

Tapped: An Inside Perspective on The Craft Beer Movement

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Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the participants of my study, thank you to everyone who took time out of their valuable schedules to give me their ideas, stories and voices to share.

I would like to thank the Western Program of Miami University for inspiring me to follow my passions and allowing me to pursue any and all of my interests.

Thanks to the following editors and advisors who worked diligently to make sure my research design, ideas and writing were coherent, effective and well done:

Dr. Kevin Armitage

Dr. Hays Cummins

Dr. James Bielo

Dr. Jacqueline Daugherty

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow students in the practicum, many of the ideas for the project were the result of collaboration, advice and editing done with my peers on a weekly basis.

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A Note on Methods

The research used in the project took the form of my undergraduate senior thesis for the Western Program at Miami University. As a concept, I have been working with craft beer since Fall 2015, reading background literature, framing my study and formulating my research plan.

Once my proposal and literature review passed the initial stages, I applied to the Internal Review Board of Miami University to get approval for conducting research with human subjects. This involved understanding processes of informed consent, parameters of my study and making sure to protect the identities of participants as my project had involvement with alcohol in some capacity.

The fieldwork was conducted from January 2016 through March 2016. There were interviewees from four craft breweries: Urban Artifact (Cincinnati, OH), Municipal BrewWorks (Hamilton, OH), Quarter Barrel (Oxford, OH) as well as some brief comments from Rhinegeist (Cincinnati, OH), Blank Slate (OH) and Warped Wing (OH) during a sustainable brewing workshop. Additionally, one professor was interviewed who has taught about beer for several decades, his interactions with the industry qualified him as a craft beer professional.

I was able to attend MASH, the Middletown Area Society of Homebrewers, for one of their monthly meetings and subsequent visits to Osborn's Home Brew Shop. Five home brewers were interviewed in the course of the fieldwork.

Consumers were interviewed in various locales including bars, coffee shops, classrooms and outside. This was a diverse range of students, community members and patrons of bars. Overall, 10 consumer interviews were collected.

After informed consent, I would ask participants to define what they thought craft beer was, how it was different from other beers and what made it desirable. From those starting questions I was presented a wealth of opportunities to take interviews in multiple directions, hence the 5 major themes of my thesis. Interviews were recorded for my records, full names have been withheld, which is unusual to ethnography, but I am working safely within the confines of the University IRB's policy and will work to be more transparent about interviewees in later works.

Chapter One

Defining Craft Beer

Beer is an important part of American society. Its consumption is widespread, paired with iconic images of our values and mediates sociality across age groups. Depending on the type of beer, context in its consumption and goals behind its production, the associations, symbolisms and values of beer can change drastically. In an attempt to understand one subset of the beer industry, craft beer, which has proliferated since the early 1980's¹, I set out to interview participants in this craft beer movement with the hopes to understand what made craft beer special.

In searching for a satisfactory definition of craft beer to frame my study, I came across blatant contradiction and overtly political definitions. The Brewer's Association defines craft beer as small, independence and using traditional or innovative ingredients². This definition provides an idea about some of the values that are inherent to the craft beer movement, but it is ambiguous and hard to translate to the beer itself. Thus, I rely on consumers, craft beer professional and home brewers to outline what exactly craft beer means to them. I do not attempt to offer a concrete definition of what craft beer is, but rather highlight the important aspects that arise when we begin thinking about craft beer.

Defined by Consumers

When prompted to define craft beer in their own terms, consumers were taken aback. Many tried to evoke a "common sense" definition, but many of these definitions ended up varying among participants. With the diversity of definitions I received, it became clear that a definition of craft beer was certainly not common sense. Some consumers described craft beer as something that is not industrial or macro beer, others settled on a definition regarding taste and quality, a few mentioned the non-industrial, artisan nature of production.

How craft beer appears, smells and tastes helps define what it is. In an industry in which almost all the products have a large degree of overlap in ingredients (barley, yeast, water and hops are the main ingredients in beer), the appearance of the final

¹ "National Beer Statistics". Brewer's Association. Accessed April 2016 <https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics/craft-brewer-defined/>

² "Craft Brewer Defined". Brewer's Association. Accessed April 2016. <https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics/craft-brewer-defined/>

product becomes a mechanism for differentiation. Craft beer is something that had flavor, color and increased alcohol content³. These factors create a space about what possibilities there are for what craft beer can be and what craft beer is not. The appearance is something that can be analyzed in the moment, when a beer is directly in front of an individual. It requires minimal knowledge about the origin, production and background of the beer. A beer that looks different, tastes different or has a higher alcohol content is indicative of a beer that is different. It is in the space of that difference when craft beer can be recognized from other beer.

In addition to appearance of beer, consumers are also curious where a beer comes from. Consumers have a large stake in where they perceive the origin of their beer is. When talking about craft beer, these consumers are talking about beer that comes from smaller, independent breweries who employ craftspeople. The big beer industry is not absent in consumers' definitions of craft beer, macro beer is used as an antithesis to what craft beer is. Instead of the industrial, mechanized, global process of the larger breweries, consumers of craft beer imagine that the beer that looks, tastes and smells different, comes from a process that is smaller, more local and independent.

Defined By Craft Beer Professionals

Craft beer professionals refers to persons who interact with craft beer on a professional level; this includes brewers, owners of breweries, professors teaching about the beer industry and various other persons that make the beer industry tick. The aforementioned roles in the industry were the individuals I was able to speak with. It is important to note that these individuals already have an increased status within their relationships to beer. Oftentimes beer is their passion, but in all cases, beer is part of their livelihood. As with consumers, and all my participants, these professionals were encouraged to frame craft beer in their own words.

A focus on the process emerged in these interviews as integral in the creation of beer as a craft. Knowledge of ingredients, stages in production, and of beer styles were represented by the professionals when they advanced definitions focusing on specialization, varieties of styles, quality, size and craftsmanship. Knowing, appreciating and practicing the process of beer production offers a more intimate relationship to the final product which then is transferred to which beers are determined to have craft status.

³ Consumer Interview LW. *Craft Beer Interview*. (Author Interviews, Miami University).

The intersection of specialization and variety refers to the degree of knowledge and precision that professional craft brewers are dealing with. A wealth of recipes can help promote status as a system in which craft beer could be produced. It represents an ongoing interaction with the process of production, these manipulations of the process are used to create beers of different styles. The ability to produce different styles, as well as the beer itself achieving that style, is a clear indication of a craft beer. Specialization refers to craft beer professionals who have meticulously refined the process to achieve mastery of a specific style⁴. A style done at a master level displays the knowledge and experience of the brewer, classifying the end beer product as craft.

Size and craftsmanship are important indications of how to differentiate beers. Production facility size appears to influence the ability of the brewers to retain status as artisans. As a professor who teaches on the beer industry as a whole described, “size makes pressure”⁵. When production is ramped up, increasing mechanization and distribution pressures begin to wear away at the ability of the brewer to tweak and tamper with the process. Size is an important boundary in defining craft beer, but it is not a hard line, rather something that is flexible. When the pressures of size, i.e. profit, expenses, consumer values, market demands, become more important than the artisan nature of production, beer risks losing status as craft.

Defined By Home Brewers

In the home brewers I interviewed, the definition focused on the intimacy of the process, ownership, innovation and creativity in producing beer. Beer brewed by these individuals is outside of the market, removing its status as a commodity and restructuring the relationship to its production. To the home brewers, commercialization and the introduction of exchange for monetary purposes reduces the intimacy in the actual process of production. It veils the “authentic” factors of beer and replaces them with market values. The home brewer definition challenges craft beer on its most basic level as a commodity.

⁴ Urban Artifact, a brewery used in my study site, is known for their sour beers. These cultures are a great source of pride and the result of much trial and error. The insights on mastery stem from talking to Urban Artifact employees about the process.

⁵ Craft Beer Professional Interview RB. *Craft Beer Interviews*. (Author Interviews, Miami University).

During a meeting of a Home Brewing Club in Southwest Ohio, a home brewer sharply remarked, “It’s marketing. ‘Craft’ is a selling point. If you look at the Brewer’s Association definition, it changes as they need it to get more membership”⁶. This emphasis overviews the importance of intimacy of the process. Many home brewers express a passion for beer, usually both the consumption and production. This passion is for the beer and market/ commodity status introduce a threat to this passion. Independence, ownership of recipes, creativity and innovation are ways to reestablish and protect that passion in the world of craft beer.

To home brewers, the independence of a brewer or brewery is a reflection of how they are able to operate, how they are able to innovate and how they are able to take ownership of their work. From an operation standpoint, craft beer needs to remain independent because of the implications of being “bought out” by the industry giants. If a craft brewery is bought out, then there is no way of knowing what factors are driving the production of beer. Recipes and creativity are a big factor in the defining of what craft beer is as well. Another home brewer reflects on their own brewing and the history that home brewers have in starting craft breweries, “All beer was craft at some point”⁷. The creation of a recipe marks intimacy of process. In order to create a beer, a recipe is needed, and the further a brewer can understand the process, the more consistent an outcome will be, resulting in a recipe. The creation of all styles, and in fact, most beers, would be considered craft at their inception due to the intense process required to create, refine and establish a recipe.

Innovation is also a driving force of how home brewers create the “craft” of craft beer. Beer began as a simple combination of key ingredients — barley, hops, water and yeast. Variations of those ingredients were experimented with and refined to result in a semi consistent beverage we now call beer. Every introduction of a new ingredient, or ingredients in different amounts or forms, changed that end product. This sort of innovation literally puts “crafting” into the language of beer. To carry on this tradition of crafting beer, home brewers stress the importance of innovation to keep expanding the repertoire of craft beer. By default, however, this sort of expanding definition of craft will inevitably leave behind beers that are considered older, or no longer innovative.

⁶ Home Brewer Interview BO. *Craft Beer Interviews*. (Author Interviews, Miami University).

⁷ Home Brewer Interview TA. *Craft Beer Interviews*. (Author Interviews, Miami University).

Craft Beer as a Social Movement

Despite different involvements and engagements with craft beer, there are overlaps in ideals, perspectives and values regarding craft beer. Despite differences in interactions between home brewers, craft beer professionals and consumers, they are all linked under what I will call the craft beer *movement*. Looking at the beer industry as akin to physical space, we can clearly see, through participant definitions, a niche cut into the space that is occupied by this other, this “craft”. Bourdieu outlines the creation of these social groups; within a social system, actors possess opinions, stances and dispositions, these are replicated within the system as a form of conditioning — wherever those conditions are replicated in a sufficiently unique manner, social groups arise⁸. If the beer industry as a whole is viewed as a social system, the sensibilities, stances and opinions needed to generate social groups in the system arise from the differences between consumers, craft beer professionals and home brewers.

Integral to the creation of this social space (existing within the social system, not physical space) is the fundamental sensibility of a moral economy⁹. In her description of a tripartite moral economy amongst the tea pluckers of Darjeeling, Sarah Besky advances a moral economy as a way to insert discourses on labor, management and the environment back into the framework of consumption, production and distribution¹⁰. Moral economies however, should be viewed as frameworks in which values, concerns and principles can be reinserted to those processes of production and consumption. Therefore, I offer a moral economy of craft beer, one that reinserts the *process*, *authenticity*, and the *relationship* between producers and consumers. Now, both consumption as well as its production can be examined and analyzed not only from economic standpoints, but also through the integration of these values into the system of craft beer. Craft beer subsets are united on the front to reintroduce values and to differentiate itself from a highly mechanized, industrial industry that it finds itself a part of.

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, 1982, “Social Space and the Genesis of Groups” in Scott Appelrouth & Laura D. (Desfor) Edles, *Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 2nd Edition(2011): 666.

