

**Crafting Beer, Crafting Community:  
An exploration into the portrayal of craft beer**

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## Abstract

In this thesis I argue that the way in which craft beer has positioned itself within the beer industry largely parallels the principles that Annalee Saxenian attributes to Silicon Valley's success. Craft breweries style themselves as a collaborative group that is fundamentally different than their macrobrewery counterparts. Craft beer is often associated with the collaboration that happens between breweries as they function via a "we all float together" mentality. It is this set up of craft beer as a uniting brand that has allowed for the smaller breweries to be successful. This relationship is what is portrayed to the consumer, but it is more complex than that. Not everyone in the industry is friends and there is still the element of competition present, just as it is in Silicon Valley. I argue that craft beer can also attribute aspects of its success in carving out a space in the beer market – one that is actually viewed as threatening to macrobeer – by establishing itself as a meta-organization. By focusing on community and collaboration, craft beer allows for its consumers to participate in "performative branding." The target audience is able to create their identity with the product, which in turn creates this image of craft beer that then is reaffirmed by the individual breweries through the organizational field. The unifying label of craft beer helps to draw in consumers and establish industry practices, but it also creates expectations of difference that individual craft brews and the meta-organization do not always live up to.

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## Introduction

Beer has been called America's beverage. It is the drink that comes to mind when you think of football or hanging out with people after a day at work and is about as engrained in the American identity as apple pie. Today there are many different options when it comes to choosing what beer you want to drink. While around 75% of the beer in the US is produced by macrobreweries like MillerCoors and Budweiser, there are also thousands of small batch craft beers being sold across the United States (Poelsmans and Swinnen 2011). This diversified beer market has not always been the case in the US. Instead, it has risen out of a rich and evolving history.

Craft beer has only become popular over the past few decades, but its popularity has been growing rapidly. By comparison, many macrobreweries who have histories that span over a hundred years. The rise of craft beer has created a shift in beer culture and what people associate with beer. Craft beer became popular by capitalizing on a niche that macrobeer was not trying to address. Macrobeers all taste the same essentially and craft brewers took that as an opening to play with different styles and flavors (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000).<sup>1</sup> Craft breweries are profitable despite having a lower efficiency than macrobreweries because people are willing to pay a premium for a more complex product.

Craft beer has positioned itself as an alternative to macrobreweries; not just in terms of flavor profiles, but in regard to business practices and culture as well. The craft beer story has been cast as a David and Goliath story that has been about the little, traditional, unique brewery succeeding and being chosen by consumers over the mass-produced, non-differentiable

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<sup>1</sup> In blind tastings of macrobeers, consumers were unable to differentiate between the beers solely based on flavor. These tests were done in the 1960s and 1970s before the craft beer movement meaning that there could be a larger difference in flavor today.

American lager of the macrobreweries. According to the Brewer's Association, an organization of craft breweries, "an American craft brewer is small, independent, and traditional" (2015).<sup>2</sup> This definition helps with being able to compile market statistics and limit what counts as a "true" craft beer.<sup>3</sup> As their definition shows, craft beer is defined by much more than just its product. It is not just the production of styles other than the American Lager. Instead, it is defined by the business behind it and its size. In addition to the formal criteria of the Brewer's Association definition, there is also an association of craft beer being "a symbol of counterculture", which plays off of the David and Goliath story that is so apparent in the rise of craft beer (Sparhawk 2015). To more fully understand this position of craft beer as part of a counterculture, the history of beer in the U.S. must first be explored.

### **History of Beer in the US**

Beer has a long history in the world as a whole and has been integrated into US history since the pilgrims and founding fathers. The American taste in beer has gone through many changes throughout time. Before Prohibition there were many small breweries that were tied to an area. They were often associated with a tied house, a bar that would only serve beer from a certain brewery (Baron 1962). The small scale of brewing had a lot to do with the logistics of transporting the beer and keeping it from spoiling. Each type of beer was therefore linked to a physical place near the brewery.

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<sup>2</sup> The Brewer's Association is an independent organization that consists of over 2,300 breweries as members. It provides insight into the craft beer market as well as consolidates best practices. Its purpose is promoting and protecting craft beer in America. Small is defined as 6 million barrels or less annual production. Independent is quantified by 25% or less of the brewery's economic interest being held by a non-craft brewer. Traditional is defined by traditional or innovative ingredients contributing to most of the alcohol content through their fermentation.

<sup>3</sup> This definition allows for the exclusion of brands like Shock Top and Blue Moon, which are macrobrewery brands that attempt to appeal to the craft beer market of different flavors and styles as opposed to their standard American Lagers. It also excludes companies like Goose Island and the Craft Brew Alliance (Red Hook, Kona, and Widmer Brothers, and Omission Beer) since over 25% of their holdings are owned by Anheuser-Busch.

