sung by Neal. On his live album, before playing this song Neal announces to the crowd that white trash is “the only natural resource we’ll never run out of.”

In this song Neal embraces the label “white trash” to reclaim and then renegotiate the stigmatizing phrase’s meaning into a positive identity characteristic. Others also use this phrase to embrace a poor, rural, white culture. There is an Assjack’s song simply titled, “White Trash.” A split record featuring both ANTiSEEN and Hank III is marketed as “A White Trash Double Header.” In ‘Graveyard Shift,’ Scott H. Biram describes working in a “white trash town.” When asked about the inspiration for his lyrics, one southern rocker replied: “I think my best lyrics come from white trash living, hot-rod cars, drinking, debauchery, that kind of thing with a sense of humor.” However, the phrase “white trash” arose most frequently in interviews when informants described their backgrounds. One informant said he was raised “white trash, grew up in a trailer park.” Another informant described himself as being from “a rednecky, white trash, suburb of Washington D.C.,” thus equating being a redneck and being white trash.

Other southern rockers used the phrase “white trash” to describe how their audience following is not limited to the southeast. One commented,

I mean, ya got white trash people up there just as much as you do down here. We’re just a little more famous for it ... We played Philadelphia and had a blast. Played Pittsburgh. Yeah man, there’s a lot of farmland and shit up there. Ya can’t get anymore white trash than being on a cattle farm in Pennsylvania. Everybody’s got a pickup truck and all that shit.
Another informant answered my question about difference between his northern and southern fans by noting, “You can say all ya want about southerners being white trash or trailer trash or whatever, but there’s white trash everywhere. [laughs] But I don’t think there’s that much difference, man.”

While southern rockers see little difference between the labels of hillbilly, redneck and white trash, the latter does carry some negative connotations and stigma the former lacks. Trash denotes refuse, something useless, and something that needs to be disposed of. While hillbilly and redneck are reserved mostly for those from the country, white trash combines the stigma of being rural with the stigma of being poor, along with a variety of negative stereotypes about being culturally and socially backward. As John Hartigan (1997) points out, the phrase white trash also denotes a pollution of what many think is the pure or uncontaminated race or ethnicity: white. Regardless of the label they use, flaunting a spoiled or stigmatized identity is how southern rockers translate being poor and rural into being rebel.

There are many lyrical examples of how southern rockers flaunt the stigma of rural poverty. In ‘Smoke and Wine’ Hank Williams III sings “I don’t really care if you hate me you see, cause I’m just a country boy from the state of Tennessee,” and in ‘Not Everybody Likes Us’ he sings of others’ aversion to the South’s “certain kind of living” and “certain kind of style.” In a song about southern pride, the Laney Strickland Band sings: “We might be country, just living on the land. But if you don’t like the way we live, you know we don’t give a damn.” These songs illustrate how southern rockers embrace an identity they perceive as being stigmatized and marginalized. Then, by flaunting this spoiled identity, they add an element of social rebelliousness by signifying to others they “don’t care if you hate me.” Southern rockers reclaim a stigmatized poor, rural, white identity—and in doing such they make symbolic statements to others about their own rebel autonomy.

**The White Family of West Virginia**

Many southern rockers celebrate the White family from West Virginia in order to construct rebel masculinity through the glorification of rural poverty. David Ray White
was an Appalachian “mountain dancer,” or tap/clog dancer made known to the world by a 1985 PBS documentary entitled ‘Talking Feet.’ During a 1988 drunken confrontation with his drunken neighbors, D. Ray White was murdered and his two sons were shot. This incident, along with the subsequent dancing career of White’s son Jesco has been chronicled by Jacob Young’s ‘Dancing Outlaw’ documentary series. This film series developed a cult following as it not only explores the dying art of mountain dancing, but it presents the struggles an Appalachian family has with the epidemics of rural poverty: alcoholism, drug addiction, mental illness, violence and a general lack of a means to subsistence. Southern rockers celebrate Jesco White and his family, which includes concert and record appearances, and a two day concert held in August of 2006 called ‘Jesco Fest.’ The flyer from this event, as shown in Figure 4-2, describes this festival as both “Dixiefried” and “A Southern Arts & Music Festival.”

The struggles of the White family are lyrically described in Hank Williams III’s ‘Legend of D. Ray White.’

Way down in West Virginia, there are some people who are one of a kind. They don't need nothin' from nobody, ‘cause they're already doin' fine.

An' ol' Jesco's dancin' in his Daddy's shoes.

Yeah, ol' Hasil's still punchin' out them Boone county blues.

Birdie May White she's the strongest woman that I've ever met in my life...

She's always fightin' hard, an' livin' off the land.

For southern rockers, the White family symbolizes how people struggle with the deprivation of rural poverty. While many would likely attribute being poor to “white
trash’s” laziness and/or stupidity, southern rockers perceive that struggling with rural poverty instills strength, or a certain self-reliance that helps one overcome any challenging conditions or adversity they confront in their lives. As described in song, Williams admires this family because of their self-reliance and ability to negotiate their deprived conditions. He sings “they don't need nothin' from nobody,” because the matriarch of the family, Birdie May is “always fightin' hard, an' livin' off the land,” even after raising 24 children and grandchildren without her husband. While William’s ‘Legend of D. Ray White’ illustrates the revaluing of white trash into a positive identity attribute, the song is unusual in that it positively represents women, both Birdie May and her daughter Maimie, as possessing independence, determination, and survival skills. Southern rockers lyrics usually attribute such characteristics to men.

Most southern rock songs that address rural life are means through which to construct and convey rebel masculinity. Rural activities symbolize how a man is master of his environment, even when that environment is harsh and challenging. Living poor, or living without steady income from employment as one tours the country, necessitates masculine self-reliance and ingenuity overcoming problematic situations created by limited resources. Thus, southern rockers do not embrace rural poverty in itself, but they use surviving being rural and being poor to symbolically signify their rebel masculinity. That is, besides residing in rural areas, no southern rockers ever described catching, trapping or shooting their meals while touring as musicians.

The connection between rural environments and masculinity is readily apparent in many lyrical references to men and their guns, fishing poles, farming equipment, and pickup trucks. Such imagery celebrates not just rural environments, but the male dominated activities that take place in rural areas: fishing, shooting, racing, camping, and negotiating a vehicle through difficult terrain. Southern rockers use these culturally-defined masculine activities as resources to convey rebel masculinity. From the perspective of southern rockers, real men have rural survival skills as having these skills symbolizes a man’s ability of needing no one but himself, and in making due in difficult environments.

Overall, southern rockers’ identity work signifies their mastery of rural skills, which bestows value on what has been otherwise devalued in our larger culture. This
exemplifies Campbell and Bell’s (2000) conceptualization of the interconnection between rural life and masculinity. There is first, the “masculine in the rural,” which is how masculinity is constructed in rural settings through skills such as shooting and fishing. However, southern rockers use the “rural in the masculine,” in which rural themes are used to signify masculinity independent of a rural setting (Campbell and Bell 2000).

**Rural versus Small Towns**

While southern rockers use rural symbols to signify their masculinity, they also recognize problems associated with small town life. Willie Heath Neal often describes the negative experience of small town living. In ‘No Good,’ he sings: “It’s a small town, rumors get around … they all want to know what’s going down.” This is fitting with the themes of his other songs ‘Tennessee Woman Blues’ and ‘Everybody Knows’ which are both about how he is the last person in a small town to discover his partner was unfaithful. In ‘Fear and Loathing in a Small Town’ Neal sings “I’m tired, fed-up, strung-out and pissed off, this town sure gets me down.” In ‘Graduation Day’ Neal sings how even though all his friends moved away, he does not “know if he’ll ever get out of this town” or will be forever reduced to “pumping gas at the Amoco.” These last two songs in which Neal describes the limited opportunities of small towns are echoed by two pieces from Nashville Pussy. In ‘Hate and Whiskey’ they sing:

> Well I come from down, in some dirt-water town.
> Where there’s nothing to do, and nothing cool around.

In a remake of Ike and Tina Turner’s ‘Nutbush,’ Nashville Pussy sings of a “little town down in Tennessee” where “nothing much happens.” Scott Biram also has a song entitled ‘Lost Case of Being Found’ that takes place in a “shit ass town,” and in ‘Goin’ Home’ he describes a “little greasy town where I’m sure to get my trouble goin’ round.” Unknown Hinson also sings a song called ‘Torture Town’ that describes the misery of a small town where he plays his guitar in exchange for liquor. Hank Williams III sings a song in the first person about his jailed uncle called ‘Cecil Brown’ who’s “from a little town,” where he “never understood why they thought I was no good,” as people “don’t think much of me.”
As a general rule, when southern rockers reference positive attributes of rural environments they use terms such as white trash, hillbilly or redneck, but when speaking of the negative aspects they frame their presentation it in terms of small towns. These songs are fitting with informant’s answers to questions I asked about the contradiction between their urban dwellings yet celebration of rural lifestyles. Despite being from places like Atlanta, Nashville, Austin, or Charlotte, many informants claim they prefer rural life to urban life. For instance, one informant noted:

Ya got a little more air to breath. That’s all I can think of off the top of my head, just peace of mind, because when I’m out in the big cities I’m just fucking feeling the fucking madness, and I’m not even staying in them that long and I can feel it like crazy.

Another informant describes how his opinions about rural versus metropolitan living had changed:

When I was a kid, I used to say, “Well, you know, I’d love to live in a big city like Nashville or Austin or even New York or something, somewhere where I could be in the middle of the pulse of the action.” You ask me that today, man; I don’t want none of that shit. I would much rather live in a fucking shanty out in the middle of nowhere along a lake somewhere where I can grow my own vegetables and have a couple of dogs and be left the fuck alone.

One southern rocker describes not just rural living, but rural living in the context of a southern rock career.

Back 120 years ago, when people like us wanted leave home, we had to join the fucking Army and now you can just join a rock band. So I figure we’ve come out way ahead. That’s progress to me, man. I don’t have to join the fucking confederate Army to leave the fucking farm and usually in those days you’d have to. And that was the whole point in life, man. And southern rockers, as much as we pay tribute to the farm and shit, the whole attitude is get the fuck off the farm because it’s boring, seriously. And it’s got its limits and there’s a whole world out there.
This informant captures how most southern rockers think about their rural roots. While almost all celebrate rural environments, they also recognize small towns are not without their problems, especially in regards to boredom, gossip and very limited opportunities for musicians—problems that conflict with the very same rebel masculinity symbolized by rural activities. Limited opportunities means a man cannot do as he pleases, and the gossip of small town life infringes upon a man’s autonomy. This is most likely why southern rockers lyrically celebrate not rural environments per se to signify their rebel masculinity, but the things men do in rural places: hunt, fish, and drive vehicles through challenging terrain.

Policing Identity Cooptation

To police their identity and maintain boundaries between themselves and the mainstream, southern rockers take issue with the popularization and marketing of a white trash persona. In recent years a poor, white, and usually southern identity has been packaged and sold to middle class youth. As sociologist Karen Halnon (2004) describes, the “multi-billion dollar, corporate-sponsored white trash man depicted in popular culture today is the epitome of what grates against white middle class civilized society (5).” Southern rockers are keenly aware and extremely critical of this process occurring in the mainstream culture around them. There is even one lyrical critique of the popularization of white trash. In ‘Not Everybody Likes Us,’ Hank III sings:

Just so you know, so it’s set in stone,
Kid Rock don’t come from where I come from.
Yeah, it's true, he’s a Yank, he ain’t no son of Hank,
and if thought so, god-damn you're fucking dumb.

Inspiration for these lyrics likely comes from rumors that country-rap singer Kid Rock was the child of Hank Williams Jr., an urban legend promulgated by the fact that Rock and Jr. record and appear in concert together. However, Hank III also critiques Kid Rock for not coming from where he comes from, or is not nor has never been southern, poor, and rural (A child of divorce that occurred before Hank Williams Jr.’s success, Hank Williams III is and always has been estranged from both his father, and his father’s
During an interview, another informant exemplifies Kid Rock to describe how cooptation of a white trash identity is problematic; “to me Kid Rock and all that is kinda like, it reinforces the stereotype.” Like this informant, Halnon (2004) is also highly critical of Kid Rock for embodying the grotesque elements of both sexism and racism inherent in the stereotype of rural white men (2004).

Others informants use a more general strategy to police southern rock and its white trash identity. One describes the popularization of white trash primarily as a cultural fad that produces posers who understand little about the south.

Like for instance, a band from New York City slapping on a cowboy hat or John Deere baseball cap, they don’t know what it’s like to be Southern. They can get their accent down. They can play the Lynyrd Skynyrd guitar riffs all the want, but they’re not Southern. They have 30 minute lead guitar solos that are coming out their ass; I don’t care. The fact is, man, unless you’ve lived down here and understood what it’s like to be down here, from here, and understand the prejudice that the rest of this country has toward this area and always has had, you don’t understand it. I mean, getting the fucking--getting the dress code down and the mannerisms--look at all these fucking kids around here with mohawks and spiked jackets. They’re not from England, you know. It’s easy. It’s easy, man, it’s a costume. This whole redneck thing has turned into just like every other thing has; costume, instant redneck, man. Just add water, and all of a sudden, you’re white trash, and it has become hip to become white trash all of a sudden. And the thing that’s really funny about that is, if a lot of these hipsters really, really had to hang around people that were considered white trash, I don’t think they’d think it was so fun.

This informant uses the term “costume” to describe white trash as a fashion statement. He goes on to argue these individuals do not really understand what it is like to be from

5 In a song co-recorded with and often performed alongside Kid Rock entitled “The F-Word,” Hank Williams Jr. sings how “his boy Shelton” [Hank Williams III] should “take the old man’s advice” and lose the “F-word.”
the south or “down here.” Such policing creates a symbolic boundary between those who are legitimately white trash, and those who only pretend to be white trash.

Another informant places the fad of white trash into the context of his past and future life.