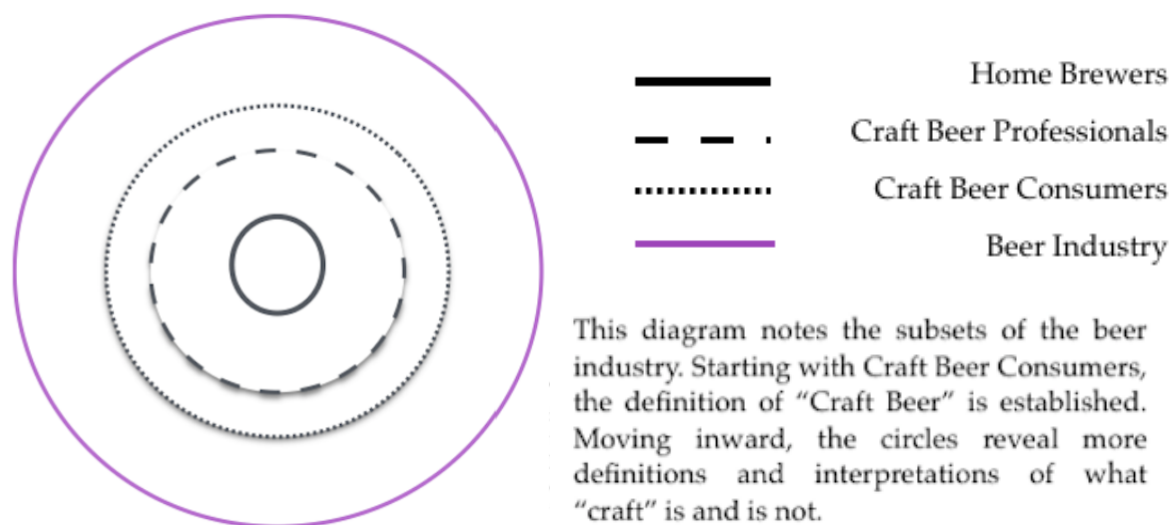
⁹ The Moral Economy concept arises from works by E.P. Thompson (*Customs in Common*, 1991) and James S. Scott (*The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*, 1976).

¹⁰ Sarah Besky, *The Darjeeling Distinction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 32,86.

The moral economy will be a guiding framework throughout this work, so I will detail a little more about each component of this moral economy.

- Reinserting the process into evaluation of the beer industry serves to critically reflect on the knowledge, skills and traditions that have been used to produce beer. It advances an appreciation for the final product that is absent from the larger beer industry.
- Authenticity, which is featured more later in the chapter, is defined here as the relationship between the actors and the process of production. It can refer to knowledge, experience, passion or a number of other concepts.
- Finally, the relationship between producers and consumers is an attempt for craft beer to wrestle with highly industrialized, mechanized, utilitarian beer produced from industry giants. The relationship between the two parties includes but is not limited to: place, education, intentions and consumption. Consumption here refers to the performance of drinking beer: the actors involved, the social context, the environment and other factors derived from interviews across the spectrum of actors.

As seen through the process of defining, each of these groups socializes others in their groups to reproduce a more coherent group as well as a more unified whole. Thus, in the spirit of Bourdieu, sensibilities within the beer system, can be used to outline “habitus” or “affinities of style” in group subsets¹¹. The following diagram represents



¹¹ Bourdieu, “Social Space and the Genesis of Groups” in Appelrouth & Edles, *Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 666.

the social system I have outlined. The groups have created their own definitions, and therefore values, fracturing the system into parts that can be analyzed from a systems standpoint as well as their individual relationships.

The model of concentric circles promotes a binary understanding of beer / craft beer. Within structuralist anthropology, Mary Douglas outlines binaries and their representation in the circles as a way of determining what *is* and what *is not*¹². For consumers, beer that tastes different, looks different, varies in alcohol content and feels different sets the boundaries for what craft is. Homogeneity to the industry standards is related to status as not craft beer. For craft beer professionals, beer that resembles various styles, is produced by craftspeople and reduces external pressures by staying small *is* craft beer. For home brewers, beer that is made independently, innovative, and made with an intimacy, a love, of the craft *is* craft beer.

As the definitions are, the *nots* of craft beer for each of these groups are not strict boundaries, but flexible. It would be an unfair and non-useful generalization of the craft beer industry to attempt to define and set boundaries on what craft beer is and isn't. These are patterns picked up from the participants of my study, they do not seek to establish universal laws, but present a case study that can inform future research projects. However, this model is helpful in understanding the sorts of values and perspectives at play in the craft moral economy.

Using the craft beer moral economy, each subset of actors creates their social space, unified in resisting the larger industry, but differentiated along ties of authenticity. As mentioned beforehand, authenticity in this work refers to the relationship between actors in the craft moral economy and the process of producing beer. Authenticity is useful to think of as a vector that transcends the concentric circle model. Where the concentric circles offer comparative relationships between actors, authenticity is a tool we can use as a system wide factor that both offers insight on individual groups, as well as their importance in the larger system.

If authenticity is the relationship of the actor to the process, then it is necessary to provide an outline of each social groups interaction with the process. As industry wide consumers, drinking beer requires no knowledge of the process or of the industry in general. Macro beer is the standard of the industry and therefore, its consumption is the base level requirement for becoming involved in the system. As craft beer consumers there is a requirement of knowledge of the industry to make a determination about

¹² Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a meal", *Daedalus* Winter (1972): 241-243.

what is beer and what is craft beer. Although many consumers advance their knowledge of craft beer as they continue consuming, the basic differentiation is all that is needed, which does not necessarily suppose any knowledge of the process of production. As craft beer professionals, an enlightened understanding of the process is called for. Actors in this group need to understand the multitude of styles, what constitutes those styles, how ingredients interact *during* the process and how minor changes in the process affect the end product. As home brewers, there is a major, active involvement in the process of craft beer. It is the responsibility of the individual to initiate, carry out and assess the process of beer production. They are heavily involved, and the deeply invested, in the entire process.

Authenticity can be compared to the boundaries set in the concentric model. As marginally involved in the process, craft beer consumers have a low degree of authenticity. As a result of this distance from the process, consumers have the largest, most flexible and most inclusive definition of what craft beer constitutes. Through a constant educational process, these consumers are constantly growing their understanding of craft beer, both of the end product and the process¹³. This process is a constant refinement of authenticity as consumers become more involved. However, this authenticity only narrows the gap in the concentric circle model between craft beer consumers and craft beer professionals because there is a constant stream of industry wide consumers who choose to make the jump to craft. With a constant refinement among current consumers as well as an influx of new consumers, the boundary in the circle model remains fairly stable. Again, their definition is the largest and most inclusive as their knowledge of the process is the lowest and that compromises consumers ability to differentiate the nuances in the process that craft beer professionals and home brewers utilize to determine what craft is.

For the craft beer professionals the increased knowledge of the process — the knowledge of styles, recipes, and nuances of production result in an increase in authenticity in the realm of craft beer. With an awareness of varieties in beer, what they are supposed to look like and the ability to make them, craft beer professionals shrink their concentric circle model to be more exclusive. This more exclusive boundary would exclude the products produced by individuals who lack the very knowledge that craft

¹³ Carlos Gomez-Corona, Hector B. Escalona-Buendía, Mauricio Garcia, Sylvie Chollet & Dominique Valentin, "Craft vs. industrial: Habits, attitudes and motivations toward beer consumption in Mexico", *Appetite* 96 (2016): 366.

beer professionals are supposed to possess. Some beers may qualify as craft to consumers under the guise that they taste, look or smell different, but they may lack the qualities of specific varieties of beer that craft beer professionals know to look for. This nuance represents a distinction between beers that meet basic levels of difference (appearance, taste, alcohol content) and beers that are made explicitly and purposefully different. This degree of authenticity shows just how acutely some differences between craft beer professionals definition and consumers definition can be. Yet, these differences between style, intention and appearance can also represent high degree of differentiation between consumer craft beers and nuanced styles of beer (craft beer professional beers).

When it comes to home brewers the intimate relationship to the process results in a vastly different understanding of craft between consumers and home brewers. Where consumers analyze surface level observations, home brewers rely on their knowledge of processes to formulate their definition of what is craft. The connection to the process allows home brewers to have a vast array of tools to analyze a beer. Definitions between craft beer professionals and home brewers lie in the space of the market. Through market forces, craft beer professionals open a possibility to dilute (in the eyes of home brewers) the process to cater to external forces. Home brewers and their focus on creativity and innovation are pushing the boundaries of what should be craft and therefore leaving behind styles that lack the mastery of style that craft professionals rely on for their boundaries. As the most authentic actors in the craft beer system, home brewers are constantly testing new boundaries and definitions not only as to what is craft beer, but what no longer can claim that status.

Craft beer as a system relies on individuals participating in the system and socializing one another within the industry and within their subsets. Definitions are never concrete, rather they are the result of constant interaction and validation. The dynamics of boundaries in the system will change, but a framework of authenticity helps us understand how those categories are established and navigated.

Chapter Two

Construction of Quality

Beer claims status as both a product and commodity. With this standing, discourse on quality becomes inherent to the selection and consumption of craft beer. Notwithstanding these inherent properties of commodities, nearly all of the participants of my study concerned themselves with the quality of craft beer. Quality is utilized to speak about the entirety of the product, the taste, the process and the ability of a beer to evoke values in larger societal contexts. In understanding how the actors in the craft beer scene construct their own interpretations of quality, we can understand the values they place on the craft beer industry to achieve status as a high quality product. My study examines three separate constructions of how to understand quality in the craft beer world: taste, appealing to social consciousness, and the craft itself. Yet, quality is not simply reducible to any one category of these so I introduce an *ideal type*, which highlights the tensions of trying to achieve all aspects of quality and rather can prioritize certain aspects of different categories to form different constructions of quality.

Taste

When examining taste as an indication of quality, any given product is being compared. The resulting “taste” that we experience is a cognitive exercise comparing the sensation of taste to the comparable experiences we have had before. In terms of beer, taste and flavor become a means of differentiating and ranking beer against one another. In this context, taste and flavor are used by some participants in the craft beer field to order and construct their notions of what constitutes a “quality” beer. It is in this thread that quality as taste arises.

As consumers or brewers pour the liquid over their taste buds, sensory information is being sent to their brain. It is compared against other stored knowledge and subsequently a decision about the beer can be reached. If the taste ranks highly against other beer, it is high quality. If not, the beer is ranked in the middle or lower, suggesting that there are factors about this beer that compromise its rank. For some in my study, taste was the paramount and most attractive factor in consuming craft beer. The flavor profile and attributes of a craft beer created an “atypical experience”¹⁴, with

¹⁴ Consumer Interview HD. *Craft Beer Interview*. (Author Interviews, Miami University).

the nuances of flavor marking craft beer as something different than is usually expected in beer. This is not a distinction of craft and macro beer, but can be used to compare and differentiate beers of all varieties. Consumers generally rely on the flavors of craft beer (bitterness, malt, earthy notes, etc.) as a method of differentiation from the pale american lager (most macro beers). So for many consumers of craft beer, the recognition of those flavors becomes a deciding factor in the choice to consume craft beer over other beers and consequently, for them to rank the flavorful beers as higher quality products.

In a consumer society, individuals are responsible for navigating and understanding their landscape. In his theory of consumption, Jean Baudrillard advances this navigation and participation in consumption not as a willful choice, but rather as the “duty” of the citizen¹⁵. Mediating a constant interaction between symbol and market, consumption is a language, which consumers learn through socialization¹⁶. For Baudrillard, consumption is a system that we cannot escape, but in our participation, we are able to differentiate and make choices about the way we consume. Whenever craft beer is evaluated as a high quality product on the ground of its taste, individual consumers are evaluating a product, internally ranking it amongst their personal data set, and attempting to socialize others to believing that their assessment should be validated and the beer they labeled high quality in fact deserves that status.

As a multi-billion dollar industry, beer has an exceptionally large marketplace. As an exercise of choice in a seemingly endless array of options, some participants in the beer industry use taste and flavor of a way of differentiating and labelling the quality of a given beer. However, it is important to outline nuances of taste to understand what exactly this construction of quality is stating about any given beer. Once we can understand how taste applies to beer, then we can analyze the construction of quality on the grounds of flavor.

Contextualizing Flavor and Taste

Emile Peynaud discusses many issues of taste when examining perception of wine. Taste lies in the realm of the subjective, unlike how “an objective phenomena lends itself to measurements which can be expressed in figures; it exists independently

¹⁵ Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, trans. Chris Turner (London, SAGE Publications, 1998) 69-86.

¹⁶ Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 76-78.

of the observer”¹⁷ taste is entirely dependent on a taster. Taste eludes measurement and objective comparisons and remains relative to the subject doing the tasting. Not only is taste subjective, but even to an individual taster, results can be fickle. Sight and smell weigh heavily in our perception of taste, appearances and smells provide associations and expectations that the taste may interpret and experience during consumption, and each of these experiences varies amongst individuals¹⁸. These biases can be outlined as factors, but they cannot be corrected to present a more objective tasting experience. Furthermore, the physiology of the taster, as well as the environment in which they are tasting, can further complicate and alter the senses, introducing a new level of complexity into interpreting taste¹⁹. Each taster then has an independent set of variables that compound in complexity and cannot be corrected for in attempting to measure taste.

To add to the complexity that the senses provides, individuals expectations of taste add further ambiguity. Expectations of the object of consumption can prepare bodies to receive what is expected of that object to deliver. In a study concerning milkshakes, one milkshake was poured into two cups and labeled differently, one label encouraged drinkers to indulge, while the other advertised the health benefits of the shake. As a result of reading the label, individuals consuming the shake recorded differing levels of ghrelin, a chemical used in digestion²⁰. This suggests that in preparation for consumption, our bodies interact with our brain to determine an appropriate response. For purposes of taste rather than chemical balances, brains could inform the taste buds to prepare to receive expectations, and subsequently the taste buds may receive those inputs even if the consumed object differs.

It is common practice in craft breweries and brewpubs to inquire about their various beer selections. A good bartender will then outline the style, flavor profile and body of the beer to the patron before they sample. With these inputs, individuals formulate expectations on what they are about to try. Knowing what they are supposed

¹⁷ Emile Peynaud, “Tasting Problems and Errors of Perception” in Carolyn Kormeyer, *The Taste Culture Reader*, (Oxford, BERG, 2005) 272-278.

¹⁸ Peynaud, “Tasting Problems and Errors of Perception” 272, 277.

¹⁹ Peynaud, “Tasting Problems and Errors of Perception”, 274-278.

²⁰ Alia J. Crum, William R. Corbin, Kelly D. Brownell & Peter Salovey, “Mind Over Milkshakes: Mindsets, Not Just Nutrients, Determine Gherkin Response”, *Health Psychology* May(2011).

to taste, the actual tasting process produces and reinforces those expectations, molding them closely to what was expected and compromising an ability to determine what tastes and flavors might have been labelled had the taster not been offered expectations.

Taste As Quality

For the individuals who construct quality on the basis of taste, they are creating a hierarchy of personal tastes that they value. When a specific beer matches closely to others in the top portion of the hierarchy, the beer is determined to be of high quality. However, this rendition of quality is limited due to the subjective natures of taste. It does not translate well across palates to assign quality solely on taste. On the other hand, this construction of quality does offer a useful framework for differentiating beers from one another and comparatively discussing the good and bad attributes in them. Quality in regards to taste becomes a label that differentiates beers amongst a wide array of options as well as prioritizes some attributes over others. In the world of craft beer, flavor and taste immediately differentiate craft beer from macro beers, which then suggests to the individual that craft beers are higher in their hierarchy and thus, achieve higher quality as a product.

Social Consciousness

For others consuming and creating craft beer, taste is not enough to differentiate quality amongst the multitude of products. The vastness of availability in taste of beers creates difference but does not denote quality. For these individuals, the construction of quality is formulated by the products or brewery's ability to connect to social consciousness. Quality in this sense is not inherent to the beer or industry, but how it is situated in our larger society. The social consciousness that craft beer attunes itself includes but is not limited to: sustainability, traditional knowledges, social contexts and independence.

Sustainability

Due to the smaller size and manageability of craft breweries, consumers imagine that these breweries are better able to reduce their impact on their environment. Scaling down the process allows producers to manage their water usage, waste, carbon emissions from distribution and their energy consumption. Whether craft breweries achieve this is not the purpose of my study, but I will be interacting with the

perceptions of actors in the craft beer field to determine how the movement sees itself. However, consumers recognize that through the smaller nature of production, the aggregate of craft beer production results in less stress on the environment due to smaller consumption of resources, less water usage and less carbon from brewery to consumer²¹. In choosing from a wide variety of similar products, beer that recognizes and attempts to be sustainable can be framed as a product with a higher quality than others.

Traditional Knowledges

The beer industry has evolved from a smaller, regional model of production to a nationalized, industrial, mechanized model. Buyouts of intermediate sized breweries after World War II resulted in large conglomerates that were producing an immense portion of the market. This increased the commodification of beer and removed consumers from the connection to the brewers and the process of making beer. As a response, craft beer focuses on relationships to brewers and the brewing space. Craft beer facilities often make their brewers accessible, educate their consumers, and offer tours of their facility. This is an attempt to reinsert the process and knowledges of beer production to make them familiar to the consumer. As a result, the educated, enlightened consumer can appreciate their product to a higher degree.

The artisan emerges in the craft beer scene. Not only as someone who has a deep appreciation for the making of beer, but also a figure who brews and shares their beer. This personal connection allows consumers to feel that they are closer to the process that produced their beer²². Making the beer more personal allows consumers to appreciate not just the taste, but the accumulation of knowledge and expertise that went into the beverage in their glass. This separate criteria of appreciation promotes a deeper connection to beer and differentiates beers that could be perceived as foreign or distanced through a lack of knowledge. This appreciation results in a perceived higher quality of the end product.

Social Contexts

²¹ Consumer Interview JS. *Craft Beer Interview*. (Author Interviews, Miami University).

²² Consumer Interview RT, *Craft Beer Interview*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

When prompted on the social contexts in which beer was consumed, participants framed opposing situations. One situation was a large gathering of people, many of which are strangers. Conversation is surface level and beer, or more generally alcohol, mediated social relations. Most often this type of situation was then promptly associated with macro beer or cheap alcohol. However, craft beer was framed in a very different light. Close friends, family, respected colleagues joined the participants in these imaginary situations, consuming craft beer and enjoying company and conversation²³. This comparison of social contexts is more directly tied between the construction of quality for craft beer against macro beer. More generally, this evocation of quality focused on framing all craft beer as higher quality than macro beer due to the value added benefit of promoting and fostering conversation amongst close compatriots. One consumer stated craft beer was made to drink with close friends at “a bonfire, with a guitar involved ... [craft beer] implies a greater level of connection”²⁴. It facilitates and is meant for drinking with good friends to make positive memories.

We can work with this framing of quality through examining the phrase “quality over quantity”. This common phrase is used to describe the general sense of appreciating closeness and connection against more alienating and more utilitarian values. As mentioned above, craft beer is associated with a sense of camaraderie²⁵. When speaking of conversation or company, appreciating closeness, openness and connection speak of a higher quality experience. Craft beer’s ability to foster camaraderie and connection while promoting deeper conversation thus ranks it as a higher quality experience over the alienating, mass-produced, highly-replicated experience of consuming macro beer.

Independence

One consumer remarked that craft beer is “not the big guys — Miller, Coors, Bud... It’s nice for people to get a start, to run their own small business”²⁶.

Independence and the entrepreneurial spirit are themes that people consume in the craft

²³ Consumer Interviews RT, JB, JS, SW, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

²⁴ Consumer Interview RT, *Craft Beer Interview*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

²⁵ Consumer Interview EB, *Craft Beer Interviews* (Author Interviews, Miami University).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

beer industry. As my participant stated, the beer is produced by people, not corporations and through that simple differentiation, craft beer can exemplify the small entrepreneur. In an American context, work ethic, independence and success are critical values that individuals strive to achieve and support. Through the consumption of craft beer, some individuals feel that they are supporting entrepreneurs in the industry, independent people that are trying to make their way in an industry run by corporate giants.

Social Consciousness as Quality

The more effective a product or commodity is at tapping into symbols, identities and places, the more loyalty and consumption they receive. In his study of doughnuts in North America, Paul Mullins notes that the doughnuts success lies in its ability to tap into nationalism, the American Dream, and the memories and identities of its consumers²⁷. Tim Horton's marketed the doughnut using national symbolism like hockey, Cambodian's in California rallied around the doughnut industry to start their lives in a new country , and millions of Americans recognize doughnuts as a comfort food found in churches and community spaces²⁸. Doughnuts have become a staple of our society and to connect to Baudrillard, allow us to consume symbols and ideas as well as food. Beer connects us to these values and ideas as well. The socialization inherent in consumption is creating craft beer as a commodity that evokes conversation, independence, sustainability and traditional practices. Over time, these associations will become stronger and stronger and be spread across a larger population. The subconscious of each consumer will then replicate these connections to themselves as their drinking and associate those values with others when they witness consumption. These connections suggest that craft beer has more to offer than what is limited to the glass.

One difficulty these products face is attaching themselves to these values. It can be difficult to distinguish products in a rapidly growing craft beer market. In the specialty coffee market, the connection to social consciousness comes through fair-trade or organic certification. Sarah Lyon describes the differentiation in coffee, "Today's consumer market is characterized by product standardization, meaning products now

²⁷ Paul Mullins. *Glazed America: A History of the Doughnut*, (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 2008) 73-115.

²⁸ Mullins, *Glazed America*, 79, 87, 92-94.

require signs, such as brand names or certification seals, that add value to them”²⁹. For coffee, it is imperative that labels and brands stand in for the value added to products. Lyon notes that the liberal, educated upper middle class accepted the certification as actually providing the value added³⁰. For beer, labelling efforts and certifications are in essence non-existent. Instead, this liberal, educated upper middle class who have been exposed to the value added in various other commodities is able to connect those ideas to other industries. Through the educational process from commodities as coffee, this audience can recognize the same principles in the beer industry.

Specialty coffee and craft beer share a similar audience — young, white, educated individuals. Exposure to fair trade, the concept that proceeds from purchasing a commodity should be fairly distributed to those involved in the production process, inserts the idea that commodities can represent social responsibility. Recognizing that craft beer is capable of cutting out middlemen such as distributors and retailers, they can believe that their dollars are going directly to the brewery, which exists as a small-scale operation that is not a multinational corporation. Despite a lack of certification, breweries have made a conscious effort to educate consumers and differentiate their product from the standard beer. This differentiation and education serves as a stand in to certification that the audience in craft beer recognizes from other commodities that promote social responsibility.

This value added transcends the beer itself. It allows consumers to buy into a lifestyle rather than simply consuming goods. Heather Paxson reflects on the ability of similar goods to allow consumers to recognize “that market relations already include nonmarket relations [so] we can better grasp people’s simultaneous projects of making a good life and a good living”³¹. Through the integration of consumption and ideal lifestyle values, the introduction of nonmarket values in the market allows consumers to evaluate the quality of products based on their connection to their ideal values.

The Craft

²⁹ Sarah Lyon, “Just Java: Roasting Fair Trade Coffee”, in Richard Wilk, *Fast Food/Slow Food: The Cultural Economy of the Global Food System*, (New York, Altamira Press, 2006), 249.

³⁰ Lyon, “Just Java”, 249.