I remember when I first started going to punk shows in the early ’80s. If you showed any sign of being redneck or white trash, you were going to get your ass beat. You know what I mean? (Laughing) So those very same people now are the ones that are being the kings and queens of the white trash sect, you know … it’s just like these guys – like there are guys that I know that ever had that attitude before, and then all of a sudden you see them five or six years later, and they got Mack truck caps and flannel shirts, and you’re talking like this, man, you know … I just know that whenever the people that are white trash for the day, when they’re done with it, I’ll still be this way. I’ll be this way when I’m an old man.

This informant describes how his poor, rural background was a liability in the punk scene before the popularization of white trash as a passing fad. He also adds that because he has always been poor and rural, unlike the “scenesters” he will always be white trash—thus staking claim to the authenticity of his poor, rural identity.

Another southern rocker finds the popularization of white trash as more problematic than just a passing fad because it could result in a troublesome future for the individuals who embrace it.

I really don’t understand why anybody would want to come at things from a standpoint of trailer trash power. Like, “Yeah, my wife beater’s got more coffee stains on it than your does, and I ain’t washed my hair in two weeks. It’s only been one week for you.” I don’t understand that, and I also think that it’s really not cool to tell kids that it’s all right to be a waste and to not try to better yourself, man.

Even though most southern rockers do not perceive upward socio-economic mobility as a life goal, this informant is critical of artists who celebrate underachievement, or being a
waste. However, this was the only informant to judge upward mobility as a positive thing for anyone.

Another informant thinks the superficiality and in-authenticity of white trash popularization is problematic because many adherents are not even from the south—reaffirming how for southern rockers, the south is symbolic of rural poverty.

I just don’t get it. It cracks me up how . . . white trash is popular. You got people from California, New York wishing they were just white trash. It blows my mind. I get emails and shit from people from other countries who are just trying so hard to be white trash. And fortunately for guys like me, that just got—and you know what? No matter if they are a good country band out of New York or they are a good out of wherever, they are not authentic because they are not from south, which is where it started.

This informant uses the word authentic, thus policing who has a legitimate claim to both white trash and a southern identity. Another informant implies how the popularized white trash is inauthentic, arguing being poor is not something to be proud of. Rather, there should be pride taken in escaping rural poverty.

I’m proud of how I grew up. I’m proud of my roots. It’s not about being white trash now. I guess you should be proud of how you grew up . . . I grew up pretty poor. I grew up in foster homes and stuff, too, man. And that’s why most of my songs are about people. Because I grew up that way, subconsciously I didn’t realize till much later when I started writing, that I really observed people my whole life.

This quote is fitting with another informant who discusses rural poverty in the context of popular culture.

I’m from Virginia. I’ve got southern roots. I mean it’s weird. I mean, I’ve got ridiculous southern roots, but I grew up in a city in the central east coast, you know. Granted, I used to go down to my Granny’s house in the mountains of Virginia, and I know Southern culture. I know how to survive. I know how to start a fire with two twigs, and I know how to, you
know, pull crops, and I know how to hunt and gut animals and all that shit.
I mean, those are things that – I mean, put it this way. Let’s take a poll.
How many of these pop country fuckers can skin a rabbit and pull tobacco
and cotton without cutting their fingers up, right? I definitely have a sense
of southern pride, but it’s more a spiritual thing and a cultural thing. To
me, it’s about living off the land and keeping that kinship with nature and
not losing your place in the world.

This informant captures how southern rockers embody white trash as a positive attribute
of their masculine identity when he speaks of rural activities like hunting, farming, and
even survival skills like starting a fire without a lighter or matches. This is indicative of
the embodiment of rural poverty through “living off the land.” Southern rockers do not
celebrate being country and poor, but rather celebrate the skills they learn from
experience and rural poverty. This celebration manifests itself when southern rock men
do identity work to construct themselves as being able to survive a harsh environment
with limited resources. They are able to do such because the struggles of their poor, rural
pasts instilled them with a masculine strength and self-reliance. As southern rockers
construct being poor and rural as symbolic of rebel masculinity, they police the
cooptation of white trash as passing fad being marketed by the culture industry.

**Flying the Flag**

Southern rockers emphasize their whiteness as a race or ethnicity as they
construct and signify both their rebel identity and their manhood with rural poverty. The
terms “hillbilly” and “redneck” assume whiteness, while the phrase “white trash” literally
states being white. My lyrical survey reveals only two songs in which “white” appears
without trash: Artimus Pyledriver’s ‘Dirt Road White Girl’ and Nashville Pussy’s ‘Lazy
White Boy.’ Thus, in most instances whiteness as a race or ethnicity is assumed as
opposed to stated. Still, southern rock is “very white.” The overwhelming majority of
the musicians in the sample appear to be white, and the crowds that come to see these
southern rock bands are in most cases comprised entirely of whites. The music(s) of the
revival are also white. While originally inspired by black artists, the gospel and rock
subgenres of the southern rock revival have since evolved to be an expression of a white
ethnicity (Bertrand 2004). Country has always been considered the expression of poor, rural whites. Coming from Europe, metal and punk were always white and to a lesser extent also primarily the realm of young men (Weinstein [1991] 2000).

Southern rockers also use the confederate flag to signify whiteness, as well as rebelliousness. Southern rockers display the rebel flag almost everywhere—it adorns clothing, album covers, guitars, and as shown in Figure 4-3, some southern rockers have the flag tattooed in their skin. As a controversial historic symbol that currently serves as the point of a highly continuous debate about its public display, the flag is infused with two meanings; a symbol of hate used by the Klan and other white power organizations, and a symbol of regional, southern pride. However, in either of the evoked meanings, display of the rebel flag or what informants call “flying the flag” signifies whiteness as a racial or ethnic identity (Cooper and Knotts 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 4-3: Jeff Clayton’s Rebel Flag Tattoos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image_1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When I ask southern rockers about what the flag means to them, all quickly distance themselves from racism. For instance one informant commented:

I look at it as being proud, of being proud of where you’re from. Even though I fly the flag with the colors, I got a black & white in my skin [a tattoo done without color, or entirely in black and gray], and I’m not
racist, I’m proud of where I’m from. I mean that’s the way it is man, and there is some attitude in that.

Being “proud” to be from the south is the most common response given by southern rockers when asked about their display of the rebel flag. However, this informant also describes the flag as having “some attitude,” referring to how the flag is perceived to be offensive by many outside the revival. This means that when looked at in the larger social context, “flying the flag” signifies rebel masculinity by showing that a man does what he pleases despite the protest of others.

Echoing others, another informant pointed suggested the flag conveys southern pride.

We fly the flag on our van, I mean we’re southern and proud of it … It has a confederate flag license plate on there that gets us in trouble sometimes.

But it’s not a racist thing, it’s a pride thing, it’s a ‘heritage not hate.’ I don’t want it to be misconstrued as something hateful.

This informant points out how his heritage, not racism nor hate is why he and his band “fly the flag.” He adds how the flag gets them “into trouble sometimes,” which signifies rebel masculinity by showing that a man is willing to confront complications rather than submit to the will to others. This informant went on to describe how they did not take a confederate flag license plate off their van while touring through Michigan, even though they thought it illegal in that state. Another southern rocker described a conflict with non-racists skinheads, known as S.H.A.R.P.s (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudices) over his display of the flag.

In their attempts to diffuse the racist meanings of the confederate battle flag many informants went one step further and claimed the north, with its high levels of segregation, is the portion of the country with the actual race problem. One informant noted, “In our neighborhoods it overlaps, whereas I noticed up in Brooklyn on Grand Avenue, on that side it was Puerto Rican, on that side it was white, I mean it was a straight fucking line.” Another informant accused the north of ignoring race problems while pointing out how the south directly deals with racial tensions.
A lot of times it’s these northerners that think that they’re so high-and-mighty and they’re the idiots. They think that the south is where all the prejudiced people are, but what are they doing but displaying prejudice. Think about that. They’re the ones who live in their precious New England gated communities talking about the Negro problem as if it were the southerners’ fault, but they’re the last ones that rub elbows with them. Down there in the south we’re rubbing elbows with them, and we get angry with one another, but at the end of the day it’s a dysfunctional family with the emphasis on the family. We might use harsh language but we’re working it out. At least we’re putting our money where our mouth is, we live right there in the midst of it all, we’re like wrangling with all these sorts of southern problems of race, and class, and religion. We’re having to work it out and that’s why all the best art and music comes out of the south. We’re actually having to hash it out … So, we can speak from experience where a lot of these New England types can only fantasize about what it must be like in the real world because they’re old money affords them the luxury of being apart from that. That’s unfortunate for them, and they end up being the real prejudiced ones cause they don’t speak from experience.

In this passage the informant engages a strategy of identity work that reinforces the authenticity of southern rock as reflective of modern struggles by noting; “We’re having to work it out and that’s why all the best art and music comes out of the south.” Indirectly, this informant also reinforced the rural elements of the southern rock identity by stating; “We’re more connected to the earth and the soul-fullness that’s in the ground and in the dirt and in the muck.” However, more pertinent to the discussion of “flying the flag,” is this informant’s claims wealthy northerners are the prejudiced ones, both racially and towards southerners. Another southern rocker agreed with the first informant’s opinion about how southerners are stereotyped as racists: “If a guy’s walking down the street with a rebel flag on his shirt you automatically think anti-black person or whatever.”
Other informants similarly emphasize that northerners are more racist than southerners. One, for example, said:

People up there [the north] think that we’re all racists just because we live in the south. So I’ve had a lot of people make really racist statements in my presence thinking, “Oh well they’re from the south and in a band called ______ obviously they’re racists.” I think the south has done a better job dealing with racism because we were forced to during that whole civil rights era. In the north they still have a, Italians and Polish and all those divisions. So ah, I mean that’s one thing that I’ve noticed and I kind of find like almost offensive to me, when people assume that just because I’m from the south that I’m racist.

Like other southern rockers, this southern rocker dislikes being stereotyped as racist because he is from the south. He also believes the south has had more success dealing with racial tensions.

Many southern rockers engage in an identity work strategy that transposes racism from both themselves and southerners as whole on to northerners. This is justified through the belief the north is more racially segregated than the south. By positioning their own self to hypothetical northerners who are unacknowledged racists, southern rockers project racial prejudice from their own self onto northern others. However, it is noteworthy informants who engage this strategy insist that non-southerners inaccurately stereotype southerners as racists. There is a contradiction in rationale here as they do not like being stereotyped, while at the same time they are insistent upon the right to display the confederate battle flag, which is a symbol of both racism and the south, which thus identifies the displayer as a bigot to others. Thus, their rationale perpetuates the very same stereotype they claim to be troubled by.

The interactionist perspective provides insight into southern rockers’ displaying of the confederate flag. While southern rockers distance themselves from the bigotry symbolized by the flag, it is still a racist symbol infused with meanings of prejudice. Thus, displaying the flag is an act of racism—even if the displayer does not consider himself to be a racist. Flying the flag is still a racist act because the flag supports a larger pattern of racist thinking, regardless of individual intentions. For instance, even though
southern rockers claim not to be racists (in interviews, not in lyrics), whenever they display the flag they are reinforcing all the others (like the Ku Klux Klan) who use the flag to symbolize white supremacy. If a racist walks past a bar with southern rockers hanging around outside as sees twenty rebel flags, he or she and their ideology will be empowered.

Another way to look at how flying the flag can be problematic comes from defining racism as the reproduction of white privilege and minority oppression. Defined in this way, it is possible for whites to be color-blind racists; they can perpetuate a racist social structure inadvertently through their actions (Bonilla-Silva 2003). Even though they do not consider themselves racists, because the practice of “flying the flag” reinforces the racist structure of society, a structure that ultimately reproduces racial inequality in society, displaying the confederate flag is indirectly a racist action. For example, a person might justify their ill feelings towards minorities by using a strategy of diffusion; they could rationalize their dislike of others by claiming, “At least I do not wave the confederate flag around.”

While most southern rockers minimized their own racism in defending their “flying of the flag,” one informant was particularly candid about the racial and/or ethnic meanings of the rebel flag. In his answer to a question about the negative results of “flying the flag” one informant noted:

I always tell the brothers who try to give me some shit, “Dude that’s your victory flag. What the fuck you pissed on that flag for.” And it goes back to, take for instance nowadays, rap and all that stuff, it’s about being where you’re from. The Latino community, it’s about representing, fucking this is my block, this is where I was raised, you can’t come in our territory and all that shit. We’re not saying that, I’m just saying I went to Franklin fucking Rebel High School, our mascot was the god damn confederate flag, and I was raised in a civil war town, and that’s just the way it is, man. And, all the uptight people worried about it [shouldn’t], because the white man is a dying breed that will be gone in about 50 years and you won’t even have to bring it up anymore.
This informant compares the rebel flag to Black’s and Latino’s boundary maintenance strategies that involve not only a community pride, but as having the power to maintain in and out-group differentiation. Certain phrases used by this interviewee, how the rebel flag is actually the victory flag for blacks, how Latinos are territorial, and how the white man is a dying breed imply this southern rocker perceives a great deal of animosity and even conflict between the races. A threat to the “vanishing white man” is also implied in the response. While he ultimately engages the “heritage not hate” argument to support his display of the flag, in comparing it to other’s actions that offend him as a white man, this informant seems to be attuned to how his own use of the confederate flag offends others because it is a symbol of white pride.

Displaying the rebel flag empowers the rebel self and reinforces rebel masculinity by making statements to others that one does what he pleases despite, or in spite of protests from others. Thus, the flag is an especially convincing signifier of rebel masculinity. Southern rockers rationalize their display of the flag by minimizing its racist meanings and maximizing it as a symbolic statement of their heritage—however there is a contradiction in this, as their heritage is not only white, but inherently white and supremacist. Because the flag has been infused with bigotry, flying the flag celebrates whiteness in a racially offensive manner. Although most do not admit it, the offensiveness of the confederate flag is likely the reason southern rockers openly display it so readily; it reinforces rebel masculinity by signifying to others one does not care how others perceive them, and they are willing to confront the strong negative reactions the rebel flag evokes from others. They use the “heritage not hate argument” because it is a more palatable argument about why they display the flag.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I examined the identity work strategies southern rockers use to construct themselves as poor, rural, white men. For instance, southern rockers do not take pride in rural poverty as a “good” way to live, but they celebrate the strength and survival ingenuity living in such conditions instills in a man, including a man’s abilities to hunt, fish, and farm. Southern rockers also embrace stigmatizing identity labels such as hillbilly, redneck, and white trash in order to signify their lack of concern for how others perceive them. They also police their identity from cooptation—claiming many,
as a trend or fad setting culture industry, embrace a white trash identity as a façade.
Southern rockers claim these “posers” do not understand that one should not be proud of
being white trash per say, but being proud of overcoming the hardship of rural poverty.
Southern rockers also signify their racial and ethnic whiteness, both implicitly and
explicitly by displaying the rebel flag. This identity work technique signifies and
reinforces rebel masculinity given that the rebel flag has become an offensive symbol of
whiteness. In displaying the rebel flag, southern rockers empower their rebel masculine
self by establishing their willingness to disregard the opinions of others while also
offending others—to do what one pleases despite, or in spite of protests from others.
CHAPTER 5: VICE AND SINFUL IDENTITY WORK

Like many times before, in June of 2005 I found myself waiting backstage to conduct an interview. Members of the opening act and some of their staff were sitting around a table, steadily passing marijuana pipes and lighters in a counter-clockwise direction amongst the small room. Most everyone in the circle had a bag or plastic container filled with his own “stash” in front of him—wherever the pipe was when it ran out, that person would refill it and a lighter would spark again. It was a sold-out show that night, and one band member was arranging the bartering of drugs for entry into the show. When the deal was secured, the drugs were prepared in a small microwave oven. A band member answered a knock on the door, finding two young women. After speaking with them he disappeared into the room behind the one I was in to speak with the headliner that night—and even over the loud stereo playing the hidden tracks on Bob Wayne’s album, I could hear a man in the adjacent room yell, “No more girls!” Southern rockers do not just sing about sex, drugs, and alcohol, but engage in these practices in their personal lives. Vice for southern rockers is not just about the pursuit of pleasure, but also a means through which to construct and signify rebel manhood.

This chapter analyzes southern rock’s celebration of drinking, drug use, and casual sex and how these behaviors are entwined with the rockers’ rebel manhood. One way southern rockers signify their rebel masculinity is by both singing about and consuming large amounts of alcohol. Drugs and sex are also central themes in their lyrics, album covers, and websites. Do southern rockers actually engage in these behaviors, or because drinking, drugs and casual sex have evolved into such important components of rebel masculinity do they falsely boast about these behaviors? Some southern rockers might exaggerate such activities to market themselves as rebel men. But the many times I found myself backstage, surrounded by a haze of pot smoke, drug dealers, and scantily dressed young women, establishes how southern rockers do not just sing about drinking, drugs, and sex, but they also readily engage in these behaviors.

Historical research on the south prior to the civil war connects vice and masculinity, a connection frequently overlooked because of the unique meanings southern gentiles allotted to drinking, drug use, sex with prostitutes, and ritualized
violence. These behaviors are usually equated with a lack of self-control. However, for young, gentile, southern men, these behaviors signify how a man is not controlled by anyone but himself. These acts were displays of self-mastery and self-autonomy; statements that a man is free to do what he wants when he pleases. “Drinking, gambling, sexual experimentation, dueling and other forms of orchestrated violence were accepted and even encouraged in southern male culture. These behaviors, which today connote an absence of self-control, did not, in the early Republic South, compromise a refined man’s reputation (Glover 2004).”

In contemporary society consuming alcohol is a strategy used by men to signify and affirm their masculinity, which means southern rock drinking practices are aligned to society-wide norms prescribing how and what men should drink. Southern rock exaggerates the larger culture’s prescribed gendered drinking practices. Previous research finds not only do men drink more than women, but American culture has divergent views about gender and drinking: men but not women should drink. In what many addiction scholars now consider a classic review piece linking alcohol and masculinity, Russell Lemle and Marc Mishkind (1989) write: “Drinking is a key component of the male sex role. Men are encouraged to drink, and in doing so are perceived as masculine. By contrast, drinking is discouraged for women, and it is considered unfeminine” (214). The act of drinking makes symbolic statements that one has the proper characteristics and qualifications of a man. In social contexts populated primarily by men—which is the case with southern rock—alcohol intake is not only promoted, but competitively promoted among men as reaffirmations to others of their own masculinity (Gough and Edwards 1998).

In our culture, alcohol use is a symbol of masculinity. It signifies a male’s entrance into manhood, and confirms his acceptance among his fellow men. Ordering, being offered, consuming, and sharing alcohol elevate the user’s manliness. Heavy drinking symbolizes greater masculinity than lighter drinking, and the more a man tolerates his alcohol the more manly he is deemed (Lemle and Mishkind 1989: 214).

The connection between masculinity and alcohol use is reinforced by the media, which presents drinking as primarily a male practice through its marketing efforts.
directed primarily to men (Messner and Montez de Oca 2005). In these efforts, the link between drinking and other key masculine attributes including unconventionality, risk taking, and aggressiveness if not violence, are also reinforced (Capraro 2000; Lemle and Mishkind 1989). Unconventionality, risk, and aggressiveness are components of emphasized by rebel masculinity. Also, drinking within the revival scene signifies self-efficacy: that a man is independent, self-sufficient, doing what he wants, when he pleases, despite protests from others—even if those protesting others are authority figures.

While the term vice never arose in neither interviews nor lyrics, the concept is fitting because informants consider binge drinking to the point of becoming aggressively disruptive, using drugs, and having casual sex as interconnected.6 This vice categorization is observed in lyrics. Hank Williams III’s ‘Whiskey, Weed & Women’ describes the burnout that occurs when “the whiskey weed and women have [had] the upper hand.” Nashville’s Pussy’s ‘She’s Got The Drugs’ blurs sex with substances as the listener has a hard time differentiating which the singer is finding attractive, a women’s physical body or drugs in her possession. This band also has a song entitled ‘Good Night for a Heart Attack,’ in which they describe simultaneously partaking in the vices of drinking, drugs, sex, gambling, and even gluttony. Nashville Pussy also connects sex and drugs in ‘The Bitch Just Kicked Me Out,’ which is about a relationship ending because the man used cocaine and slept with his partner’s sister and mother. Another example connecting sex and substances as vice is ‘The Life I Know’ where Willie Heath Neal places women in the same category as drugs and alcohol when he sings:

Too many women, and too many pills, too much damn cocaine.

6 The traditional southern vice of gambling is a part of southern rock, but mostly only in tattoo images that depict gaming dice and playing cards. The most explicit example of these tattoos is a single king from a playing card that adorns Legendary Shack Shaker guitarist David Lee’s entire back. Gambling was never observed in the field, but was occasionally mentioned lyrically. In Bob Wayne’s ‘Ghost Town,’ a first person narrative of a supernatural encounter, he shoots a “cheater right between the eyes.” Scott H. Biram’s ‘Hit the Road’ describes spending all night wagering bets on cockfights—which is an embodiment of a rural lifestyle just as much, if not more so than it is a celebration of gambling. The Legendary Shack Shakers also mentioned cockfighting in their song ‘Shakerag Holler.’ Hank Williams III sings of how his uncle “used to deal cards from the bottom of the deck” in his song ‘Mississippi Mud.’
Too much whiskey and too much weed, I’ve smoked away my brain.

Many informants made statements during interviews confounding sex with substances. One individual described that because of past addiction problems, he had given up everything—but then went on to qualify that he had given up everything except caffeine and women. Another informant notes that unlike many of his colleagues, “I don’t play music to get laid or do drugs,” thus connecting sex and drugs to each other and also to southern rock itself.

From a southern rocker’s perspective, drinking, using drugs, and casual sexual encounters are interconnected behaviors of a similar category. One vice behavior often accompanies, or follows another. As this chapter will go on to establish, all these behaviors are also expressions of rebel masculinity. A “real” southern rock man drinks, uses drugs, and sexually objectifies a woman—which in turn means drinking, drugging, and casual sex are considered expressions of rebel masculinity that help to authenticate and legitimate one’s status as a southern rock man.

**Alcohol**

Because it simultaneously symbolizes manhood and frugality, southern rockers drink cheap beer to signify both their masculinity and being poor. Any inexpensive brand of beer is acceptable to southern rockers, though one brand is more esteemed than all the others: *Pabst Blue Ribbon* or *PBR*. The beer’s logo adorns T-shirts worn by musicians and audience members alike, and the clubs at which southern rock bands perform often offer discount “specials” of PBR during the shows. In advertising one of his shows via his MySpace bulletin, Bob Wayne says there will be “$4 dollar pitchers of PBR all night.” Evoking cheers during a live show, Hank III dedicates a song to Pabst Blue Ribbon drinkers by stating, “PBR drinkers in the house, this one goes out to you god damn it!”

Although PBR seems to always have a presence at live shows, Willie Heath Neal’s song entitled ‘Willie’s Rant’ is the only contemporary southern rock song that mentions *Pabst Blue Ribbon* beer by name. In this song Neal’s central theme is his need to relocate from a beach town to ‘Hillbilly Heaven,’ “some place in Tennessee where they like tattoos, drink Pabst Blue Ribbon and wear cowboy boots.” PBR is so popular
that one informant differentiates his band from the others within the genre by explaining, “We’re proud to be from the South, but that doesn’t mean coming up with PBR anthems singing about trailer parks.” Even this informant, however, was seen drinking PBR after a show.

Some bands adopt PBR as a logo. For example, Joecephus and the George Jonestown Massacre adopt the Pabst Blue Ribbon logo for their band emblem. As Figure 5-1 shows, they replaced the words of the beer name with the band name while the beer’s trademark blue ribbon in front of a red stripe remains.

![Figure 5-1: Adopting the Pabst Blue Ribbon Logo](image)

The only other brand celebrated like Pabst Blue Ribbon is a regional beer of Texas known as *Lone Star*. Figure 5-2 comes from Scott H. Biram’s MySpace page, and shows him holding a can of Lone Star beer. While it can be argued that Texas is not part of the confederate south, many Texan artists are part of the southern rock revival because they embrace rebel masculinity with a western spin—such as preferring Lone Star Beer to PBR. Because Texas symbolizes the openness and manliness of the American frontier, like PBR, drinking Lone Star Beer signifies the self rural and poor, and thus one’s rebel masculinity.

![Figure 5-2: Drinking Like a Man in Texas](image)
Whiskey

Southern rockers also use distilled liquors—or “party liquor” as Unknown Hinson calls it—to symbolize rebel masculinity. Lemle and Mishkind (1989) point out how, liquor—because of its high alcohol content and unpleasant “straight up” taste—signifies a drinker’s masculinity. Southern rockers, however, only drink specific types of liquors indicative of the rural, working, and poor classes of the southeastern region. Whiskey has a historic connection to rural America because both its portability and potency made it the drink of America’s frontier, a place now entwined with an especially celebrated type of frontier masculinity (Connell 1996).

*Jack Daniels* and *Jim Beam* are the most popular brands of southern rock whiskey. As distilled liquors, they fit general masculine drinking norms. These liquors also celebrate their southern Appalachian history. On the bottle, printed almost as big as the name Jack Daniels is the words “Tennessee Whiskey.” Jim Beam prints “Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey” on their bottles, along with the actual brewing location of Frankfort, Kentucky. As noted in Wayne Hancock’s song ‘Miller, Jack and Mad Dog,’ these two whiskeys are so popular they are often referenced by first name only: *Jim* and *Jack*. Southern rockers often incorporate whiskey into their album covers. On the cover of Junkrod Joe and the Cadillac Hearse’s album ‘Hornswaggled,’ band members are pictured in the front seat of a car with bassist Johnny Lawless holding an open, half-consumed whiskey bottle. In the background of Nashville Pussy’s album ‘High as Hell,’ a “Jack” bottle sits on an end table next to a shotgun and cowboy hat.

Whiskey is also often part of live performances. When bands ask audiences to bring them drinks while on stage, most often they request a shot of whiskey. One band even ordered an entire round of whiskey shots for the band while onstage, and before taking them gave “cheers” and touched glasses. In concert, Nashville Pussy displays their fondness for Jack Daniels. Before taking a drink from the bottle, lead singer and rhythm guitarist Blaine Cartwright exclaimed to great applause from the crowd: “I’d like to introduce you—we got sitting in tonight, the fifth member of the band, all the way from Lynchburg Tennessee, Mister Jack Daniels.” Drinking whiskey reinforces the southern rockers’ rebel masculinity that is tied to the southern and Appalachian regions of the country.
Masculine drinking culture dictates not just what men should drink, but how men should drink (Lemle and Mishkind 1989). Men are supposed to consume liquors “straight-up,” meaning neither diluted nor sweetened with other “mixers” like soda and juices. This is fitting with southern rocker drinking norms, which require men to drink it straight from the bottle or through shots. In Hank Williams III’s ‘Straight to Hell’ he sings: “Serve me up a drink and I’ll shoot it right down, and I'll jump up on the bar and holler ‘One more round!’” In the last song on this same album Hank III makes a figurative toast to the region with a shot when he sings, “Pour me another shot of Whiskey, this one’s for the south.” However, even southern rock whiskey drinkers usually intersperse their shots with beer.

**Moonshine**

The most celebrated form of whiskey in lyrics is moonshine, white lightning or just “shine,” a homemade, un-aged and thus rather unpleasant tasting grain alcohol usually distilled from corn—though in a pinch, wheat and even hog feed have been known to suffice. In their song ‘Up the Creek,’ Artimus Pyledriver refers to white lightning as the “drink of the southern man,” implying the “harder” drinking of moonshine is the domain of men, not women. The opening sentence of their biography on Artimus Pyledriver’s website and Myspace page reads, “The General Lee, Lynyrd Skynyrd, moonshine and hot rods. Welcome to the South.” Their video for the song ‘Swamp Devil’ about a hot-rod car takes place in a forested area, and scattered about are empty jars—the type of container often used to store and transport moonshine from the still. Before performing this song onstage, lead singer Dave Slocum announced: “This song is about runnin’ shine in a 69 Dodge,’ the same year and make of The General Lee.” The lyrics speak of “straitening the curves,” which is a line about driving fast on curvy roads taken from Waylon Jennings’ theme song to The Dukes of Hazzard television show.