³¹ Heather Paxson, *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2013), 65.

Beer production is a technical process that requires scientific knowledge and practical know-how. The continued practice of making beer results in an increased familiarity and expertise. Long years of practice and exposure to the gamut of problems and difficulties correlate to a nuance in production that erases variability and increases consistency that suggests mastery in producing beer. Furthermore, individuals involved in this process are closely related to every aspect and have an intimacy with the beer before it ever reaches the end product.

For the artisans and craftspeople of the craft beer industry, the process means something. One home brewer comments on the creation of beer, “Attention to detail is a big thing here, they [we] are not just chucking out a product to make money, there is actually care and thought that goes into the crafting of the beer”³². This is not a process that has simple inputs and outputs, but a process in which the inputs require a carefully planned and executed set of practices that can result in a desired outcome, or a failed one. The end product is a result of the process, not just the initial ingredients.

“It’s a liquid art form. I like to see what each individual’s art is. Which is why a lot of the time I prefer home brew over commercial brew. Commercial beer is forced into this kind of box that has to exist for them”³³. This comment from a home brewer exemplifies the craft itself. As an art form, individuality is involved in the process and difference becomes values. Flavors are no longer inherent to the materials, but brought out through skill and intention. Beer is a window to the brewer and tasters can pick up intentions and nuances of their style that may be lost in larger facilities which neglect the importance of tweaking and being hands on in the production process in the name of consistency.

The following excerpt presents some of the technical and scientific knowledge possessed by a craft beer professional:

“So you’ve got different kilns and roasts of malt and you have different kinds of grains. Let’s take that one step at a time. The kilning process is taking your raw grain — barley, oats, grain — you will germinate it for a period of three days to moisten it at a certain temperature. Once the seeds begin to germinate, it starts making these starches to feed the sprout. Then you kill it ruthlessly by raising the temperature for a certain period of time. The longer you do it, the different kinds of protein breakdowns and free amino acids — there is a lot of chemistry going on — but essentially the less time you do it, the lighter the malt”

³² Home Brewer Interview CW, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

³³ Home Brewer Interview JC, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

When prompted why they make and drinks craft beer, the same producer responded, “Well its like alchemy, you have all the fun stuff — you can be singed, you can be scalded ... there is such a range you can get with the same basic ingredients, it’s magic”³⁴. Even with an intense knowledge of the process — the kilning and roasting process is just the beginning preparation of the grain before brewing ever begins — the transformation of ingredients to beer is magical. The ability to create, the opportunity of uniqueness, the artistry, all derive from the preparation and execution of brewing.

The Craft as Quality

The individual brewing does not create in isolation. Various factors are at work in which the crafting of beer becomes art. In reflecting on Louis Kahn’s architecture, Dennis Domer suggests that Kahn idolized the “truth of the materials”, always honoring their uses and purposes to create a greater whole³⁵. In this sense, we can understand the importance of the materials in a setting of creation. Inherent in each material is a hierarchy of purposes, a best use. Through developing a repertoire of those uses and constantly testing and experimenting at their boundaries, artists can create new results through a combination of the same elements. The larger the understanding of the materials, the larger uses they can be put to. In terms of beer, a wealth of understanding in the basic materials can result in the maximization of those ingredients to culminate during beer production to create the best possible outcome. The integration of materials that “honors” them, or has them fully realized, presents a beer that achieves a higher quality that comparable products.

In this capacity, the materials themselves become reinserted in priority. The entirety of the process is a complex interaction of ingredients, temperature, biology and brewer’s knowledge. Jane Bennett puts forward a theory of vibrant materiality, suggesting that non human material can take on the role of actant which “produces action or is enabled to act through interaction”³⁶. Through her framework of a degree of agency that is lent to “things”, we can view the interaction between brewer and ingredients as a co-performance. Neither the brewer nor ingredients have the outcome

³⁴ Craft Beer Professional Interview BA, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

³⁵ Dennis Domer “Louis I. Kahn: The Structure of Creativity”, *The Structurist*, January 1993: 1-33.

³⁶ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, (Durham, Duke University Press, 2010), 21.

entirely in their hands. Increased mastery of the process, attention to detail, and trial and error become important in guiding and directing the ingredients to produce a quality end product. The ingredients and their subsequent chemical interactions must be guided and coaxed into performing in directly the way the brewer intends. Through experience this relationship becomes more defined and strengthened, resulting in a production of beer that utilizes ingredients to a high degree.

Comparisons across artisans help lend some insight into how the actual craft of beer brewing is essential to the craft beer industry. In studying artisan cheesemakers, Heather Paxson outlines how artisans understand their craft, “[artisans] consistently describe what they do ... as a balance of art and science”³⁷. Science refers to the technical natures of craft and art is used to outline the creative process. Thus, when science and art meet together in the beer, the outcome speaks for itself, a mastered beer that matches basic ingredients to a specific style or intended combination of flavors. Paxson refers to this unique relationship between artisans and their work as a, “way craft resists the steady creep of standardization in a global market”³⁸. Not only is craft is a response to industrial standardization of products, but also a marker of quality production. Production becomes an art form, the craftsperson assumes the role of artist. Quality derives from the mastery of practice, technical knowledge of production and skillful execution of process.

The Ideal Type

Through Weber’s construction of the “ideal capitalist”, I attempt in this section to advance a framework of quality in craft beer. For Weber, the ideal capitalist is someone who has, “grown up in the hard school of life, calculating and daring at the same time, above all temperate and reliable, shrewd and completely devoted to their business, with strictly bourgeois opinions and principles”³⁹. In this merging of principles, the ideal form of capitalist is put forward. It is person of diverse and contradictory principles that culminate in perfect form to produce the epitome of capitalist success. While any

³⁷ Paxson, *The Life of Cheese*, 129.

³⁸ Paxson, *The Life of Cheese*, 133.

³⁹ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, (London and New York, Routledge Classics, 2005), 33.

capitalist can embody some of these characteristics, the *ideal* capitalist is the apex of *all* of them.

When examining quality in craft beer, I suggest that the highest quality is achieved in this ideal form. The highest quality craft beers must exemplify taste, social consciousness, and mastery of craft. Yet, any quality beer can meet a combination of these inputs. Of course, the ideal quality is a moving target, difficult to achieve through potential contradiction and sacrifice (taste over social consciousness, mastery of craft over taste, etc.), yet meeting some of these factors can result in good or even high quality.

This discussion of quality will rely on the craft beer producers who feel the tension most of existing in both the craft world as well as the realm of artisanship and craft. Several consumers will supplement the exceptions of quality. Examining the goals and intentions of these commercial brewers will strengthen the overall formation of quality as well as outline each individual category's contribution to the whole.

One brewer in Cincinnati, Ohio outlines their process of brewing — chlorine is the only element taken out of the water, the highest quality malt is purchased at an increased expense and local hops are purchased when available. But for this brewery the yeast cultures and bacteria are the critical element, “bacteria and yeast are very important to us, we take a lot of time to cultivate our yeast and bacteria and they make our beer unique to us. That shows a really high quality, it shows how much we are willing to put into our product. And we don't use extracts or anything like that... and at the end of the day the flavor is that much better. Not everyone will notice, but we notice, that's the most important thing and it tastes best”⁴⁰. To achieve a quality product with limited amounts of time, energy and capital, this brewery prioritizes taste and craft. Through their intense effort to specialize a specific style of beer, they have mastered a style through repetition and experimentation. As a result of this process, unique tastes that have emerged to satisfy the category of taste. Their beer achieves premier taste and mastery of style. This is not to say that they are not attempting to achieve social responsibility, on the contrary this brewery creates community space in their taproom to facilitate social interaction in the community, rather in the construction of quality, their beer is more highly evaluated its mastery of style and taste.

⁴⁰ Craft Beer Professional Interview BKB, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

For a brewery in Hamilton, Ohio, taste and social consciousness result in the evaluation of quality of their beer. The owner outlines their business model and values as efficiency, education and interaction — the brewery is meant to be a neighborhood hub for families, businessmen and downtown residents. The taproom is designed to foster conversation and the bartenders serve as sources of knowledge both of beer and the surrounding area⁴¹. First and foremost, this is a community staple. It is designed to complement the surrounding businesses and bolster the downtown economy. Education comes from the sharing of styles to the consumers, as Hamilton is an underserved market in craft beer. This way they will be able to share the differences in taste of beer as well as benefitting their community.

As a case study for comparison we can examine the same principles with the New Belgium Brewery. New Belgium is an incredibly popular brewery that has been brewing since 1991 and distributes nationally. They are widely recognized as a leader of sustainability in the industry. Their product line is safe, the majority of their production is safe styles, popular, tasty and sellable. The construction of quality for these beers relies on the connection to the social responsibility of pioneering sustainability. These beers do not challenge style and in the larger context of the field of craft beer, the taste is decent, but not exemplary. However, New Belgium offers experimental releases that are made in limited batches. These challenge style, taste and fall under the umbrella of the social responsibility of the brewery. For New Belgium, the qualities of their beers form a hierarchy. The highest quality beers engage mastery of style, taste and sustainability. Each category that is attempted in the construction of quality results in an increase in the quality of the particular beer. However, the effort, risk and expense of constantly producing these types of beer could inhibit the ability of New Belgium to produce beer that routinely engages all categories. They constantly operate with a strong pillar of sustainability that engages quality with all of their beer, yet special efforts to include mastery of style and unique taste, result in higher quality beer.

The ideal quality of beer engages, and exceeds, all categories. However, this ideal quality requires intense effort, scientific knowledge, dedication to values and consistency. Much like the ideal capitalist, some of these components have tension between themselves. When thinking about quality we can isolate and prioritize each category, with the best of those in each category achieving a high quality on its own, but

⁴¹ Craft Beer Professional Interview SW, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

the engagement of each additional category raises the quality the beer can achieve. This construction of quality is dependent on the judge; each individual's values and priorities can lend additional weight to any given category. Craft beer also exists in system of consumption, which reinforces the validity of these categories as they are socialized into how beer is thought about and evaluated.

Chapter Three

Place

In a rapidly globalizing world, both consumers and producers are examining their role in the market. Increasingly, as a rejection of the utilitarian, standardized products, communities (the businesses and consumers that make them up) are searching to insert their identity, uniqueness and support into the market. Instead of mindless consumption of products that are produced by faceless, nameless others from a far away place, there is a shift towards consuming locally produced goods, or at pushes to educate about where products come from and how they are made. A prime example is the slow/local food movement. Resisting the global/industrial food system, slow food advocates advance a model of consumption that relies on local ecology, seasonality and local producers. Through these, advocates hope to bolster local economies, educate about food and environment and build support for neighbors and community members. In short, movements such as these seek to reclaim the global and make it local. The rejection of this globalization builds community, sense of place and advocates a different kind of consumption. Beer, especially smaller scale craft breweries, seek to tap into this market and thus attach their products to this sentiment. Being a social movement, I stress that this chapter does not outline a mission statement within the craft beer movement; rather it serves to understand how craft beer latches on to sense of place and why it is important.

Place is a complex construction. It is the intersection of people and their culture, the built environment, the natural ecology and climate and an observer. The observer is especially important in that they choose the prioritization of the aforementioned elements to interpret and experience a place. I will examine how exactly beer mediates and advances these factors to help the construction of place. I suggest craft breweries serve as a window into a place — a launching point, that beer provides a specific taste of place, and that through its role in economies, it prioritizes local business over the global.