---

7 When the article “the” is included in the name, ‘The General Lee,’ as opposed to just ‘General Lee,’ one is referring not to the civil war general but to the orange racecar from the television show ‘The Dukes of Hazzard.’
Artimus Pyledriver is not the only southern rock artist to celebrate moonshine in order to signify and reaffirm rebel masculinity. Hank III sings so specifically about moonshine he differentiates between types according to region from which they originate. On his album ‘Lovesick, Broke & Drifin’ there is a song about taking shots of “Georgia Moonshine straight from the jug” until he and his friends “drink themselves blind.” Before playing this song at a concert in upstate New York, he asked the crowd about their own local “shine.” In the song ‘Crazed Country Rebel’ Williams attributes his being “fucked up on the floor” to “Boone county moonshine” referring to Boone county in West Virginia (which is also the home of the White family).

Moonshine appears frequently in southern rock lyrics because its historicity endows the beverage with a set of meanings that reinforce both southerness (in terms of being poor, white and rural) and rebel masculinity. Because moonshine has such a repulsive taste, masculine prestige is allotted to men who are willing and able to drink it. Since it is made as opposed to purchased, moonshine symbolizes the self-reliance of the poor, rural culture celebrated in southern rock. But most importantly, not only is moonshine illegal—but folklore celebrates “outlaws” who defy the rules and distill the sprayt. Even the name of the beverage reflects its deviant status, called moonshine because it is usually made under the cover of darkness, or by the shining of the moonlight. Thus, moonshine makes simultaneous symbolic statements about rebel masculinity by signifying a man’s self-efficacy and risk taking.

Moonshine and moonshining have a historical connection to rebel folklore characters of the south. Distilling originally developed as a means to transform corn—a crop in raw form that is easy to grow but difficult to transport and of little economic value—into a concentrated, mobile, and highly profitable product. Eventually, what started out of economic necessity evolved into a traditional practice (Durand 1956), and it is this moonshining tradition celebrated by modern southern rock as an identity work strategy that southern rockers do to infuse the rebel masculine self with being poor and rural. The Laney Strickland Band describes this heritage in their song ‘Moonshiner’s Son,’ which details the experience of transporting the illegal alcohol from the perspective of the outlaw’s child. Hank Williams III also speaks to this moonshining tradition in his song ‘Straight to Hell.’ In this song he sings:
Well back in the day with my uncle Jed,
he kept a lot of moonshine out in the shed.
He taught me how to drink, how to be real proud,
of my hillbilly ways and my outlaw style.

These songs connect moonshine to a rural region and to the embodied deviant masculine identity of an “outlaw.” While both beer and whiskey are expressive of masculinity, moonshine is especially effective towards communicating rebel masculinity. Its celebrated tradition of existing outside of the law symbolizes how a rebel man does what he wants even if it is illegal.  

**Rowdiness and Violence**

Lemle and Mishkind note that when drinking alcohol, men are expected to “hold their liquor,” or “drink as much as possible without appearing out of control” (Lemle and Mishkind 1989:215). This drinking norm of larger society is not applicable in southern rock where drinking to the point of losing control is the plateau of using alcohol to signify rebel masculinity. Overdrinking is noted in many Hank Williams III songs, including his lyrics “I drank on Tuesday until I fell down” or “dance all night until the sun comes up, drink ourselves completely blind.” Still, consuming alcohol to the point of intoxication and beyond is fitting

---

8 The popularity of beer, whiskey, and moonshine in southern rock is also indicated by the lack of other types of beverages appearing in lyrics. Only two other beverages were found in the content analysis of southern rock songs: tequila and wine. Bob Wayne sings about sharing tequila with the devil in his song entitled ‘Take Me Along,’ but even tequila is fitting with masculine drinking norms given that it is strong and usually consumed “straight up” in shots. Wine also appears in southern rock lyrics on occasion. One instance comes from Wayne ‘The Train’ Hancock’s anti-drunk driving song that mentions ‘Miller, Jack and Mad Dog’ in the chorus. Miller is an inexpensive brand of beer, and Jack or Jack Daniels is a type of whiskey, but Mad Dog is a type of wine. Still, Mad Dog is economically appropriate as it is a type of inexpensive or “screw top” berry wine known for having a low enough alcohol percentage to be sold in more than just liquor stores—the sole location in most states where one must secure whiskey and other types of liquors. Hank III ‘Smoke and Wine’ references a homemade hillbilly wine fermented from wild fruits. This type of wine Hancock refers to in his song ‘Wine Spodiodie’ where he lists different types of wines made out of types of wild berries and fruit (blackberry, raspberry, huckleberry and cherries) instead of grapes.
with how Lemle and Mishkind described the between drinking and male unconventionality, risk taking, and aggressiveness. Alcohol is intertwined with aggressive rowdiness in southern rock, which is another means to signify rebel masculinity.

After binge drinking aggressiveness, or what southern rockers call “rowdy” behavior is not only expected, but celebrated. In ‘Smoke and Wine’ Hank Williams III sings: “I’m a little bit crazy, on the rowdy side cause I like to drink my whiskey and I like to get high.” Another lyrical example of getting rowdy or unruly comes from J.B. Beverly and the Wayward Drifters who sings:

I’m drinking bourbon, cause the blues got me down.

And I’m drinking whiskey, and I’m gonna tear up this town.

These lyrics are fitting with interview responses that attribute violence in southern rock, and southern culture in general to alcohol. When asked what causes violent outbreaks at their concerts most attribute drinking with answers such as, “usually it starts with the liquor,” “starts with the bottle,” “don’t get me on the liquor, definitely not,” “I think it always depends on the alcohol, usually, the alcohol intake and if somebody is going to lose their mind or not,” or “it’s always alcohol related.”

The line between becoming rowdy and outright violent is somewhat ambiguous, though the two definitely exist on a continuum of aggression in which ‘rowdiness’ can escalate into outright physical violence directed at both property and people. For instance, it is difficult to assess Wayne Hancock’s ultimate intentions in regards to drinking and aggression in his song, ‘Gonna Be Some Trouble Tonight’:

Well I’m gonna get loaded out on the town
Lookout lord I’m still hellbound
I ain’t looking for love, I’m looking for a fight
I’m feeling mighty groggy, and there’s gonna be some trouble tonight

Junkrod Joe also connects drinking and fighting in his song ‘Suicyco Baby,’ where he proclaims “sometimes I’m drunk and I gotta fight, just the kinda guy I am.”

Drinking and fighting is not exclusive to the country music influenced portions of southern rock, it is also present in the rock and metal portions of the genre. A rock/metal
song by Nashville Pussy called ‘Hate and Whiskey’ elucidates the connection between drinking and violence lyrically:

Never been no where, and no where to go,
just pray you’re not around when I finally explode.
Cause some times life feels like everyone’s out to get me.
So leave me alone, cause I’m full of hate and whiskey.

The massive amount of drinking at southern rock shows is often accompanied by “getting rowdy.” Men become over-intoxicated and aggressive, engaging in deviant behaviors that while perhaps annoying, are generally more of a nuisance rather than a threat or problem to others. For example, men might get aggressive in the pushing and shoving that takes place in front of the stage. During a concert in Buffalo, NY one man became so intoxicated he climbed on stage and stood there with his arms up and screamed—though what he was screaming was not audible as the band continued to play their last song of the evening.

Southern rockers also express drunken rowdiness lyrically. Hank Williams III’s song, ‘Thrown out of the Bar’ details getting drunk and rowdy: “I’ve been beat up bad, been kicked around, been kicked out of every damn bar in this here town.” Before playing this song at one concert, he dedicated this song to the rowdy by saying, “This goes out to some of our rowdy, mother fucking friends out there that sometimes get thrown out of the goddamn club before the night is over with.” He went on to note, “But, hopefully that ain’t gonna happen to nobody tonight, seems like we got pretty cool fucking staff doing their thing here.” Other southern rockers opening for Hank III on this same tour spoke of an incident a few nights before this dedication in which Hank stopped the concert mid-song to rescue a rowdy fan who was being removed from a venue.

There was a kid last night in Ashbury Park that was going off quite a bit and the bouncers were going to kick him out, and Hank stopped the show.

Yeah man, he stopped that motherfucker on a dime. He said as long as this guy ain’t kicking anybody in the head, or kicking anybody in the balls he’s just having a good time and let him be.
While this happened during Hank III’s country set, when probed further these and other southern rockers who have also opened for Hank III agreed the metal set was the rowdiest in one of their words, “the hardcore part of his show gets fucking crazy.”

Hank Williams III’s ‘Thrown out of the Bar’ also illustrates an important element as to how rowdiness signifies and affirms rebel masculinity. He is not embarrassed about being on the losing end of a fight as he sings “I’ve been beat up bad, been kicked around.” On the surface, this contradicts hegemonic masculinity. One might think that loosing a fight signifies a lack of manhood. However, winning or losing a fight is of secondary importance to rebel masculinity. More important is the willingness to fight and risk physically injury. As a Nashville Pussy song entitled ‘Going Down Swinging’ puts it, “I can take a licking and I’ll come back kicking. I’m Kentucky fried, but I ain’t no chicken.”

While usually rowdiness is limited to the symbolic posturing of men to establish their masculine identity in a mostly anonymous crowd, aggression at southern rock shows can and often does gets out of hand. For instance, Scott H. Biram posted a MySpace bulletin that read “Every SHB show from now on will apparently involve a brawl of some kind. I think it's great!! Just don't break my shit or throw beer on me.”

On one occasion I was witness firsthand to a violent outburst. Although the charges were dropped just hours before the trial began, in November of 2005 I was subpoenaed by the Orlando Prosecutors office to testify about a fight witnessed at a concert featuring two informants—Alabama Thunderpussy and Suplecs—who were opening for the band Corrosion of Conformity (also known simply as C.O.C.). The final band of the evening was onstage, I was at the back bar of the club with two acquaintances: a body piercer and a tattoo artist. While I had my back turned when the fight began, within seconds one acquaintance of mine was on the floor being punched, kicked, and then finally hit with a bar stool by his attacker. Immediately upon the start of the fight, a group of men secured the perimeter of the brawl, keeping others back while yelling, “Let em’ fight!” After the fight an anonymous crowd member who eventually broke the perimeter and tried to stop the altercation repeatedly called me and my other acquaintance “faggots” for not trying to help. I later found out the attacker was a tattoo artist from a rival shop, and the incident stemmed from an earlier argument about a vandalized window.
A few days later on this same tour, the violence was deadly. Three nights after
the incident I witnessed in Tampa Florida, a tattoo artist named Michael Pyne stabbed
Tommy Laskas and his wife Wendy Laskas (Amrhein and Duryea 2005; Dunn 2005;
McCartney 2005). A newspaper article describes the incident:

Things started off inauspiciously for the couple soon after they arrived at
the Seventh Avenue club June 23 for a Corrosion of Conformity concert. The trouble started when Wendy Laskas and a girlfriend accidentally
knocked down Pyne, 39, near the mosh pit. About 20 minutes later, near
11:30 p.m., a woman who was with Pyne picked a fight with Wendy
Laskas' friend. When she came to the friend's defense, Wendy Laskas was
knocked to the ground. Thomas Laskas, 29, tried to break up the scuffle,
but Pyne began beating and stabbing him, witnesses said. Wendy Laskas
and two others also were injured. Her husband died the next day at Tampa
General Hospital.

The article also stated, “The young couple enjoyed hanging out in Ybor City, but they
were far from the rowdy type (Rondeaux 2005).” In order to avoid a life in prison, in
July of 2006 Pyne plead guilty to second-degree murder and accepted a 25-year prison
sentence (Jenkins 2006). Wendy Laskas is currently suing the club where the incident
took place (Rondeaux 2005), a lawsuit a Tampa Bay area opinion writer describes as
being based on …

not a legal question, but [it’s] a pragmatic one. If one voluntarily enters an
"entertainment" venue that requires metal detectors, bouncers and guards
in a part of town noted for its potential for violence, is one entitled to the
same expectation of personal security if one were dining at say, Bern’s?
Maybe the answer to that question can be found in the prophetically titled
punk rock band Tommy and Wendy Laskas had gone to hear that fateful
night; Corrosion of Conformity (Ruth 2006).

9 It is perhaps suspicious that both incidents involve individuals from the tattoo
community—but it is beyond the data to establish a direct link between tattoo artists and
physical violence.
This author is not the first to attribute music and/or bands for violence at concerts, rock-n-roll itself has been blamed for brutality and bloodshed almost since its inception. Many rock writers even claim the 1960s as an era of socio-cultural change metaphorically ended not with Woodstock, but at a December 1969 Rolling Stones concert in Altamont, California. There were four deaths at this concert, three people were killed from trampling, and another was beaten to death by the Hell’s Angels motorcycle gang, whom were hired by the Rolling Stones for security. Both the Rolling Stones and their music were blamed for this incident (DeRogatis 2003; Marcus [1989] 2003), and as Ruth’s opinion writing about the Tampa stabbing shows, bands and their music are still scapegoats as the root cause of violence at rock-n-roll concerts.

I followed up with informants from the bands that were performing the nights when these violent incidents occurred. One noted how the image of the bleeding man lying there still haunted him, and how the two incidents combined made him question his behavior at concerts. Before these incidents, he would mingle with the crowd before and after the band’s set, but after the incidents he spent more time backstage. Another informant emphasized that such violence is atypical for his band’s concerts. He attributed these outbreaks to the type of crowd drawn by more popular bands like Corrosion of Conformity:

Well it’s what I like to call the Pantera factor. Underground music is a little harder for most of the masses to find and find out about, so it takes a little more investigating, which usually means the person doing the investigating has more of an individualistic outlook on the world in general which usually—and these are all assumptions—means that they are more intelligent than the average heavy music fan who gets all their information from clear channel owned TV and radio conglomerates. Usually the masses are only exposed to what the industry deems extreme. Bands like Pantera. But as for violence at the shows in general, I think there is definitely a disconnect where folks don’t really get it. What I mean is that people have become desensitized to the validity and preciousness of all life, let alone each human life and how our actions affect each other. Mix that with some beer and some “hell yea” and it’s very easy to see why
someone would not blink when thrusting a sharp piece of metal into another, separating tissue and bursting liquid out upon its release.

While all studies find little if any connection between violent music and violent behavior (Arnett et. al. 1995; Gaines 2003; Lacourse et. al. 2001; North et. al. 2005; Scheel and Westefeld 1999; Weinstein 2000), none have considered the mediating variables mentioned by this informant—especially alcohol, which research shows is strongly linked to violence (Paker & Auerhahn 1998). Thus, the informant above is most likely correct in that southern rock itself does not directly cause violence, but can attract individuals with a propensity for violence because the music is hyper masculine and creates opportunities to make masculine displays through drinking and aggressive behavior. Violence can result as lowered inhibitions from the alcohol combine with intentional efforts to be aggressive in order to authenticate and legitimate rebel masculinity. But in some ways southern rockers are attracted to these dangers, because in confronting physical danger, they signify rebel masculinity. However, another possibility cannot be ruled out entirely; because violence and masculinity are entwined, it is plausible southern rockers use alcohol to rationalize and justify their violence.

**Drugs**

Like alcohol, drugs are another vice used by southern rockers to do identity work that signifies and affirms their rebel manhood through unconventionality and risk-taking. Because drugs involve legal complications that alcohol does not, drug use is an even more risky endeavor than drinking. Although not as common as alcohol and usually not consumed in public spaces, drugs permeate southern rock. Several different informants offered me marijuana during interviews, while one even asked me if I had the means to secure them drugs.

Just as musicians often ask for drinks on stage, so do they sometimes ask for drugs. This request is most often made in code speak. For instance, one band asked people in the crowd to “help them out” because they had the next day off and “were looking to be up all night.” Another band offered to play song requests in exchange for “green donations not of the monetary kind”—a statement that was followed up with a comment they “were looking to take about a 1/8 of an ounce of requests.” Sometimes it
can be difficult to assess what statements made on stage are truthful and which are for showmanship—showmanship through which southern rockers signifies and affirms his rebel masculinity through declaring the self a user. However, as described in the introduction to this chapter, all my experiences suggest most southern rockers use drugs personally in addition to promotionally.

Marijuana

Marijuana is almost universally accepted in southern rock as the vast majority of musicians celebrate being users. This celebrating is fitting with using drugs to make symbolic statements of manhood, as if no one knows one is a user it makes no statements to others, and there is no signifying rebel masculinity. For example, while performing Wayne ‘The Train’ Hancock speaks of his marijuana smoking and of his past arrests for marijuana possession—a reaffirmation of how drug use as a risk-taking endeavor that affirms rebel masculinity. The lyrics of his song ‘Viper’ compares smoking marijuana to the sound the snake makes. Another musician who publicly announces being a marijuana user is Willie Heath Neal. At one concert after being inundated by a fog machine while onstage, he commented the only smoke that belongs in country music comes from marijuana cigarettes. During another performance Neal announced he was going to play a song he wrote “one day while waiting for a bag of weed to show up.” The song is entitled ‘Sack,’ and in it he sings: “I got everyone one of my concerns, I got them wrapped up in a bag—and it’s the best feeling I’ve ever had.”

In addition to his many songs about the drug, Hank III readily uses marijuana imagery across many mediums. The top of his website displays two pot leaves. The vest he wears on almost all occasions has a patch of a marijuana leaf on the right shoulder. As seen in a Prick Magazine photo layout, Hank Williams III has a pot leaf tattooed on the inside of his upper left arm. In the October 2003 High Times Magazine, Hank III is pictured holding a marijuana bud to his nose. Another picture posted on Hank III’s MySpace page shows him smoking marijuana from the extended hand of a fan while playing onstage. When you visit Alabama Thunderpussy’s website the banner reads, “beer and weed.” These are just a few of the many examples of how southern rockers communicate their user status to others in order to affirm their rebel masculinity.
By making it publicly known they smoke marijuana, southern rockers embrace an outlaw or deviant aspect central to rebel masculinity—a deviance that is celebrated by putting it on display for others in order to legitimize and authenticate the rebel self. Unlike alcohol, drugs cannot be safely used in public spaces—only occasionally did I witness open use of marijuana during a southern rock concert, while I always witnessed drinking. In having to conceal marijuana use, southern rockers use alternative means to communicate their user status and therefore their status as rebel men to others. In doing such, southern rock musicians do identity work that constructs their masculinity by showing one’s willingness to take risks. One’s rebelliousness can only be authentically incorporated into one’s identity if others are aware of that deviance—and the only way to make others aware is to communicate information about the self to others.

**Hard Drugs**

Harder drugs, like hallucinogens, cocaine, sedatives, and barbiturates are celebrated in southern rock, but not to the extent marijuana is. For instance, while all evidence suggests marijuana is Hank Williams III’s drug of choice, he also writes and plays songs about other substances. In fact one song on his ‘Straight to Hell’ album mentions six drugs in addition to “weed” and “moonshine,” all of which were taken during a four day binge that started in Tennessee and ends in Texas: “acid,” “morphine,” “H,” (heroine) “blow” (cocaine) and “mushroom tea.” Another informant claims portions of this song are based on actual experiences he and Williams shared. In this song he proclaims that he “loves being high and hates being low,” but also adds, “now I’m starting to feel like I might've O-D’d,” or overdosed. Another song on Williams’s same album, ‘Pills I Took,’ written by ‘Those Poor Bastards’ surveys the consequences of a drug binge. The song details,

I've been awake for eight days straight …
I been twitching and turning and seeing visions …
I've lied and I've stole and I ain't fucking joking …
There's blood on the carpet and holes in the walls …
The mirrors are all busted and someone's crying,
It must have been those pills I took.
Williams’s version of this song ends with the sound of a hospital heart monitor flat lining. Many southern rock songs about hard drugs are written in the style of Johnny Cash’s ‘Cocaine Blues’—a murder ballad that begins with a shot of cocaine and ends in a 99-year prison sentence accompanied by the warning: “lay off that whiskey, and let that cocaine be.” Both Hank Williams III and Willie Heath Neal perform Cocaine Blues live, and both have recorded and released their own versions of this Cash song. Writing in this tradition develops a discourse about the contradiction of substance use: personal pleasure with very real personal consequences.

Just as binge drinking followed by violence and physical injury is a behavior that reaffirms manhood via unconventionality and risk-taking, so is the consumption of hard and hallucinogenic drugs. While many view drug use as a sign of personal weakness, southern rockers interpret using substances as a sign of self-mastery and symbolic statements of an empowered man. Like heavy drinking and violence, drugs affirm a man’s willingness to risk negative consequences in order to do what he pleases. Hard drugs are symbolic displays of rebel masculinity because of their often detrimental results when used. If drugs were not constructed as dangerous, their use would lack the same significance as an affirmer of rebel manhood.

**Drug Use, Not Abuse**

While most southern rockers accept, if not celebrate drug use, substance dependency is chastised. J.B. Beverly’s punk band, Little White Pills, song entitled ‘All Strung Out’ is about the ravages of addiction on an individual who even had “to sell his best guitar” for “some little white pills.” Scott H. Biram describes a frustrating relationship with a girl addicted to cocaine in ‘Santa Fe.’ Nashville Pussy also sings to an addicted person in their song ‘You Give Drugs a Bad Name:

You've got a whole lot of trouble, running in your veins
Say it right here and right now, you give drugs a bad name

All of these songs about addiction are written about an abstract other in order to communicate the problem of substance addiction. Addiction is viewed as sign of a weakness and therefore an un-manly character flaw. When southern rockers discuss personal drug problems, they almost always do so
in the past tense as conquering addiction indicates strength and therefore a masculine person. One such artist is Joe Buck who commented to the crowd during one concert: “Dude I did so much Heroine in the 90s, I kept Columbian drug lords in business. I bought mansions.” Buck also sings about his past drug abuse: “I filled my veins with everything, drinking whiskey, shooting heroine, snorting cocaine.” Bob Wayne also sings about overcoming his own past troubles with heroine addiction. On the first song of his untitled album, ‘Lowdown, Road-bound Man,’ he sings “I’ve kicked a few bad habits; I've seen a few men die.” In another song ‘Best Forgotten,’ the audience finds out Wayne experienced the drug-induced deaths of both a high school friend Miles and his father. In this song we discover Wayne “was gonna kill himself, just like my old man” who died “with a needle in his arm, in some hotel room.” This is fitting with his song ‘Whiskey on my Breath,’ which despite its title is mostly about the frightening experiences of heroine and cocaine that results in a suicide attempt. Fortunately, in ‘Best Forgotten’ Wayne sings of life-saving redemption:

Then something happened, I ain’t sure what it was,
best I can figure is the lord up above.
Now I’m sitting here stone cold sober,
singing these fucked up songs.

Wayne also has another song describing the negative manner through which southern rockers view addiction: “And a foolish man will loose his house, yeah a foolish man will starve to death.” Suplecs has a song about their loss of a friend who was “taken away by the white devil.” All of these songs affirm the dangers associated with drug use—though despite these warnings drugs are still incredibly common in southern rock. Thus, given their dangers the end result is a southern rock frame in which drugs are especially powerful affirmations of one’s rebel masculinity given their dangers.

One informant was comfortable enough to discuss his past issues with substances abuse during our interview session.

I’ve been playing music since I was 15 and I lived in, basically squalor, just doing drugs and playing music, and the whole getting clean thing, all my friends, close friends and family are just so happy. They’re like man,
keep going, you’re finally able to do it where before I wasn’t able to do nothing. I was literally living in a storage shed for 30 dollars a month, sneaking in and out it at night. It was full of like, beer cans and, ya know, syringes cause I was a mess.

Other informants admitted drugs could be problematic in southern rock, especially for musicians given that many fans are more than willing to provide musicians with drugs at their own expense. Musicians must personally negotiate between using drugs, but not abusing substances as to become dependent or addicted. Because southern rock musicians are always in a context of temptation, addiction is yet another detrimental consequence of hard drugs that southern rockers confront—thus in having the courage to use but not abuse these drugs reinforces southern rock musician’s rebel masculinity.

**Drug Dissenters**

Unlike alcohol, which is almost universally glorified by southern rockers, not all musicians accept mind-altering substances. During our interview, one informant argued drugs negatively affect southern music.

We leave the counterculture element out of it, and we try to boil it back down to the more visceral, kind of juke-joint, barn-dance, hoe-down aspects, the stuff that it grew out of. There was all those rock-n-roll guys who discovered drugs and started singing about drugs and raising hell in a more heavy metal kind of way. It became more about lowering the bar instead of holding yourself up with pride. It’s kinda like, ya know, the ornery southern gentleman thing was replaced by this hippy rock thing, and I don’t have anything in common with the hippies, I don’t have anything in common with the drug culture.

There are even a few lyrical anti-drug examples in southern rock. Unknown Hinson reaffirms his anti-drug positions in his song ‘Hippie Girl’ when he sings: “I ain’t taking no drugs—but I’ll sure take a hippy girl’s free love.” Thus, while Hinson does not partake in the drugs, he does indulge in the last of the southern rock vices: sex.
Sex

In southern rock, women—especially women who meet cultural definitions of beauty—are constructed as sexual objects who, like drugs and alcohol, are assumed to exist primarily for the pleasure of men. Examples of the sexualized construction of women lyrically and via album cover and website imagery are readily available. For example, Hank Williams III sings that “he likes a good time and a one-night stand” in the title track off his ‘Straight to Hell Album.’ On his website he also has a section entitled, ‘Hellbilly Honeys,’ which is a collection of amateur photographs of nude women. While done in what could be described as a more artistic manner, Alabama Thunderpussy—whose band name carries sexual connotations—pictures nude women on three of their album covers. Artimus Pyledriver describes their music on their MySpace page as “odes to fast cars, faster women, and the land they call home.” Surprisingly, however, their one song about a woman, ‘Dirt Road White Girl,’ is a rare southern rock lyrical example where a man considering entering a long-term relationship with a women. Another example of objectifying women comes from Bob Wayne. On a MySpace bulletin for an upcoming show he announces: “PLUS FREE VAGINA INSPECTIONS, HELD BY BOB WAYNE HIMSELF AFTER THE SHOW IN HIS CAMPER!” According to a MySpace bulletin posting by Unknown Hinson’s management team, he will “sign boobs and butts” free of charge after concerts.

Some of the most explicit lyrical examples of objectifying women come from ‘The King of Country Western Troubadours,’ Unknown Hinson. Because he is half musician and half character actor, Hinson is able to make sexist, objectifying statements that if taken completely seriously are so demeaning they would most likely even offend a large segment of semi-misogynist southern rock fans. Because Hinson never breaks out of character, no one is certain how serious he is, or where to draw the line between the ironic, satirical aspects of his character and the actual or serious elements of what he says, what he does, or even who he is.

Lyrically, Unknown Hinson expects women, or womerns in his lexicon, to be

---

10 Before the band’s site redesign, Artimus Pyledriver also used this exact wording on their website.
sexually attractive, sexually available, while at the same time domestically subservient and to speak not even when spoken to. For instance, in one song he sings:

I like the way that you don’t talk,
I like the way that you don’t walk.
I like the way you do nothing at all.
I like the way you don’t fuss and squeal.
I like the way your skin don’t feel.
I like the way you just lay there so still.

It is only later the listener is informed this woman, named ‘Poly Urethane,’ is an inflatable sex toy. In his song ‘I Ain’t Afraid of Your Husband’ Hinson sings, “A good looking woman, a chart topping man, need to get it on any chance they can, give it up—come on baby give it up.” In the song ‘Venus’ he describes his attempts to “build a rocket ship to go where women don’t give no lip.” In ‘Foggy Windows,’ Hinson sings about his failed attempts at peeping and in ‘Silver Platter,’ he once again reaffirms how he wants a woman “now on a silver platter, so just shut the hell up, I don’t want no chatter.” In his song ‘Lingerie,’ he sings,

This song ain’t for woman’s lib, it’s for the good one’s who believe in old Adam’s rib. Your husband worked all day, he should’ve been home by five, his supper’s on the table gettin’ cold as ice. Now don’t raise hell at him that will just chase him away, when you[‘re] man comes home for supper baby, put on some lingerie ... a man don’t want to hear a woman whine, the way to his heart is through his eyes.