Window to Place

Beer is experiential; the very act of drinking stimulates taste, smell and touch as you feel the texture of beer you are drinking. All the while, the sights and sounds of your environment are being processed simultaneously. Taste has been covered in

previous chapters, but I evoke the sensation of drinking here to frame how place can be interpreted through craft beer. Tuan writes, “Place is a center of meaning constructed by experience. Place is known not only through the eyes and mind but also through the more passive and direct modes of experience”⁴². Where sight and mind fail, the exploration for ones own conception of the place is, “known both directly through the senses and indirectly through the mind”⁴³. Here all of the senses are utilized to understand sense of place. Sight and expectations do not truly convey all that is necessary to interpret the environment. Adding sensation such as the sound, taste and smell of consuming craft beer to the aforementioned attributes will expand the data necessary to conceptualize a sense of place.

In an interview with a home brewer with a lifestyle of bouncing from place to place, they described the discovery of those places through craft beer, “We move around a lot, so a typical Saturday is going to find a new brewery... Now, with some coworkers, a kind of event has popped up, every Thursday we visit the ‘brewery of the week’, wherever it is”⁴⁴. To navigate a new environment and become familiar with a place, this individual seeks out craft breweries. Craft beer serves as something familiar, yet in this act of exploration, mediates discoveries of the environment that is inhabited. Within the craft beer movement, participants know what to expect at a craft beer establishment, and through the expectations of unique craft beer, end up discovering more about the locality and nuances of place through the consumption of craft beer in its specific context. While the act of consumption will only render judgements about the beer itself, the other senses active during consumption (sights, sounds) will add to the interpretation of the feel of a place.

Through familiarity with craft beer, participants in the craft beer movement can feel comfortable in exploring new things that are mediated by what to expect with the beer. Furthermore, to participants, the existence of a craft beer establishment stands as a symbol, a beacon of meaning that suggests both new beer and local flavor. Individuals know that craft beer is small scale and local, and that knowledge allows them to use a craft beer establishment as a starting point in a new area, or as a source of knowledge about a locality. One consumer explains, “I like the experience of trying new places,

⁴² Yi-Fu Tuan, “Place: An Experiential Perspective”, *Geographical Review* 65(2) 1975: 152 [151-165].

⁴³ Tuan, “Place: An Experiential Perspective” 153.

⁴⁴ Home Brewer Interview TA, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

what you find. It's also a way to explore a city. You need to be looking for something, so why not look for [craft beer]"⁴⁵. Beer serves as a launching off point. Reaching the destination of a craft beer establishment requires that individuals physically navigate the space of a locality. In the act of consumption, they are exposed to people that live and work in the area that are speaking about their own experiences in the place.

This construction of place is not limited to outsiders visiting a new place. Inhabitants of a place can also use craft beer establishments as a source of identity, or at the very least an example or reinforcement of local values. A consumer from the Cincinnati area describes visiting downtown, "You go to Cincinnati, you go to a Rhinegeist pub, they've got signs everywhere"⁴⁶. Rhinegeist is a Cincinnati brewery that has opened and operated in the Over-The-Rhine neighborhood. Historically, the Over-The-Rhine neighborhood has housed German immigrants and has since become labeled as a struggling, disenfranchised neighborhood. Housed in the top floor of an previously abandoned warehouse, even the name of the brewery nods to its location. Furthermore, my participant describes an establishment as a neighborhood pub, a pub that is proud to serve the repertoire of Rhinegeist. Geographers Schnell and Reese write on craft beer paying homage to place, historical context and local culture, "[craft brews] are a diverse array of ales that can be found nowhere else, creating a truly local experience... brewpubs also have catered our craving for uniqueness by providing one-of-a-kind social settings, commonly decorated with local historical photos, maps, and other artifacts of a place's personality"⁴⁷. Rhinegeist imagery in pubs in downtown Cincinnati is interpreted as marking a place with a familiar social setting, good beer, and a connection to local culture.

Yet place is not so simple as the summation of attributes. Schnell and Reese offer a conception of how sense of place should be understood, "We feel that sense of place and place attachment must also be viewed as active, conscious processes, not as passive qualities"⁴⁸. Now sense of place is actively developed by the factors involved, the factors themselves are not markers of the place itself. A consumer reflects on a trip to

⁴⁵ Consumer Interview JB, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

⁴⁶ Consumer Interview LW, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

⁴⁷ Steven Schnell and Joseph Reese, "Microbreweries as Tools of Local Identity", *Journal of Cultural Geography*, Fall/Winter 2003, 21(1): 46 [45-69].

⁴⁸ Schnell and Reese, "Microbreweries as Tools of Local Identity", 47.

Maine, “A family trip to a national park became a craft brewery tour. We ended up visiting 17 breweries in the state of Maine... I like seeing what they did with their land — if they were on a farm, if they were in the city, how they use their land — its all about what they do with their atmosphere”⁴⁹. These breweries did not possess qualities that made the Maine trip what it was, it *formed* them. Through the lens of various establishments, the participant was able to generate an understanding of Maine — the values, the tastes, the smells from the actual beer, but local culture, history and land use from the act of exploring and finding these establishments. Later on in the interview, the participant describes being recommended a nearby horse farm over a conversation at a craft brewery, the result: a new horse.

Through the medium of the craft brewery, participants in the movement can gauge and formulate a sense of place. Both the acts of finding an establishment and interacting within it give participants a sense of the locality. Schnell and Reese describe even more nuanced ways in which craft beer sheds light on local culture: “[the names of the craft beers] tend to reflect the places in where they are brewed, and are derived from a wide array of sources: historical figures or events, local legends, landmarks, wildlife, or even climatic events”⁵⁰. Craft beer maintains an intimate relationship with place. It capitalizes and reflects local culture, taste and environment. The craft beer becomes meaningful in producing and maintaining the sense of place. Craft beer does not create a map, or a definitive, final understanding of place. Rather, to individuals involved in the craft beer movement, it is a medium for understanding, interpreting and exploring places. It is a window, a glance into a place, from which to start.

Taste of Place

The title of this section purposefully uses a translation of the French concept: *terroir*. Terroir is a widely disputed, diversely defined concept that is used to advocate for the taste of particular goods resulting from the environment conditions (namely soil) that they were produced in. However, discourse on terroir transcends complex chemical reactions and specific locations. It is wrapped up in environment conflict, agrarian values, traditional practices and is framed as arising in response to global/industrial

⁴⁹ Consumer Interview CH, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

⁵⁰ Schnell and Reese, “Microbreweries as Tools for Local Identity”, 54.

food systems⁵¹. Avoiding the complexities and nuances of genuine *terroir*, I can use the translation to highlight similar concepts and explore just how craft beer frames itself within the taste of place.

As a precursor to this section it is important to remember the complexity in the process of actually brewing beer. Even amongst individuals using the same ingredients, consistency takes a lot of time, patience and experience. Outcomes of recipes can be significantly altered in minutes or seconds depending on temperature and timing. In short, even with the same recipes and ingredients, styles of brewing and equipment differences between brewers can result in different beers.

In using taste of place, I refer to the connection of food to a specific location. One chief difference between *terroir* and taste of place is that *terroir* uses environmental factors to advance the emergence of unique tastes in food. Taste of place however, relies on the food's connection to place, not necessarily its origin there or its emergence from that local environment. For example, the brewery site in Oxford, Ohio produces beer using an incredibly small system, limiting the consumption of the beer to that establishment only. In this sense, the tastes, flavor profile, body, alcohol content of that brew, are *unique* to that establishment. The same combinations of ingredients done with different water, by a different brewer, or on different equipment, could result in major or minor changes that would not be entirely consistent with the beer brewed in the establishment.

However, the ingredients themselves are sourced from around the country or even internationally. The nuances of the beer are not directly derived from the region in which these ingredients are sourced, but how they are combined and used at the final destination. It is through the techniques and practices of specific brewers that create unique products. With this in mind, I argue that each individual craft beer establishment becomes a site with unique tastes of place. The ingredients, recipes and brewer converge at a site to produce a unique brew.

Individuals then can experience a place through tasting breweries within it. Beer becomes a medium in which unique tastes are characterized and displayed. A craft beer professional details tasting place through touring breweries around the nation, “[I got] free tours with the owner, its real legit stuff... it showed me the industry, what was going on out there, I saw different types of working environments because nobody does

⁵¹ Amy Trubek, “Place Matters”, in Carolyn Kormeyer, *The Taste Culture Reader*, (Oxford, BERG, 2005), 262.

it the same way”⁵². Through the tour of the brewery, this individual was able to understand how beers get their flavors, they were able to assess the unique stamp of the brewer on the beer. Expanding the thought displays this inter-industry interaction, “[I see] what their program is, what their process it. Do they have this kind of tank or that... its an investigative geekery type of thing”⁵³. This expansion of knowledge about equipment and process help establish uniqueness amongst brewers and explain how differences in taste are dependent on place. Closing their thought on exploring taste through traveling to visit breweries, this professional described seeking new flavors, “You go and get the thing that you cant have. It’s like a treasure mission, go get the ‘booty’, go home”⁵⁴. The quest for flavor takes individuals to different places where they are bombarded with new tastes and new experiences in the location of the visited brewery.

Seeking new flavors intersects with exploring new places. Amy Trubek offers insight into the complexities terroir faces with integrating taste and place⁵⁵:

the cultural domain, the foodview, creates the gout du terroir. The taste of place does not originate with the Mesozoic period collision of the African and European continental plates that defined France’s geography and geology. Rather, beginning in the early 1900’s, a group of people began to organize around this naturalized connection of taste and place, for they saw the potential benefits of a food view celebrating the agrarian and rural way of life.

This outline of how taste and place were originally formulated is representative of the value and symbols that is consumed as well as the food itself. Even *terroir*, now a concept suggesting taste derives intimately from regional soil, found its footing in social contexts. People wanted to protect rural values, different ways of life, and through a concept like *terroir*, they were able to advance a unique perspective on food that allowed it to take a different role in the food system — foods that characterized place, displayed its values and drew people in to consume food and culture.

⁵² Craft Professional BA, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

⁵³ Craft Professional Interview BA, *Craft Beer Interviews*.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Trubek, “Place Matters”, 263.

Breweries are attempting to do the same thing as 1900's food advocates in France. The reframing of beer as a window to place, as a display of unique flavors reimagines the brewery not as a site of food consumption, but as a characterization of the expression of values attached to beer in very specific locations. These unique instances cannot be reduced to simple food consumption, nor simple experiential formation of place, they must intersect. Through leading tours, offering tasting sizes of beers and educating patrons about beer in general, these breweries are protecting and reinforcing values they express in their establishments as well as the culture of their locality. The location is central, it is the site of an experience, not just of consumption. Seeking out flavor, seeking out new experiences of place— both are achieved through finding a local craft beer establishment and enjoying a pint.

Local Economies

This section will summarize the attitudes and perspectives of the informants and connect it to literature on local development. It is clear that craft beer has an intimate relationship with localities and places, therefore, it is important to understand craft beer's role in local economies. Localism, a refocusing on development, focuses on inserting local values, concerns and individuals into the model of growth. Through this framework, craft beer can be understood as a boost to local economies, a case study of localism and as a method of integrating local perspectives into business.

One consumer advocated that craft beer is an important democratic tool that promotes conversation about social and political issues⁵⁶. In this sense, the consumer evoked Habermas' depiction of the public sphere. Habermas claimed that the public sphere was a place for informed citizens to discuss, critique and speculate on the nature of governance, democracy and important social issues⁵⁷. In this sense, the consumer was able to discuss those local values, perspectives and issues at a craft beer establishment. Like many other public spaces, the craft beer establishment becomes a meeting place for citizens to discuss issues. This is an important step in accurately identifying and interaction with local communities.

⁵⁶ Consumer Interview JS, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

⁵⁷ Jurgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article", *New German Critique*, 3 (Autumn 1974): 49-55.