In ‘Love on Demand,’ Hinson describes a woman’s refusal to comply with “orders” to have sex with him as “un-American” and “communistic.” While these examples are exaggerated for comedic humor, they are of only humorous to some because they reflect an element of truth about their reality as they see it. In concert, Hinson’s sexist and objectifying lyrics and statements made between songs received the most applause of anything he did. The only other topics that draw such strong applause are drinking, drugs, or insults to Nashville. Without interviewing audience members, it is difficult to assess how Hinson’s statements are being received and interpreted. Still, Hinson is
interesting sociologically, because his character only makes sense in context—which means if the sexual objectification was not somehow part of that context, his humor would be nonsensical.

**Women in Southern Rock**

The southern rock band that most explicitly sexualizes women is the only act to include female members. Nashville Pussy was founded with two female members: guitarist Ruyter Suys and bassist Corey Parks—who was ultimately replaced by another woman, Karen Cuda. All past and present female members of Nashville Pussy sexualize their bodies with provocative clothing and on stage behaviors. Figure 5-3 is a photo taken during a Nashville Pussy concert showing Suys in tight and revealing clothing, playing her guitar in such a way that the instrument mimics the body of a sexual partner. Later in the evening Suys performed with her black shirt pulled up, revealing her torso and black undergarments. This received great applause from the audience from both men and women.

Nashville Pussy’s album art is even more sexualized than their performances. On the cover of their debut album, ‘Let Them Eat Pussy,’ Parks and Suys are pictured forcing two men to perform cunnilingus—an act that could be interpreted as sexually empowered women demanding their own satisfaction. My interview with Suys reveals she does consider herself “a cutting edge feminist,” who claims women must come to terms with their sexuality in order to progress socially. However, she also admits that her sexuality has been commodified to benefit the band.
Thus, while her image can be interpreted as empowering, most depictions of Suys and her many female bassists can also be seen as objectifying in that the band’s website and their album art is full of pictures of Park and Suys in revealing clothing.

One objectifying depiction is presented in Figure 5-4, which comes from the back of the album, ‘High as Hell.’ Parks and Suys are pictured in a pose with each other on a heart shaped bed. On the inside of this album, Suys is shown topless—with her hair covering her breasts, holding her guitar—as the carving on the bow of ship. Also on the inside of this album Corey Parks is shown in a G-string, black leather bra, cowboy hat, and belt of bullets, giving Lemmy Kilmister, the bassist and lead singer for Motörhead, a lap dance as he is strapped to an electric chair. In the foreground of this picture is a hand holding the sentenced man’s last requests; two lap dances from Corey and $5,000 worth of drinks for his funeral. However, their highly sexual persona is not the only asset Nashville Pussy has at their disposal, as Ruyter Suys is highly respected for her guitar skills within the southern rock community. Their website boasts she was once voted the best guitarist in Atlanta. Still, in seeing Ruyter outside of a club before a show—before she had put on her stage clothes and instead wore a bulky sweater, oversized knit hat and large rimmed glasses—I overheard a man adorning not her musicianship, but how she “still looked hot” despite her presentation. A man next to him agreed.

---

11 This is also another example of celebrating musical heroes. From England, Motörhead has sustained a successful career since the 1970s by fusing punk and metal, and by embracing rebel masculinity.
Nashville Pussy’s band name also affords them the opportunity to sexualize their music through word play. Many of their songs are lyrically constructed using “pussy” in such a way that the listener is uncertain whether the singer is referencing the band or a vagina. This is noted on some of their record titles, with their debut album named ‘Let them Eat Pussy’ and their most recent release entitled ‘Get Some [pussy].’ One song on this album, ‘Pussy Time,’ uses this strategy that makes their band name and a vagina undistinguishable lyrically:

Well all right, who wants some pussy. *We do* (sung by the women)
Then come with me! Go, Go, Go, Go YEAH.
Get some, grab some and hold on.
Box it baby, box it up and take it home.
There’s one thing I say, that never changes.
Just cause you make money doesn’t mean you get paid.

*We got the pussy.* You got time baby.
*We got the pussy.* You got the time baby.
*We got the pussy.* You got the time baby.

Well all right, you better get it before it’s gone.
Let me tell you baby, you better eat it before it gets cold

These lyrics are representative of Nashville Pussy’s strategy of lyrically blurring the possession of female genitalia with their band name. However, the band admits these explicitly lyrical examples that sexually objectify women are exaggerated. Still, just because the explicit examples involve exaggeration is not to say the objectification of women does not take place in southern rock. When directly asked about it, informants usually either make statements about how sex and sexism has always been, and always will be a part of rock-n-roll—or they point out how “I’m not going to pass up the chance to get laid, [laughs] but that’s not why I’m doing it (playing music).” This means that the objectification of women by southern rock musicians is best illustrated not in interview responses, but in their construction of women as a vice—a vice that, like drinking and drugs, is symbolic of their rebel masculinity while simultaneously a threat to that very manhood. Looking beyond vice, it can also be seen that in objectifying women’s bodies,
rebel masculinity compliments hegemonic masculinity and ultimately reinforces the domination of men over women.

**Resisting Domesticity**

Chapter 3 describes how southern rockers celebrate their freedom and autonomy while minimizing the “slavery” of work, education and family. This relates to sex as vice because many southern rockers consider women threats to their rebel masculinity because like substance abuse that carries the risk of addiction, sex carries with it the risk of domesticity or becoming “whipped.” For southern rockers, a “real man,” or a man who conforms to the norms of rebel masculinity answers to nobody but himself—and under no circumstances should one ever answer to a woman. Long-term, monogamous relationships infringe upon a man’s independence and autonomy, and are thus threats to rebel masculinity. In the case of Bob Wayne, escaping this threat is expressed lyrically in ‘Lowdown, Roadbound Man’ when he sings “I slipped out on your daughter, just like I slipped out of your noose” or:

- As far as staying here goes, girl I think I’m gonna pass.
- Now if that ain’t country, I’ll kiss her fucking ass.

Hank Williams III also notes the power struggle that can occur in relationships with women when he sings “I don't usually let a woman get an upper hand on me” in ‘Things You Do to Me.’ In another song entitled ‘My Drinking Problem,’ he focuses almost entirely on resisting domesticity:

- She said she's gonna quit me, if I didn't quit the booze.
- So I just started drinkin' more, to see if she would really choose.
- And I have to hand it to that girl, she meant every breath.
- An' I'm glad she did, 'cause I was about, to drink myself to death.

- Well, she said I had problem. Boy, was she ever right?
- To keep from goin' home to her, I'd stay out drunk, all night.
- And I believe that woman left me, in the nick of time.
- If she'd a-stayed much longer, I'd have dranked up my last dime.

This song details both the problem of domesticity, and how domesticity can constrain other vice behaviors that signify and affirm rebel masculinity. Being forced to give up
his drinking for his partner would threaten Hank III’s identity stake in rebel masculinity. At the same time, he blames his ex-partner for forcing him to drink.

During interviews, many southern rockers spoke of how long-term relationships and marriages are problematic for their life on the road. Some even told stories of having been forced by past partners to decide how they were going to live their lives, or were forced to choose between music and family. One informant told me “I had a girlfriend with a house, huge house … now, we’re no longer together. She gave me an ultimatum and I’m not going to stop doing this.” This informant also discussed this break-up onstage, adding his ex-girlfriend filled up a canoe with all his belongings and set it adrift on a lake—a funny story he then used to reinforce how life is best lived without “things,” or in nonmaterial way. Another informant described how a band mate “went through a divorce from a wife he thought supported him but didn’t.” Other musicians are able to maintain their relationships; two even claimed the best thing about being on tour was “no old ladies.” Most, however, claim to be uncommitted to a partner.

There is a lyrical reference to the constraints of domesticity from Willie Heath Neal who sings how he’d like to leave his town but has “a little girl and that gets in the way … but someday she’s gonna be grown and I won’t have to make this town my home.” It would seem that this song was written before another on the same album entitled ‘Madelyn’s Song,’ which describes not the constraints of domesticity, but the pain and sorrow of life on the road without his daughter. In this piece Neal sings: “No matter where I go you’ll always be my little girl, I’ll have to watch you grow up from my own corner of the world.” Thus, this song is fitting with the manner in which most southern rockers view domesticity; as something to be avoided because it can constrain a man from doing what a man he wants and being able to live free of the influence of others. This, of course, is the central component of rebel masculinity: doing what one pleases even when others take issue with what one does. Because autonomy is central to rebel masculinity, the vice of casual sex involves the risks of both committed relationships and children, which is fitting in that masculinity involves confronting those risks or risk-taking. Perhaps then the construction of women as sexual objects rather than considering the opposite sex in terms of thinking and feeling people is a defense
mechanism used by southern rockers to rationalize their choice to live without companionship.

**Sin and the Devil**

By first framing, and then embracing vice as sin, southern rockers reaffirm the rebelliousness of their masculinity by challenging some of the larger society’s most strongly held virtues. While most religious people avoid the sins of drinking, using drugs and having casual sex in order to avoid eternal damnation in hell, southern rockers either do not actually believe, or do believe but do not care about the consequences of their actions against the will of god in the afterlife. One informant even describes the appeal of sinful behaviors stems from the fact that they are deviant.

I’m not really a religious person but I was raised around it, and seems like people who’ve had a lot of religion in life constantly rebel. I mean like the whole idea of Christianity like asking for redemption for your sins, its almost like “ok, good, now we can go out and sin.” Ya know? And the biggest bible thumpers do it to; they just do it behind closed doors. Whereas Rock-n-Roll just kind of embraces that side, but I think that side of people has always been there. They know it’s wrong, they’ve been told its wrong and that makes it all the more appealing. The whole idea of that to me anyway, you can’t do this and you can’t do that, all those things are natural instincts and urges that god gave us. When you see a hot lady and you want to bang her, god gave us those urges and then they turn around and say “no you can’t do it now.” It kind of, it’s kind of ironic in a way too. So, I think it’s just kind of human nature, and I think people [in] the so-called rock-n-roll lifestyle are embracing that.

Unknown Hinson would probably agree that rock-n-roll is has a corrupting influence of upon this country’s youth given his song entitled ‘Rock-n-Roll is Straight from Hell.’ Alabama Thunderpussy also links Rock-n-Roll, drinking and drugs with anti-religious sentiments in their song Blasphemy, pronounced “blasts-for-me.” Bob Wayne also captures the connection between rock-n-roll and sin in religious terms with his song ‘Make it Home,’ in which he sings:
My mother told me a long time ago that the devil was after my soul.
I started running to find out the reasons and ended up part of the show.
Well the darkness was chasing so I turned to embrace it, and now I can’t let go.
And I wonder if I’ll ever make it home.

In the song ‘Devil’s Son,’ Bob Wayne makes a deal with Satan in exchange for a record contract, just like “Kurt [Cobain] and Elvis [Presley]” did. In their own way, different southern rockers frame vice in religious terms: as embracing sin, or embodying that which the Christian god forbids as to signify and reaffirm their rebel masculinity.

Another way southern rockers frame vice in religious terms is through the imagery of the devil. Using the devil for musical expression is not new to two music genres that influence the southern rock revival: metal and country. Metal music has always embraced “the darker” aspects of life, including the devil which is just one of many “arcane and mysterious symbols to numerous too mention” that symbolizes not so much evil, but an abstract, masculine based power sought by rebellious youth (Gross 1990:125). This means in metal music, the devil or Satan is depicted in abstract, almost mythological and/or metaphorical terms in order to make symbolic statements about our own immediate reality. While heavily critiqued for promoting occultism by groups such as the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), social scientists find the abstract presentation of the devil in metal music has more to do with critiquing society through a transvaluation of hegemonic social values (Walsner 1993; Weinstein 2000) or perhaps selling records (Breen 1991) than propagating actual worship of the devil.

Traditional country music presents the devil as characterized by fundamentalist religion (Lund 1972): as an evil or demonic force of personal temptation that must be resisted in order to avoid eternal damnation in the afterlife. Hank Williams III even juxtaposes a classic country song by Charlie Louvin called ‘Satan is Real’ to open his album ‘Straight to Hell’ that depicts the devil through a fundamental religious frame:

Satan is real, working in spirit
You can see him, and hear him in this world everyday
Satin is real, working with power
He can tempt you, and lead you astray
This depiction of the devil is fitting with a literal interpretation of the bible in which the devil is a real, active, evil force tempting individuals to sin against god and thus suffer eternal punishment in hell.

Southern rock merges the manners in which the devil is used in each of these genres. As in metal the devil is embraced symbolically, but as in country he is depicted as a real force as opposed to metal’s more abstract and symbolic characterization. In ‘Evil Motherfucker from Tennessee’ Joe Buck sings “everybody say I got the devil in me.” In ‘El Diablo,’ the name of the devil in Spanish, Willie Heath Neal sings how the devil is making him reap deadly revenge on an ex lover. He sings,

Well the Devil’s got a hold on me,  
from my cowboy hat to the boots on my feet.  
He’s gotten in my head, red is all I see,  
cause the devil’s got a hold of me.

Bob Wayne also refers to the devil in Spanish in his song ‘Her Name is the Devil.’ Like Neal, Wayne also incorporates the devil into a murder ballad entitled ‘Burn that Woman,’ once by saying his homicide target is ‘the devils kin’ and later how he “tried to remember something Jesus said, but the words of the devil rang through instead.”