Craft beer establishments form a separate category of brewery with an entirely different set of goals and aspirations. Wes Flack outlines these categories, “Today three types of breweries can be distinguished based on production capacity and distribution patterns. Large breweries are almost all part of multipoint operations with national distributions. Midsize breweries tend to have regional distribution. Microbreweries usually have local distribution”⁵⁸. Microbreweries are understood through their ability to distribute their product. Inherently, with smaller amounts of production, these breweries are often limited to the localities they operate in. This means that the transportation, sale, and consumption of craft beer is mediated in local contexts. Although some larger corporations may be involved in this process, the small-scale production suggests that local economies benefit from every aspect of craft beer from production to consumption.

Craft beer potentially bolsters local economies through growth. In discourse on urban development through the lens of consumption, we can match beer up to the categories which promote growth. Ann Markusen and Greg Schrock outline three major principles of this consumption-driven urban development: developing local tastes to promote consumption from local constituents, creation of local jobs through growth in a local sector, an export sector being built out of local serving markets, and the attraction of skilled laborers, retirees and entrepreneurs to unique local environments⁵⁹. The following is craft beer’s connection to these factors:

- Craft beer is a unique local taste which is fostered through local patrons appreciating the taste and in turn consuming it. With intricate connections to place outlined in previous sections, this local taste is highly developed in craft beer and meets the first section of local growth.
- Job creation stemming from craft beer is a little more speculative, but as a brewery grows, it will employ more people in the brewery, open up the possibility for maintenance, distribution and sales, and foster bar and restaurant employment with a rise in local consumption.

⁵⁸ Wes Flack, “American Microbreweries and Neolocalism: ‘Ale-ing’ for a Sense of Place”, *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 16(2), 1997: 40.

⁵⁹ Ann Markusen and Greg Schrock, “Consumption-Driven Urban Development”, *Urban Geography*, 30(4), 2009: 345.

- As the local taste is developed, the brewery has a solid base of business that allows them to consider expanding. Once a brewery expands, it can serve regional markets, bringing dollars that the brewery can invest in the community, as well as bringing a larger consumer base to visit the location of the brewery and explore the locality as outlined in the *Window to Place* section.
- In one of the brewery sites, both owners were former engineers at large corporations who decided to try and start their own business and got the capital to open their own brewery⁶⁰. In fact, many craft brewers have left another job and have the time, acumen and capital to invest into infrastructure, equipment and employees. Furthermore, where a strong sense of local identity is perceived, the more attractive it becomes for more people to live and work in those localities.

Not only does craft beer meet the requirements to promote local growth in the economy, it can also shape a more globalized, corporate economy in a locality to a more place-centered one. Kaiser Rangwala defines place-based economy as, “a participatory bottom-up economy where the individual community building efforts of local businesses and residents create a collective unique identity and sense of place”⁶¹. Through the connection to the public sphere, the development of local taste and identity, and the involvement of other local businesses (bars, distribution companies, stores, restaurants) craft beer is a perfect catalyst to begin to shift economies to a more place aware model.

This outline of small-scale, local production maps nicely onto the craft beer sector. It not only benefits local economies, but suits the concerns of the consumers I interviewed discussed in a local public sphere. One consumer suggested that, “that kind of narrative [small scale, local production] drives craft beer ... when I drink craft beer, I like thinking that it’s something with personality, unlike large, corporate beer”⁶². As a consumer in an increasingly globalized, industrialized market, this consumer was well aware of the local movement. They strived to be conscious, to put their dollars towards people and values they support, and attempt to keep their dollars in their community.

⁶⁰ Craft Professional Interviews BKB, SH, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

⁶¹ Kaizer Rangwala, “Place-Based Economy”, *Economic Development Journal*, 9(1) Winter 2010: 42.

⁶² Consumer Interview RT, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, WST 444, Miami University).

The “personality” he discusses, is the local flavor, the local culture, and a unique sense of place that is created and fostered by craft beer. This consumers attraction to craft beer arose out of the recognition of these principles being an important part of the industry.

Chapter Four

Symbolism & Performance

The previous chapters have been concerned with outlining definitions, associations and values that craft beer can claim. The consumption of the beer reinforces and creates those values, but it also performs them. Physically, the *act* of drinking is a highly visible, public display of many of the values stated above. This performance connects the consumer to the beer itself, thus attaching the values of the beer to the person consuming it. Not only does the beer have inherent values and symbols that we consume, but individuals can display and reinforce their own values to the rest of society.

Within the craft beer movement, individuals come together to form the larger social movement. At the first level of similarities, all individuals in the movement must be consumers of craft beer. After that basic requirement is met, separate levels of socialization emerge to structure the movement and state values of the individuals even more clearly. This socialization is present between individuals within the movement as well as society as a whole. The “in” group represents participants that identify as part of the craft beer movement, their actions within the movement help to create the boundaries of the movement and prioritize values. The “out” group represents society as a whole. As witnesses to the visible consumption of craft beer, the out group relies on interpreting the act of consumption to understand how consumers are portraying themselves and they ascertain from an outsider status what core values are driving the craft beer movement.

The “In” Group

Relying on Baudrillard’s theory of consumption mentioned in a previous chapter, one can imagine how the act of consumption is transformed from a physical act to a performance laden with meaning. It is, “a whole system of values, with all that expression implies in terms of group integration and social control functions”⁶³. As an institution, consumption becomes a means of identifying, initiating and reinforcing all sorts of social groups. These social groups can form around class, interests, values, ethnicity, age, gender, etc. Consumption itself does not form these groups, it mediates

⁶³ Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, trans. Chris Turner (London: SAGE Publications, 1998) 69-86.

them. Individuals in society, and indeed from within the groups themselves, set the terms of consumption so that when products are consumed we are able to read them as symbols and values, not simply products. These rules are not written, rather the system of socialization marks groups and sects and properly attuning oneself to the practices of the group decides whether or not one can be included.

At this point in the book, it is clear that craft beer is laden with values and meanings. It can symbolically represent place, it can distinguish taste, it connects consumers to larger values of sustainability and social responsibility, yet it is very firmly rooted as a commodity in a marketplace. As such, according to Baudrillard's theory, it is not the beer that sets the rules for what values and symbols are represented, but how it is consumed. With this system of socialization, it is the actors in the marketplace who perform the proper practices and attitudes surrounding craft beer consumption. The in group is mediated through understanding the values and symbols imbued with craft beer, aligning with them, and finally, consuming the product.

The most readily available of these forms of socialization can be recognized through context. For many college-aged consumers, consumption of beer is regular, but there are distinct instances in which different beers are appropriate. Macro brew is commonly sold (and drunk) in massive quantities in Oxford, Ohio. Entire pallets of beer will be delivered to parties for consumption of anyone who happens to walk by. For the consumers of craft beer I interviewed in Oxford, there was a marked shift in the consumption of craft, "For me it would be the transition from drinking to get drunk, in which case you want more beer for less money ... or drinking for social reasons, you aren't looking to get drunk, you are looking to enjoy yourself, enjoy the moment, then I would get a six pack of a new brew"⁶⁴. Something at the core of craft beer shapes and molds the situations in which it is consumed. Another consumer reflects the same sentiment, "I am drinking for enjoyment ... I want to enjoy the alcohol I am drinking, I would rather have one good beer than three shitty ones"⁶⁵. The enjoyment and appreciation of craft beer is the first form of socialization of consumption, there are marked differences in the act of drinking a craft brew and a macro brew. Another consumer goes a step further, outlining some of the specific parameters of socialization present in the craft beer movement, "I like the act of drinking craft beer, I associate it

⁶⁴ Consumer Interview JM, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

⁶⁵ Consumer Interview RW, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

with conversation and substantive conversation even and a fun night with friends, rather than shotgunning⁶⁶ a beer with 100 people I don't know"⁶⁷. Craft beer is not something to be drank as fast as possible, nor to be drank in a manner to achieve efficient intoxication (drinking quickly to get drunk). It requires a different approach to the act of consumption, a different performance.

As the consumers above stated, craft beer is to be appreciated, enjoyed at a slower pace. Slowing down the process restructures the goals and intention of the consumer. Shedding an efficiency mindset, drinking quickly or simply drinking to achieve intoxication, craft beer consumers focus on flavors, body of the beer, the smell. These get obscured if consumed too quickly. When a consumer slows down the process of drinking, they gain time to analyze, compare and relate the characteristics of beer. Furthermore, since all craft beers possess different qualities and flavors, consistency is not present. With macro beer, the same, standardized liquid comes out of similarly labeled cans — there are no surprises, no differences. Craft however, cannot be determined simply by appearance or label, the act of tasting has to occur in an appropriate manner. In this sense, the adage — *quality over quantity* — was mentioned by many consumers as a chief difference of macro brews and craft ones.

The consumer participants of my study were explicit in mentioning that craft beer came with associations of conversation, familiarity and respect. Sociality is present in all types of alcohol consumption. Yet, craft beer consumption is associated with respect for the people you are drinking with, a familiarity, and a level of conversation that is engaging. Macro beer carries a strong association with unfamiliar social situations. Not only is it important to recognize the socialization within the craft beer movement, but also how drinking *non* craft beer is associated and understood by the participants. As individuals, my participants outline what they expect when enjoying a craft beer, and what they expect when they are having a macro beer. The process of socialization is carried out by all the individuals involved in craft beer culture which in turn reinforces those individual values until they become the standard, accepted contexts in which craft beer is to be consumed.

This distinction delves deeply into what is appropriate for consumption. While not explicitly written, individuals understand that when drinking a macro beer, you do

⁶⁶ "Shotgunning" is a term that refers to a method of chugging a beer in the fastest manner possible, usually done in a manner of seconds.

⁶⁷ Consumer Interview RT, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

not sip to analyze the flavor, smell to understand the notes or gauge the body of the beer through feel. It is standardized and routine for drinkers of macro beer, they know what to expect. But craft beer requires those steps to understand the difference. Consumers recognize this step and follow it. Over time, these practices become widespread and routine, eventually evolving into unwritten rules surrounding consumption.

Context and practice are the first level of access into the recognizing the socialization of consumption. In the craft beer world, participants in the movement have constructed a vocabulary to navigate the nuances of craft beer. Through describing the tastes, feel and appearance of craft beer, a language arises that allows consumers to work within a larger structure. A consumer outlines the criteria on which he interprets new beers, "You can tell if a beer is quality by tasting, even if you don't like it, you can notice its balance, its hop profile, its mouth feel"⁶⁸. Even if they did not enjoy the beer, the characteristics of the beer are still a valid topic of conversation about quality. This represents a new level of socialization. Through identifying, describing and labeling the characteristics of craft beer, consumers provide and reinforce a framework of craft beer. It can be discussed and compared. These discussions and comparisons contribute to consumers overall knowledge of the availability of characteristics in craft beer. They can be relatively ranked and help form consumer preferences that in turn shape what becomes acceptable and appropriate for craft beers to be.

As a secondary level of socialization, the level of palate, participants of the movement are equipped to make decisions and judgements about beer. One particular consumer worked in a brewpub and outlined how drinking craft beer can be attached to larger discourse on palate, "'I am a sous chef, so I like to think I have a pretty good palate, an understanding of flavors, drinking beer is like eating now"⁶⁹. For this consumer, analyzing the flavors in beer and understanding the complexity and interaction between them not only became a way of thinking and talking about beer, but also a medium to pair it with foods. The discussion of quality and characteristics provides a new way of interacting with beer that was, and is, not present on the global market of standardized light beers. Through consumption, this level provides a different way of understanding and enjoying beer. As a process, consumers must

⁶⁸ Consumer Interview JB, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

⁶⁹ Consumer Interview EB, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

aggregate the necessary experience of taste as well as the appropriate language to express it with others. Using the wrong words or describing beer in inappropriate ways will lead to a certain alienation amongst fellow consumers and inhibit the credibility a participant in the movement has. Actions such as using correct language, describing things in the right ways and recognizing the accepted terms marks a consumer as a more committed consumer in the craft beer world, one who simultaneously creates and reinforces the socialization and appropriate behavior towards craft beer.

The "Out" Group

The actions from within the movement of craft beer set the parameters for who is initiated and what is necessary to participate, yet from an external viewpoint, consumption of craft beer carries different symbolic values. For the uninitiated of the movement, the public consumption of craft beer is a performance of the individual that is interpreted by everyone, including those unfamiliar with craft beer. Recognizable from its distinct appearance, the venues in which it is offered and overhearing dialogue (ordering or discussing flavors), consumption of this different product is recognizable. Beer is a ubiquitous beverage in American culture, its translucent, golden, clear liquid has become the categorical definition of what beer is supposed to be. What then, can we conclude from the consumption of something that does not quite fulfill the image of the standard beer?

The interpretation of consumption has long been the focus of academics. Thorstein Veblen coined the term "conspicuous consumption" and outlines it as thus, "unproductive consumption of goods is honourable, primarily as a mark of prowess and a perquisite of human dignity, secondarily it becomes substantially honourable in itself, especially the consumption of more desirable things"⁷⁰. Veblen outlines the public consumption of finer commodities as a mark of status, cultural capital and knowledge. The functionality between products may remain the exact same, the consumption of beer as an alcoholic beverage results in a process of intoxication. However, when cultural values, attitudes and perspectives are introduced, something about beer must exert or display those values. This represents a shift away from functionality to a more subjective understanding of consumption. Mediated through the entire range of commodities, an individual can distinguish themselves on their taste, class and

⁷⁰ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Originally Published 1899 (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 69.

priorities based on what they choose to consume, as well as what they do not. As discussed in Chapter Two, I will be working with craft beer as a distinguished commodity, meaning that it possesses qualities macro beer does not, is less common than macro beer, and is priced at a higher value. With this in mind, the consumption of craft beer then can mediate the drinkers dispositions of status, class or flavors.

Understanding that the pure functional value of beer remains the same, craft or macro, this analysis attempts to capture the subjective introduction of values inherent to beer. Something about the consumption of this commodity reflects values, attitudes, perspectives, or largely summed together as tastes. Pierre Bourdieu suggests that the distinction of these tastes is a qualifier of social and economic status, “each individual’s position in the space defined by the first two factors depends essentially on the structure of his assets, that is, on the relative weights of the economic and cultural capital he possess, and his social trajectory”⁷¹. Thus, tastes can be formed through the identification of economic capital, as well as social capital and trajectory, but the economic capital is the first identifier in the process of consuming craft beer. It is well known that craft beer is a luxury good in the world of beer. A pint at a bar will cost several dollars more than a pint of macro-brewed beer and the price hike is found at the grocery store as well, a six pack of craft beer averages to around \$8-10 dollars whereas 12 macro beers will be around \$11-15. In the purely financial aspect of consuming craft beer there is an observed practice of economic position. From a purely functional standpoint, economics would dictate that macro-brewed beer be purchased over craft beer. Yet, Veblen points us to consumption of “finer” goods transferring some increase in status, some accumulation of cultural capital. Bourdieu expands the earlier thought; “the greatest absolute contributions to the second factor [social trajectory and cultural capital] are made by the indicators of the dispositions associated with more or less seniority in the bourgeoisie; mainly manifested in the relation to legitimate culture and in the nuances of the art of living, they separate individuals who have much the same volume of cultural capital”⁷². Thus, the conception of craft beer as a “finer” good alludes to its ability to contribute to the cultural capital of individuals, their social trajectory and their economic capital.

⁷¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction, A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, (London: Routledge, 1984), 261.

⁷² Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 261.

The “nuance in the art of living” suggests the conscious ability to differentiate products based on contribution to cultural capital, i.e. how craft beer is superior in taste, contributes to social consciousness and utilizes an artisanal process to be created. Furthermore, the ability to detach the commodity from its functionality and pay a premium to access the value-added of craft beer suggests economic capital is of little consequence and any commodity can be chosen. The conscious choice to consume the value-laden craft beer represents a cultural taste belonging to a privileged upper class or a nuanced individual. It is a performance of one’s cultural and economic capital and the act of consumption is a medium for social trajectory. From the discourse of the *in-group*, hearing the language used to describe craft beer and seeing people consuming and conversing, these nuances in the public act of consumption are solidified and become accessible to the rest of society. The consumer of craft beer transcends choosing based on functionality; indeed, they opt to pay more money, for less quantity, for an increase in cultural capital they receive from craft beer that is not accessible to drinkers of macro beer.

The next logical step in outlining the performances of craft beer is to detail why this constructed *taste* for craft beer is not emulated by all to achieve the advances in status. First and foremost, the increased cost for functionality is prohibitive to most classes. This recreational beverage could be construed as a luxury good categorically, yet the significant price jump represents another barrier to entry, especially when several macro brews can be bought for the price of one microbrew. Secondly, the nuances of the *in-group* — the correct quantities, the right social contexts, the language to describe flavor — are the barrier to entry in cultural capital. Simply drinking one craft beer will not provide enough experience and access to join the group, it requires an investment and continuation of consumption to accrue the necessary social capital. Individuals need to commit to learning, recognize the value added, and lastly, align with those ideals. Individuals that do not buy-in to the values that craft beer has to add would have lesser gains in cultural capital, which, according to the academics before, would suggest that the differences in cultural capital exist along class lines.

Yet it is not an individual decision to participate in craft beer culture. Veblen describes how the access to cultural capital and social trajectory are defended, “consumption of these goods are limited to the class, tabu to lower classes”⁷³. Through constructing and heightening the cultural capital necessary to participate, current

⁷³ Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 69.

participants in the movement can protect their place in the hierarchy of the movement. Originally the original display of cultural capital was the restructuring of the social context in which to drink beers. As that became prolific, the language of craft beer was adopted to create differences between participants, enthusiasts and casual participants. The heightening and visual display of the contexts and language is used to differentiate the craft consumers from the macro consumers.

The visibility of the performance is important in maintaining the barriers to entry. Interdisciplinary scholar George González writes on the visibility of Starbucks and its effect, “here, the tropes of ‘jazzy sophistication’ are drawn from the social body and re-appropriated by the consumer in circular fashion, distinguishing the ‘Starbucks Experience’ from the relatively mundane experience of the local diner where one goes for a square meal and little else”⁷⁴. The consumption of craft beer is displayed in comparison with the consumption of macro beer in a way in which the cultural and economic capital can be displayed, showcasing the lack of these in the consumption of other beers. The defense of this performance is showcased through acts of the Starbucks consumers, “the loyal and branded consumer reproduces the cultural dominance of jazzy, “politically correct” sophistication, by experiencing and privileging the ‘Starbucks Experience’ as such”⁷⁵. Despite different missions, goals and attitudes between consumers of the Starbucks Experience and the craft beer movement, the processes of creating and reinforcing the culture remain the same. Participants are active in displaying the values they buy into and prioritize contexts, languages and nuances to keep participation limited.

A Shift

Many of the initiated in the movement are frustrated with such a rigid, limiting structure. I suggest that there is a strong current within the movement that strives to make craft beer accessible to more individuals. Through educating consumers about how to drink craft beer — where to get good beer, what flavors to look for and how to appreciate different styles of beer. Through a process of education the barriers of entry can be lowered in terms of the cultural capital necessary. If more consumers are schooled in what to look for, how to drink it and how to discuss it with friends,

⁷⁴ George González, “The Ritualization of Consumer Capitalism: Catherine Bell’s *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* in the Age of Starbucks”, *Implicit Religion*, 18(1) 2015: 7 [3-44].

⁷⁵ González, “The Ritualization of Consumer Capitalism”, 7.

participants in the movement will increase. Both craft beer professionals at Urban Artifact described part of their mission as educating people about the world of craft beer, “Just educating — that was the biggest thing in the 80’s. With Sierra Nevada, they said, ‘this beer is supposed to be hoppy and bitter tasting’. We do the same, ‘this beer is supposed to be sour, its not on accident’. There are new drinkers everyday, its important to spread the word”⁷⁶. A professional at Municipal BrewWorks also stated that a major goal of the establishment was to bring a diverse group of people in, teach them about good beer and offer it at an accessible price⁷⁷. Education is an important tool in widening the movement, it allows more people to contribute new ideas to the movement, share existing values and spread enjoyment of a wider possibility of flavors.

⁷⁶ Craft Professional BKB, SH, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

⁷⁷ Craft Beer Professional SW, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

Chapter Five

Response to the Industry

As seen in Chapter One, craft beer culture exists in the much larger beer industry. For the purposes of analysis about the core of the movement, I have largely separated craft beer culture from the rest of the industry, but this chapter will examine how the craft beer movement is structured within the industry, what similarities and differences it shares, and how it subverts that system to establish itself as unique. Much like many of the others values present in craft beer, macro beer too tells a story of consumers, albeit a different one. Through examining the larger industry we can understand the origins of the movements, reinforce the key values and begin a conversation about the role of craft beer in a larger framework.

The entire beer industry struggled in the early 1900's, Prohibition undermined the alcohol industry and the abrupt shutdown of cash flow and production forced many a brewery to close their doors for good. After Prohibition was repealed, some breweries were able to continue operations and other entrepreneurs sought to fill the market. Yet for several decades the market was in flux and constantly changing, "consolidation and centralization then became the dominant trends in the industry. Larger companies often undercut the prices of local breweries ... because little drinking was done at home, when small breweries could not sell their product in local taverns, they were soon out of business"⁷⁸. Large conglomerates came to dominate the regional and national markets which subsequently changed drinker loyalty from local to larger scales. Over the decades these trends continued to peak between 1972 and 1982, each year supporting 134 breweries and 82 breweries respectively nationwide⁷⁹. Yet the 80's and 90's were a sort of Craft Renaissance, culminating with 306 breweries nationally, 258 of which were craft production⁸⁰. Continue this trend of significant growth until 2014 and we see that there are now 4,269 breweries, 4,225 of which claim craft status⁸¹. The industry underwent immensely important shifts and I argue that craft beer has framed itself in

⁷⁸ Wes Flack, "American Microbreweries and Neolocalism: Ale-ing for a Sense of Place", *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 16(2) 1997: 40.

⁷⁹ Flack, "American Microbreweries and Neolocalism", 42.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Brewer's Association. "U.S. Brewery Count", <https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics/number-of-breweries/>, 2015.

direct opposition to the business model of the large conglomerates — an important move to growing and establishing the craft beer movement.

Resource Partitioning

Relying on economic theory will help to explain why the industry was ready for the explosion of craft beer establishments. Merging economics and sociology, Glenn Carroll and Anand Swaminathan outline the theory, “[resource partitioning] explains the rise of late-stage specialist segments within an industry as an (unexpected) outcome of the consolidation occurring among large generalist organizations as they compete for the largest consumer resource bases of the mass market”⁸². Seeking a standardized and utilitarian product, the large conglomerate breweries competed to produce a product that was easy to drink, unoffensive in taste, and reliably consistent. For the mass market, these were the most reliable attributes that would translate into growth and profits. Carroll and Swaminathan demonstrate the effects of the mindset, “industrial beer became a blight on the beer world and almost eliminated all varieties of competition. Worse, the industrial brewing establishment took to brewing even paler, ever more tasteless beers”⁸³. Not only was the product utilitarian and standardized, it was the *only* widely available beer. In this state of an overall industry change was inevitable, “the rise and survival of specialist [craft] breweries corresponds to the presumed opening of peripheral product space created by consolidation among large generalist breweries”⁸⁴. The industry was ripe for the Craft Renaissance.