Like Wayne, Hank Williams III references a woman as kin to the devil in the song, ‘The Devil’s Daughter’ about a girl who drinks ‘gin and water’ and ‘just can’t be tamed.’ This song is more in line with the way southern rock lyrically depicts the devil; so real that he is personified, and in becoming personified there is the opportunity to interact with him on a personal level—to challenge him, man to man. In another song, ‘Blue Devil’, Hank III plays cards with and sells his soul to “his only friend, the devil” despite being told he would never win doing either. Hank III also wears many Satanic

12 Both Neal’s ‘El Diablo’ and Wayne’s ‘Burn that Woman’ are typical of traditional murder ballads in which a jealous man kills his partner for infidelity. These songs are also fitting with an early genre of a country from the 1920s called *honky tonk*. A survey of these songs reveals that like Neal’s and Wayne’s murder ballads, when women drink and are unfaithful they tend to lose homes, families, or their lives. At the same time, men’s infidelity is celebrated (La Chapelle 2004). This also holds true for southern rock. In addition to murder ballads, some southern rock songs celebrate having sex with other men’s spouses. In ‘Straight to Hell’ Hank III boasts of “boinking” a sheriff’s wife, while Unknown Hinson sings ‘I Ain’t Afraid of your Husband.’
symbols such as pentagrams and inverted crosses, and both he and his metal band Assjack performed at what was billed ‘The Most Evil Event in History:’ the marriage of Stanton LaVey, grandson of the Church of Satan founder Anton LaVey on June 6th, of 2006 or 06-06-06. Artimus Pyledriver also released their American debut CD on this date.

In ‘Take me Along’ Bob Wayne describes drinking tequila, doing cocaine, and singing songs with the devil, thus connecting vice behaviors to religion. Nashville Pussy’s song ‘Hell Ain’t What It Used to Be’ is about a phone call between the singer and the devil in which he tells Satan, “So sorry Satan, don’t take this personally … but things getting’ kinda cold down there, hell ain’t what it used to be.” In ‘Hit the Road,’ Scott Biram claims to have personally tied the devil’s tail in a knot, while in ‘Been Down Too Long’ he tells the devil “to step aside” and in ‘Long Fingernail’ the devil pokes at his heart. ANTiSEEN also has a song about a person meeting the devil entitled ‘The Devil Meets the Long Haired Weirdo.’ The Legendary Shack Shakers describe a bar on Friday night as ‘The Devil’s night Auction,’ a song which frames binge drinking and casual sex in religious terms.

In all of these songs, metaphorical personification of the devil allows southern rockers to embrace vice and sin in a grounded as opposed to an abstract way. In these interactions, sometimes the devil comes out on top, other times the songwriter is victorious. The uncertain outcome is fitting with the things the devil symbolizes like drinking, drugs and sex that carry their own dangers, and must be used at one’s own risk. If interacting with the devil was completely safe—meaning if the devil always lost—there would be no risk taking and thus no implicit statements about the songwriter’s masculinity. At the same time, framing vice in terms of religion entwines masculinity with a rebel identity. A “good boy’ avoids the devil, while rebel masculinity dictates the devil be challenged like other authority figures.

\[13\] The devil is also used occasionally in southern rock imagery. Quite fitting with vice as sin, Suplecs has what appears to be a cartoon female devil or demon rising out of a bottle and stroking the drinker’s hair on the front cover of their ‘Pouwtin’ on the Outside, Party on the Inside’ album. ANTiSEEN also has a cartoon devil on the inside of their ‘Badwill Ambassadors.’ Hank III uses the silhouette of the devil playing a guitar on his website, posters, and on the inside sleeve of his ‘Straight to Hell’ album.
Using the devil to make symbolic, anti-religious statements does not mean southern rockers actually worship the devil. When asked about why so many of his songs were about the devil, one informant said:

No, I’m not a Satanist. It’s Gospel music man. My parents tried to put the fear of god in me when I was a kid. I used to pray a lot cause that’s how I was raised. So now-a-days, it’s like I don’t know that I believe in one religion, but it comes out in my songs. I’m spiritual, I believe in a universal power. You’d would be crazy not to, I have to. I don’t know what it is, but I’m not gonna say its Hinduism, or Christian, or Buddhist, or Native American. I don’t think you can put a name on it, I think it speaks in different languages. But ah, I was raised in the Christian one, so my brain reverts to those stories.

In addition distancing himself from being a Satanist, this informant describes how his “brain reverts” to Christianity because that is the religion he was exposed to as a child. That is, the metaphorical embracement of sin and the devil in this style of songwriting stems from the fundamental Christians backgrounds of informants that instilled a religious frame through which to view reality that has survived the abandonment of the actual religion itself.

Embracing the devil in songs raises the question as to how these messages are received by fans. One informant thinks,

southern fried Rock-n-Roll is more for folks that go to church on Sunday, might raise hell on Saturday but still go to church on Sunday and don’t

---

14 Hank Williams III is actively involved with the movement to ‘free the west Memphis three,’ three Arkansas teens (Jessie Misskelley Jr, Jason Baldwin and Damien Echols) convicted for the 1993 murder and mutilation of three 8 year old boys. These defendants’s case was made known to the world in the documentary series ‘Paradise Lost,’ movies that imply these teen’s participation in the ‘gothic’ subculture and their low socio-economic status as poor, southern whites played a large role in their conviction (Opel 2005). In addition to posting updates on the case on his website, Hank III also contributed a song to the record, ‘Rise Above: 24 Black Flag Songs to Benefit the West Memphis Three.’
necessarily get off on all the 70s dissident movement, hippy, back to the country stuff. To me that's the opposite of the gospel spirit.

Another informant was critical of bands that simply take the critique of religion too far.

You got these silly black metal bands that their entire career is based on going to war with it [religion]. And I’m just like, well what happens if you all got rid of it? Then you wouldn’t have nothing to write songs about.

Still, the Myspace blog shown in Figure 5-5 posted by Unknown Hinson also shows that southern rock attracts fans devoted to occult and devil worship.

Sunday, December 17, 2006

Please, no poster sized band promo! And no Satanists
Current mood: disappointed
Category: Music

Look, I know that everyone wants to advertise their band, but please keep the image small; otherwise you take up the entire page. Be considerate of others. Also, any Satanic worship groups or fans should probably reexamine the reason for their contact with me, because I am NOT here to represent them. I'm a sinner, but I do not salute Satan as my boss. I live as if there were no tomorrow, but I still have respect for a higher power, and frankly, if you have hoped for the warden to get a call from the Governor, you'll understand.

Unknown Hinson

Figure 5-5: Unknown Hinson’s MySpace Blog

While most of what Hinson says and does exaggerates the truth for satire, the fact that this blog is accompanied by another warning—poster sized promos, which are a very real problem for ‘MySpacers,’ means this message is most likely serious. This seriousness is reinforced by reference to his fictive past where he spent 30 years praying for clemency after being incarcerated for a murder he did not commit.

Southern rockers’ perception of religion is best described as: all are aware, some are believers, few are practitioners, but because everyone knows the language, religious imagery such as sin and the devil is used to signify and affirm rebel masculinity. In having the courage to confront the devil—who in most cases symbolizes vice—southern rockers metaphorically legitimize their masculinity. At the same time, in embracing sin
southern rockers challenge the virtues of the religion they rebel from, thus signifying and affirming their rebel masculinity.

**Conclusion**

This chapter describes southern rock’s embracement of vice: drinking, drugging and casual sex. In celebrating these behaviors, southern rockers affirm their rebel masculinity built around signifying the self as an outlaw, deviant rebel. Drinking, doing drugs, and having sex has meaning beyond mere indulgences of the flesh; vice behaviors display a willingness to take risks, exemplifying rebel masculinity. In addition, drinking in southern rock often leads to rowdiness and sometimes violence. The same is true for drugs, which in addition to creating personal troubles, are addictive and involve possible legal complications. Casual sex also carries with it a risk of a long-term relationship that conflicts with one’s autonomy, another key component of southern rockers’ masculinity. Social norms of the larger society dictate these behaviors—drinking, drugs, and casual sex should be avoided. In engaging in these vices southern rockers reaffirm their rebel masculinity that prescribes a man should do what one pleases despite, or in spite of what others might have to say about it.

The last portion of this chapter describes how southern rockers frame drinking, violence, using drugs and having casual sex as sins and embracing the devil. It is argued this conceptualization occurs because most southern rockers came of age in religious families, in an extremely religious region of America” “the Bible belt.” So while most southern rockers are no longer practicing Christians, they still use religious imagery to interpret their reality and signify their rebel masculinity by expressing their behaviors as directly in conflict with the religious virtues held above all else by many others.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

This study establishes how southern rockers do identity work in order to construct, signify and affirm rebel manhood. Rebel manhood is a form of masculinity that empowers otherwise disempowered selves by constructing a façade of strength and dominance that allows marginalized and subordinated men to feel commanding and in control. Socially disaffected and estranged, southern rockers authenticate, legitimate and ultimately affirm their rebel selves by aggrandizing their indifferent defiance and reckless insubordination. Rebel manhood is achieved as southern rockers signify themselves existing beyond the subjugation and influences of others—flaunting how they do what they please, when they please, despite or even in spite of protests from others. Almost all of the identity work strategies engaged by southern rockers strive to convince both oneself, and others of this refractory masculinity.

Part of constructing rebel manhood involves embracing and imbuing with virtue a poor, rural, white, masculine identity. Incapable or unwilling to pursue even mediocre economic success, southern rockers rebuke material goods and comforts, arguing a rebel man endures with as little resources as possible, thus signifying how he is independent of anyone or anything. Rebel manhood also draws upon the rural in the masculine, signifying one as self-reliant and self-sufficient; able to make do using only their frontier survival skills like hunting, fishing, and farming. A rebel man convinces himself and others he needs no one but himself, and southern rockers use identity work that draws on rural poverty to symbolically construct and signify the self as liberated because of their self-mastery.

Southern rockers also do identity work that flaunts the stigma of rural poverty in order to signify and affirm the rebel self. They embrace being white trash—a term filled with negative imagery in regards to the illegitimacy and backwardness of poor whites from the country side. Through display of the rebel flag, southern rockers profanely celebrate whiteness as an ethnicity, which is yet another way to signify rebelliousness by showing the self as both willing and able to do as he pleases, even when others take strong exception. Southern rockers also flout their rebel manhood sins; abuse of alcohol and drugs and the sexual objectification of women. To maximize the offensiveness of
these behaviors, rebel men temper these behaviors as assaults against what many others hold in higher regard than all else: god.

Southern rock musicians consider themselves the cultural ambassadors of poor, rural whites, and in doing so interpret their unique status as traveling musicians in such a way as to reinforce and reaffirm their own rebel manhood via identity work. They construct themselves as proudly defying the more powerful and domineering culture industry that forces them to practice their craft in a marginal, niche market. Some describe themselves as the messianic saviors of a cultural art form being assaulted and corrupted by inauthentic, illegitimate popular music. They define their own music as an authentic and legitimate expression of the American experience, an aesthetic reflection they feel has been driven to near extinction by the culture industry’s pursuit of profit over aesthetic substance. Expelled by the industry to the margins of American music, southern rock musicians glorify their lives on the road, celebrating themselves for having the strength and courage to confront the hardships and struggles of a gypsy-like lifestyle that offers only limited economic and psychic rewards. At the same time their identity work flaunts their nomadic existence by framing a more standard life course of work, home and family as metaphorical prisons that thwart a rebel man’s sovereignty and autonomy.

Empowering Stigmatized and Marginalized Masculine Selves

Southern rock musician’s identity work strategies are comparable to efforts used by members of other stigmatized social groups to construct the self. For example, Anderson and Snow (1987) find that some homeless men embraced being a “bum” or “tramp,” some even proudly boasted of their abilities to engage in “cons” that allow them to “survive the road.” Others use a distancing strategy where they criticized homeless “punkers” for not fully embracing the “hippie tramp” lifestyle many “authentic” homeless men consider a lifelong commitment. Similarly, southern rockers distance themselves from mainstream pop stars like Kid Rock and embrace stigmatized identities as hard drinking, womanizing, rebel flag waving vagabonds.

Southern rock musicians have a unique place in the capitalist economy and mode of production. They are like marginalized workers striving to practice their craft in a culture industry. Like the punk (Hesmondhalgh 1998), metal (Weinstein [1992] 2000),
and alternative subcultures (Moore 2003), southern rockers embrace a “Do It Yourself” or “D.I.Y.” ethos, in which music is self-produced using amateur recording equipment that captures music in its unpolished and raw form. As entrepreneurs, southern rock bands are comparable to small business owners that create and sell products (albums) in a market dominated by large corporations who use their power and resources to exclude outsiders. Like the owners of “mom and pop” retail stores forced to compete against the likes of Wal*Mart, southern rockers struggle to earn enough money to sustain themselves and are thus often on the cusp of going out of business. Southern rockers are also like contract workers who are in some ways analogous to contingent or migrant workers. They receive little pay, they lack benefits, they have no job security, and they travel from one job to the next, wherever someone will pay them to play. As workers, southern rockers are thus like “outsiders-within” the culture industry, fighting a seemingly endless struggle to interject themselves and their music into a market dominated and controlled by powerful exclusionary forces.

As marginalized workers, southern rockers’ identity work is similar to that of contingent or “temp” workers who fill short-term contract positions in a variety of different industries for minimal economic and psychic rewards. Padavic (2005) finds when facing limited compensation and almost constant assaults on their sense of self, contingent workers did identity work to rationalize their position and salvage a positive identity. For example, a minority of these temporary employees reject the ideal of permanent employment. Like these temp workers, southern rockers distance themselves from permanent employment and financial success both because traditional work arrangements are constraining to their independent, rebel selves, and because they perceive economic and material rewards as not worth sacrificing their autonomy. Instead they bestow their alterative career paths with moral worth and a glorified work ethic of constant touring. Padavic (2005) also found most temp workers do identity work that rationalized an alternative career path, constructing a positive sense of self through their individual work ethic, and identifying with employer interests over their own (Padavic 2005). Like contingent workers, southern rockers also ennobled their craft and their savior selves by framing the revival as movement to rescue an authentic, legitimate cultural expression of the poor, white, rural, American experience.
Because hegemonic masculine norms dictate men’s work for a wage or salary to support themselves and their families, southern rockers’ abandoning of traditional employment subordinates and marginalizes their identity as men. The importance of work to manhood can be noted in how southern rockers glorify both the working man and his plight in song and on the stage, even though in interviews they spoke quite negatively about traditional work arrangements. However, like their working class audiences, southern rockers marginal employment status (or lack thereof as the case may be) in subordinate positions does not give them access to a cultural resource central to hegemonic masculine norms: power. Middle and upper-class men empower the masculine self through their employment and economic endeavors, which often include autonomy for the self, and supervisory and managerial positions with authority over others. Neither southern rockers nor their working class fans can make such claims given their low status in the labor market. Thus, they must use identity work in order to empower their masculine selves despite their marginal positions.