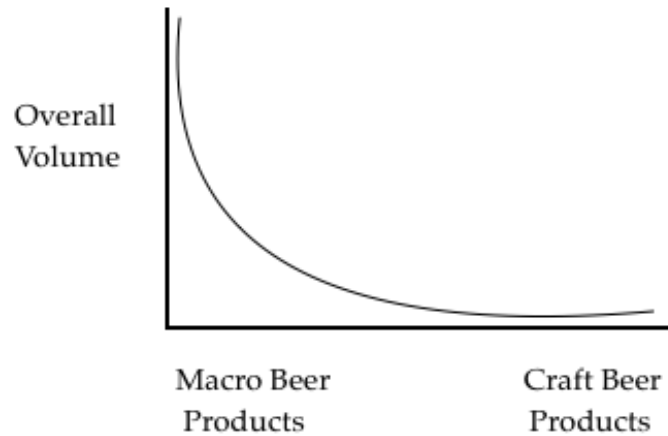
This peripheral product space became the opening craft beer needed to begin its growth. Beers hit the market that had different names, labels, styles; furthermore, they tasted different, they resisted standardization and as they were discovered, more were demanded. Below is a graphic that represents a dynamic of resource partitioning that helps to explain the proliferation of craft products over time.

Different craft products are the majority of options within the craft beer industry, but the totality of those options still only represent a small contribution to the overall industry. Macro beer offers immense volume in only a few different products. In the

⁸² Glenn Carroll and Anand Swaminathan, “Why the Microbrewery Movement? Organizational Dynamics of Resource Partitioning in the U.S. Brewing Industry”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 106(3) 2000: 717.

⁸³ Carroll and Swaminathan, “Why the Microbrewery Movement?”, 725.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*



This graphic represents the theory of resource partitioning. Few generalist, utilitarian products satisfy majority demands of the mass market. Peripheral products, craft and specialty beers, vary greatly and many different products emerge but occupy a peripheral space and thus have less of a market share.

early stages of the craft beer market, a few brave consumers tried new styles of beer, enjoyed them and spread the word. In an incredibly short period of time, there was large demand for more craft. A home brewer explains why consumers began participating, and the role of producers to meet that demand, “as a culture, there are a lot of people that want to be a part of something ... there is a lot of art and science going on in beer making. You have to understand what is going on with the process and be creative as well ... the refusal to grow and adapt will be the downfall of many a brewery, I feel like the industry is in a bit of a gold rush state”⁸⁵. Consumers wanted more of the “peripheral” product, wanted more flavors, styles and experiences, but how then, was it craft beer establishments came to meet that demand versus industry giants?

Ethos

Participants in the movement identified a codified mindset that makes this peripheral space successful. There is a different understanding of the product, a different business model and different goals inherent to macro beer and craft beer. A consumer introduces the commercial mindset, “commercial *rose* from craft — its the whole quantity over quality thing — they have a mindset of growth, ‘we need to get bigger to succeed, we need to maximize our profits’”⁸⁶. Originally, all beer was craft beer, the techniques, styles, recipes, all started as small scale. But there is a marked shift in the goals of the brewery, they must choose what to highlight, what to offer and what to prioritize. In commercial beer volume is the primary concern, ensuring that beer can be distributed in high quantities across the nation. Success is found in the quantity of

⁸⁵ Home Brewer Interview JC, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

⁸⁶ Consumer Interview JS, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

product sold, and to guarantee the sale of their beer, they provide a utilitarian, standard beer with little incentive to change up their product line. A professor in the beer industry outlines the tension commercial breweries face with a market demanding different products, “there is a bias towards smallness and there is a bias towards any ownership outside of the employees. In both those situations you can get away from a focus on quality. When you have large size there are pressures when you grow, to focus more on the volume than the quality”⁸⁷. The prioritization shifts away from the beer and towards organizational efficiency. This focus neglects the peripheral spaces that craft beer occupies, allowing craft to redefine their own goals, perspectives and mission.

The values and symbols associated with beer have been from a perspective of participants in the movement, but it also reflects the mission of craft beer framed as a part of the larger industry. As a response to the alienating, industrialized model of macro beer, the professor teaching about beer shows what craft brewers do differently, “there is this ethos in the craft beer community that, we are friends, we are collaborators, we do things for the good of craft beer and the movement, we help each other out”⁸⁸. The shift here represents an “us versus them” model painting the commercial beer producers as an “other” that is antithetical to how craft beer producers see themselves. As such, craft beer producers look out for one another, encourage each other and collaborate to secure their space in the industry and grow as a movement. It is a complementary ethos as opposed to a competitive one. A sense of camaraderie amongst the occupants of the peripheral space result in a sort of collective identity that stands for more than the commercial sector. There is more to offer, more to strive for and through sticking together and complementing the movement, they buy into advancing craft as a viable alternative and through the growth of the movement, are securing their positions as well. Participants in the movement also insert other values that are associated with craft that are lacking with commercial products, “there is an understanding of community and sustainability, that’s how people come to craft brewing, through that understanding and an appreciation for those values”⁸⁹. Not only is the craft beer a peripheral space, but a space that can provide values that were

⁸⁷ Craft Beer Professional Interview RB, *Craft Beer Professionals*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Consumer Interview JS, *Craft Beer Interviews*, (Author Interviews, Miami University).

previously unknown to the beer industry as a whole. Efforts to meet these values are held to the movement as a whole and participants are encouraged to strive to meet different standards than commercial brewers are held to.

This shift is documented by two members of Urban Artifact. Both of these individuals were brewing as a hobby in college, but afterwards pursued careers as engineers and factory managers. Disillusioned by a larger corporate mindset, they became determined to pursue their passion and become their own bosses. Mastering their style of beer, they decided that opening a brewery would give them an opportunity to make and share great beer and pursue something they felt more meaningful. Anthropologist Brian Hoey describes these lifestyle migrants, “conversion stories are a special form of autobiographical narrative where individuals distinguish a “real self” from an inauthentic self. This self-transformation entails the creation of a new vision of one’s self when long-time social roles and self-presentations are challenged and eventually stripped away”⁹⁰. Through pursuing a lifestyle and a career that they felt embodied a more authentic self, the owners of Urban Artifact are reproducing and reinforcing values about what it means to be a craft brewer.

Through reshaping the ethos involved with organization in breweries, the craft beer industry is a political commentary on the goals and ideologies of corporate structure. Reintroducing small scale production, localism, creativity, traditional knowledges and unique products defines the space in which craft beer occupies. It is a space that challenges the large scale industrialized nature that had become the brewery standard. In discourse about creating spaces in post socialist Russia, Melissa Caldwell outlines what having a space allows participants to do, “[participants] create communities, make up their own rules, and develop a sense of order and justice, which they monitor and regulate”⁹¹. Having a space thus allows the rules to be rewritten and redefined. It is visible in craft beer from shifting away from maximization, distribution and standardization that pervades commercial brewing and introducing adherence to particular styles, showcasing ingredients, being creative, prioritizing social responsibility and growing a community of people that enjoy craft beer from

⁹⁰ Brian Hoey, “American Dreaming: Refugees from Corporate Work Seek the Good Life” in *The Changing Landscape of Work and Family in the American Middle Class: Reports from the Field*, eds. Elizabeth Rudd and Lara Descartes (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2008): 118.

⁹¹ Melissa Caldwell, *Dacha Idylls: Living Organically in Russia’s Countryside*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011): 135.

production to consumption. Geographers Reid, McLaughlin and Moore summarize the communal aspect, “Both millennial and ‘locavores’ appear to have embraced both the product and the producer — flavorful and innovative beers that are brewed by people very much like themselves who invest and reinvest in the community in which they live and work”⁹². Like minded individuals have come together to set new expectations, new standards and new products that serve as an ethos that drives the craft beer movement.

Commodity Fetishism

The differing ethos describe the values and missions of the sectors within the beer industry, this section will focusing on taking a step back to examine what craft beer can contribute to understanding commodities and exchange. Examining the labor practices, the channels of exchange and the use value of products like beer will not only shed light on the importance of those products to our society, but it will also better help us comprehend and understand how these processes are enacted in daily life — how they shape worldview and ideologies. Through the analysis of *what* exactly a thing is, and how exactly we interact with it, understanding can be reached about values, uses and deeper meanings that may be veiled from casual interaction. Karl Marx writes⁹³:

A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood... so far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it is capable of satisfying human wants, or from the point that these properties are the product of human labor ... but so, soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent

The commodity becomes more than a simple use value and more than the end product of human labor. It signifies deeper understandings and perspectives of value, it reflects understandings of the world and frameworks of what is valued. With beer, it is not only the use value of the product, nor the aggregation of the labor involved in the process which should be understood during consumption. Marx expands, “Since the produces do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer’s labour does not show itself

⁹² Neil Reid, Ralph B. McLaughlin and Michael S. Moore, “From Yellow Fizz to Big Biz: American Craft Beer Comes of Age”, *Focus on Geography*, 57(3) 2014: 123.

⁹³ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling: (USSR: Progress Publishers, 1887): 47.

except in the act of exchange. In other words, the labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between the producers”⁹⁴. Exchange mediates the understanding of the commodity as a relation between labor and a monetary value, compensating that labor. This is an alienating force as it neglects the social relations which are inherent, between *people*, in the system of producers and consumers. In commercial beer, the exchange is consistently mediated through a system in which producers are veiled, labor is mechanized and social relations are reduced, resulting in a strict monetary compensation for the work done by commercial brewers. The producers become foreign and alien to the consumers, yet since the relationship is not prioritized and veiled, it does not matter. This reflects a globalized, neoliberal mindset in which labor is reduced to a monetary value reflecting use value of the product, not the social relations of the producer.

However, craft beer challenges the alienation of producers and consumers through reinserting social relations into the commodity chain. Producers are in direct contact and dialogue with consumers. Producers educate, tour and discuss their product, sharing how it is made, where it comes from and what makes it special. In this sense, a craft beer is no longer simply reduced to the monetary value assigned to reflect its use value, but as something that producers can share a part of *themselves*, as people, through the medium of the end product. The veiled relationship between the labor, product and consumer becomes transparent and accessible. Thus, a new concept of social relations, labor and beer are formulated through the process of exchanging goods directly between producers and consumers. The medium of exchange, which is routinely standardized and reduced by commercial brewers, is challenged to try and insert new values to craft beer that suggest a deeper connection on a social level.

Strict monetary exchange for a craft beer product would neglect many of the sentiments, values and symbols explained in earlier chapters. Craft beer’s unique relationship to place would be lost without the link between craft producers and craft consumers, it would be lost in translation if producers did not go an extra step to involve unique ideals concerning history and culture. The process of socialization that takes place within the movement would be inaccessible to consumers if producers were not their to explain their products — the flavors, the style of beer, the nuances in the

⁹⁴ Marx, *Capital*, 48.

process that allowed this beer to exist. Quality would be derived from supply and demand, sales and popularity, not on the specific connections to artisanship, unique taste and social responsibility. Indeed, the very definition of craft beer would lose meaning, leaning towards a different kind of beer, rather than being specifically *craft* beer. The social relations inherent to the craft beer movement are deeply integrated into its status as a commodity and they facilitate much of the meaning and value that emerges from these unique products. Craft beer transcends the aggregate labor involved through maintaining important social ties between producers and consumers that make dialogue, education and socialization accessible to both parties.

Thus, concluding, we can see how craft beer has challenged industry standards to create a space in an industry that has increasingly suffered through mechanization and industrialization. The tension between craft beer and macro beer is not something to be lamented, but rather it allows craft beer to reach a higher potential, to become something that the participants of the craft beer movement can define for themselves. Like minded individuals have come together and created new rules, new expectations and higher standards to hold this product to. Thus the label of *craft* in craft beer does not become a simple tool of differentiation between products in the beer industry, but a label about how it is produced, how it is consumed and makes a strong statement about the values, ideals and worldview of the individuals that comprise the craft beer movement.

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