Southern rockers’ rebel manhood reflects three core elements of Connell’s protest masculinity (Connell 1995). First, rebel manhood is constructed by members of a marginal, subordinated group—southern rockers are at best part of the disempowered working class, and for many their heavy tattoos relegate them only to the even more oppressed secondary labor market within the working class. In constructing themselves as poor, rural and white southerners, they also perceive themselves as part of a larger, stigmatized minority population. Second, southern rockers use rebel manhood as a defense mechanism to cope with the powerlessness and degradation they experience as a result of their membership in a marginal, subordinated group. They construct rebel manhood by signifying the self as beyond the authority of others: they construct their identities as men who do as they please despite, or in spite of others’ presumed ridicule. Such identity work helps southern rockers empower an otherwise disempowered self by constructing themselves as autonomous and independent men who are willing to engage in risky and politically incorrect behaviors.

My study reaffirms a theoretical conjecture about protest masculinity Connell surmised but could not ultimately verify with his narrow data. The men he interviewed from were of similar SES status, and they did use the same agency to secure employment,
but there were not acquaintances nor did they belong to the same social group. Still, given how these men described their involvement of different youth peer groups and motorcycle gangs, Connell surmised that protest masculinity, even though it was an individual defense mechanism for feelings of powerlessness, was in fact created as a collective practice. The southern rock revival, conceptualized as a community dispersed across the country, confirms that the construction, embodiment, and signification of protest masculinity is done as a cooperative group effort. This reinforces how, as Connell predicted, protest masculinity is collectively constructed, and collectively practiced.

My study also shows that much like media representations of hegemonic masculinity in the larger culture (Craig 1992; McKay & Huber 1992), protest masculinity can be celebrated and glorified via cultural representations—in this case, southern rock music. Within the southern rock community, musicians are like sports heroes of the larger society (Messner 1992; Rowe & McKay 1998) in that they exemplify a masculinity embraced by a social group. However, while southern rockers construct rebel manhood in order to promote their music, they are unlike professional athletes and media characters because they are more accessible to audiences. They are in essence, very much part of the southern rock collective and in order to stake claim as authentic artists, make all attempts to construct themselves as similar to, and not above or better than their audiences.

This study also affirms Connell’s argument that masculinities are constructed in relation to one another. Even though rebel manhood rejects the role model of man as breadwinner, southern rockers’ masculinity is reflective of the hegemonic cultural ideal in being sexist, homophobic, and powerful and dominant. While southern rockers distanced themselves from work, their rebel masculinity was still complimentary to working class masculinity and at times they even glorified working men in song. In rejecting employment along with education and family, southern rockers’ distanced themselves from the values of middle class masculinity—a manhood some perceive as coming closest to meeting hegemonic ideal standards (Schippers 2007, Walker 2006). Southern rockers affiliated themselves with a rural masculinity through glorifying the countryside and frontier survival skills such as farming, fishing, and shooting. Thus, not
only is this study in many ways the first documented instance of collective protest masculinity, it also reaffirms how masculinities are constructed in relation to one another.

The Implications of Rebel Masculinity

While the southern rock music revival exists somewhat independently from the larger society, it is still part of the larger society. Because of this interconnection, rebel masculinity has implications beyond the revival itself. One such consequence is the perpetuation of the power differential in which women are subordinated by men through the perpetuation of patriarchal ideologies and practices. Southern rockers’ musical marketing of women as unthinking, passive sexual objects who exist primarily for men’s pleasure bolsters a cultural ideology that perpetuates men’s dominance of women. Rebel masculinity reinforces gender power differentials through the perpetuation of sexist thinking and stereotypes of women as weak and inferior. Like Connell’s (1995) complicit types of masculinities, rebel masculinity reinforces the patriarchal dividend that all men receive, which ultimately reinforces patriarchy.

The construction and signification of rebel masculinity also reinforces the stigmatization and marginalization of gay men. In addition to detailing the interplay of gender and power, Connell’s (1987, 1995) paradigm also outlines the means through which rebel masculinity can reinforce the subjugation of gay men. Hegemonic masculinity is decidedly heterosexual, and construction of such involves the subordination of gay men. Southern rockers did this lyrically when signifying their own masculinity and authenticity as musicians by feminizing mainstream performers. Their identity work was clearly heterosexist, aiding symbolic fuel to the stigmatization and subordination of gay men.

While Connell’s paradigm works well to explain the perpetuation of dominance of men over both women and gays, it lacks a means to explore how rebel masculinity reinforces other types of inequality. Connell’s paradigm does not explain the perpetuation of racial inequality, and it only accounts for the objective existence of different class positions men occupy. Although Connell captures how white men maintain dominance generally, he does not specifically account for how the subjective meanings of both race and class perpetuate power and privilege. This is why my strategy of looking not just at masculinity, but the construction of rebel manhood through identity
work allows for a more thorough understanding by accounting for the intersection of race, class and gender in society fraught with inequality. According to the interactionist model of inequality (Schwalbe et. al. 2000) meaning is power, and the power to create meaning is used by dominant groups to define subordinate groups as inferior.

As whites, southern rockers have the power to define minorities in such a way that the racial hierarchy is perpetuated. In short, rebel manhood reinforces white privilege through the primary symbol of the revival, the confederate flag. Although they distanced themselves personally from the racial meanings of the symbol, saying, for example, it represented “heritage not hate,” the flag is nonetheless widely seen by many in our culture as representing racism. In this context, displaying the flag is actually a display of power: an act to empower the rebel self through a statement that one does what he pleases despite, or in spite of protests of others. But in displaying this symbol of not just power, but of white power, they perpetuate an ideology that fosters racial subordination. In other words, while southern rockers distance themselves from bigotry, their display of the rebel flag is a racist practice that reinforces white supremacy.

The interactionist paradigm can also be used to explain how southern rockers’ identity work contributes to the further stigmatization and marginalization of men like them. In valorizing rural poverty, southern rockers reinforce many of the negative stereotypes attributed to poor, rural, white southern men. For instance, when southern rockers distance themselves from education and work, they reinforce prejudices about how poor, rural whites are lazy and stupid. In glorifying alcohol, southern rockers are playing into a stereotype that poor, rural white men are drunks. Just as hip-hop and rap artists are criticized for their role in perpetuating stereotypes of black men as criminals (Kubrin 2005), southern rockers perpetuate a “white trash” stereotype that becomes a resource for others to stigmatize and thus further marginalize poor, rural, southern, white, men.

Limitations and Future Research

While my methodology focused almost exclusively on musicians and their music, it allowed me to inductively assess the rebel manhood southern rockers construct and embrace. Without studying audience members there is simply no way to determine how rebel manhood is received and interpreted by listeners. While southern rockers may be
seen as individual rebels expressing their reality, they exist only because they have an audience to hear their message. The fact that southern rock exists at all is a testament to the fact that there is an audience listening to southern rock. While southern rockers do not sell out arenas, they do have a considerable following all over the country, and in their albums and stage personas they present to audiences, southern rockers in effect sell rebel manhood. Just as the representations of masculinity in the mainstream, mass media affects the culture of society as a whole (Craig 1992; Messner and Montez de Oca 2005), and the same is likely true for southern rockers’ rebel masculinity. Audiences are listening to southern rock and the valorization and glorification of rebel masculinity, but how is this music being interpreted? For example, when southern rock audiences see a confederate flag, do they interpret it as a symbol of white heritage, or one of racial bigotry? In-depth research on audience members’ perceptions of southern rock are needed to answer these questions.

There are also unanswered questions about who comprises southern rock audiences and why they are attracted to southern rock and the rebel masculinity it embraces. Southern rock musicians claim themselves the ambassadors of a poor, rural, white, American culture. My participant observation at shows reveals that audiences are similar to musicians as they tend to be white, lower class, and on the verge of middle age. Both Connell (1995), and interactionists who study identity (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock 1996) and the perpetuation of inequality (Schwalbe et. al. 2000) would argue rebel masculinity as expressed by southern rockers helps listeners cope with a world that increasingly assaults working class men’s dignity given current large scale trends changing the definition of American manhood (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Faludi 1999; Lamont 2002). In fact, in writing about his own respondents upon which he founded his understanding of protest masculinity Connell elucidates:

The impact of global forces in personal life can be seen in individual life histories … An example is young working-class men on the fringe of a regular labour market. The fact of chronic unemployment, which makes it impossible for them to construct a masculinity organized around being a “bread-winner,” arises from the local economy’s change position in the global economy (Connell 2000: 44).
Given the ongoing erosion of working class given global forces, it seems plausible 
audiences of white, under class, men are increasingly attracted to southern rock and its 
rebel masculinity because it expresses their frustrations with the world while providing 
mechanisms for listeners to do identity work that would embolden them with a façade of 
power. However, research on the southern rock revival’s audience is needed to verify 
this hypothesis.

And even if true that audiences are like their musician counterparts and embrace 
rebel manhood as a protest to their marginal, subordinate conditions—there are questions 
as to why these men are marginalized in the first place. Coming of age in the 1970s and 
1980s, these men are from a generation fraught with economic depression and pessimism, 
and their subordination and marginalization could be endemic to large scale factors 
beyond their control that never allowed them to gain traction in the labor market. On the 
other hand, it also must be remembered the revival is a resurrection of a past musical 
movement, and circumstantial evidence suggests the rebel manhood being expressed by 
revivalists today is rather similar to the protest masculinity embraced by a previous 
generation of southern rockers. Thus, perhaps in addition to a comparison of the 
masculinity embraced by classic southern rock to that of revivalists, future research 
should also ask if southern rock and rebel manhood was, and might still be a force 
stearing white men away from a more standard life course of work and family and into 
the margins of our society.
APPENDIX A: HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

Florida State UNIVERSITY

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8633- FAX (850) 644-4392

REAPPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 9/22/2006

To: Jason Eastman
19 Valleybrook Drive
Bradford, PA 16701

Dept.: SOCIOLOGY

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Reapproval of Use of Human subjects in Research:
The Southern Rock Revival

Your request to continue the research project listed above involving human subjects has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee. If your project has not been completed by 9/19/2007 please request renewed approval.

You are reminded that a change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must report to the Chair promptly, and in writing, any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chairman of your department and/or your major professor are reminded of their responsibility for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in their department. They are advised to review the protocols of such investigations as often as necessary to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

Cc: Patricia Yancey Martin
HSC No. 2006.0811-R
APPENDIX B: PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

I freely and voluntarily and without element of force or coercion, consent to be a participant in the research project on underground southern music being conducted by Jason T. Eastman, from the Department of Sociology at Florida State University under the guidance of Dr. Patricia Yancey Martin. I understand the purpose of his research is to better understand underground southern music, the musicians who play it, and the audiences who follow it. I understand that if I participate in the project I will be asked questions about my music and my experiences and opinions as a musician and fan of music.

I understand my participation is totally voluntary and I may stop participation at anytime. I understand that my responses will be handled in a sensitive manner so there is almost no chance of repercussion for myself or my career as a musician. The name of my band will appear in publications that result from this research, but I will not be identified personally. None of the statements I make will be attributed to either me personally or my band. In other words, I understand any publications based on this research will be written in such a way that readers will not be able to ascertain as who said what among the anonymous members of southern music groups.

I understand there is a possibility of a minimal level of risk involved if I agree to participate in this study. The interview should take between 45 minutes and an hour. I understand that I do not have to answer any question that makes me feel uncomfortable, and I am able to stop my participation at any time I wish.

I understand the researcher requests that my responses can be tape-recorded. If I agree to be recorded, I know the tapes will be stored on a multimedia CD-Rom with password protection. Only the researcher will have access to these tapes, which will be stored in the office of Jason Eastman. The tapes will be categorized in such a way that only the researcher can identify me amongst the other respondents. I know the CD of our interview will be destroyed upon completion of the project, or by September 30, 2010. Before that time, the tapes will be used to ensure the accuracy of my statements made during the interview.

For answers to questions about this research or my rights I understand that I may contact Jason T. Eastman or the research advisor Dr. Patricia Yancey Martin at:

Department of Sociology
Florida State University
526 Bellamy Building
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2270

Telephone: (850) 644-6416
Email: sociology@fsu.edu

I can also direct questions to the Florida State University Institutional Review Board from the Office of Research at:

100 Sliger Bldg.
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-2763

Telephone: (850) 644-8633

I have read and understand this consent form.

Participant

Date
REFERENCES


Ahlkvist, Jarl A. “Music and Cultural Analysis in the Classroom: Introducing Sociology through Heavy Metal.” *Teaching Sociology* 27 (April):126-44


Williams, Patrick J. and Heith Copes. “‘How Edge are You?’ Constructing Authentic Identities and Subcultural Boundaries in a Straight Edge Internet Forum.” *Symbolic Interaction* 28:67-89.

Willott, Sara and Christine Griffin. 1997. “‘Wham Bam, am I a Man?’: Unemployed Men Talk about Masculinities.” *Feminism & Psychology* 7:107-128.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Education
2007    Doctorate of Philosophy in Sociology
        Florida State University; Tallahassee, FL
        Dissertation: The Southern Rock Revival: Identity Work and Rebel Masculinity

2004    Masters of Science in Sociology
        Florida State University; Tallahassee, FL
        Thesis: The Wild Ones: Reality Programming and Programming Reality

2000    Bachelor of Arts in Human Relations
        University of Pittsburgh; Bradford, PA

Professional Positions
2007    Coastal Carolina University
        Assistant Professor of Sociology

2006 -2007  Buffalo State College
            Lecturer of Sociology

2005    Niagara University
        Adjunct Professor of Sociology

Publications

2005    “Universal Sociological Law.” Footnotes 34.3 (March): 11.