As transportation became more feasible, beer markets started to expand, but there were still many breweries all serving different markets. At the turn of the century leading into Prohibition, the market started to shift to larger breweries distributing to more places and beer became less tied to location. This was the birth of mass production and became the start of the American Lager. It was around this time that the idea of quality started to be associated with consistency, as evidenced by the coinciding rise of canned food. The American Lager's success has been attributed to a shift in the public's perception of quality. It was around this time that the idea of quality started to be associated with consistency. This is an aspect in which the mass beer producers could excel over the smaller breweries (Stack 2010).

In order to get a consistent product that would taste the same in the bar next to the brewery as it would in a bar in a different state, these larger breweries took liberties in the production of their beer. Typically beer consists of four ingredients: water, malt, hops, and yeast. It is with the second ingredient that these larger breweries are a more lenient and is distinctive to the American Lager. Instead of using entirely malted barley grain in the brewing process, these breweries started to add adjunct grains like corn and rice to help create a more consistent product. The addition of these adjunct grains makes for a lighter bodied beer, a characteristic that is a key attribute of the American Lager. In addition to using this unconventional grain profile, these companies also started to pasteurize their beer so that it would have a longer shelf life and would not spoil during shipping (Ibid.). This rise of the mass marketed beer lasted until Prohibition was legislated in 1920.

Prohibition had a large role in the changing dynamic of the beer market. In 1915 there were 1345 active breweries in the US (Poelsmans and Swinnen 2011). During Prohibition breweries turned to other ventures including making near beers (alcoholic content under 0.5%),

dairy products, chocolate and candy, etc. (Baron 1962). The brewing industry was able to bounce back after prohibition and started producing more barrels than pre-Prohibition. However, by the time Prohibition was repealed, the US brewing industry looked drastically different. In spite of the increase in the overall beer production, Prohibition led to the failure of many breweries and by the end there were only around 700 breweries still operating in 1934 (Tremblay and Tremblay 2005). The number of breweries continued to decline and by 1983 there were only 43 American breweries in operation (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000).

World War II had a large impact on the shift of the brewing industry as well because of rations. With the employment of grain rations, the 'American Lager' style of beer that had been on the rise before Prohibition continued to gain more ground because companies were being forced to continue to use rice and corn as adjunct grains. The war also led to the passage of a law that allowed for 3.2% beer to be legal in the military instead of having the military be dry (Baron 1962). This reinforced the lower alcohol content of this style of beer and soon it took over the American beer market. The five largest macrobreweries (Miller, Coors, Anheuser-Busch, Pabst, and Schiltz) controlled 75% of the market (Poelsmans and Swinnen 2011). They were all producing the same indistinguishable light lager. The popularity of this style of the beer is attributable to the importance of technological advancements and the belief of consumers at the time that quality was connected to the consistency and homogeneity of a product (Stack 2010). People drinking these American products were acknowledging the new and the modern and therefore demonstrating a sort of capital that gave them a higher status. The idea of cultural capital is a concept that was initially brought into discourse by Pierre Bourdieu (1986). Cultural capital is all about denoting social status through symbols and displays of advantage. These demonstrations are often used to move up the social ladder.

While drinking macrobrews was a status symbol in the years following WWII, and contributed to the growth of consumption, but also led to the consolidation of the beer industry as a whole. However, in recent decades a new movement has started. The craft beer movement is the newest change in the US beer industry. These new breweries are more similar to the breweries of yesteryear, small and fairly tied to a location. As of July 2014, there are 3084 craft breweries in operation in the US with 100s more opening their doors and pouring their taps each year (The Brewers Association 2014). These breweries range from small brewpubs that only distribute their beer on site up through breweries like Sierra Nevada, which produces 829 thousand barrels per year (Tremblay and Tremblay 2005). Despite the spectrum, both of these examples position themselves as craft beer. This rapid rise of craft beer might not have the largest segment of the market, but it has seen the most growth in recent years.<sup>4</sup> The focus on a return to craft and being integrated into the community is a large part of the craft beer image. It is all about selling a quality product as well as an image of community, collaboration and a counter to big business.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The image and reality of craft beer as this counter-culture business is what I hope to evaluate and explore more in depth. Craft beer is not the first section of an industry to take hold and have more rapid growth than the more established portion of the industry. A similar story occurred with the semiconductor industry in Silicon Valley versus Route 128. The change in this industry has been investigated by AnnaLee Saxenian. Saxenian proposes that Silicon Valley was able to out compete and eventually take over for Route 128 as the headquarters of the semiconductor industry through multiple changes in business practices (1996). The main

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<sup>4</sup> Craft beer accounts for only 11% of the total beer market. It has grown 17.6% in the past year, while the whole beer market has only grown 0.5%. This means that craft beer is continuing to be the fastest growing segment of beer and is growing much more rapidly than macrobeer (The Brewers Association 2015).

characteristics of Silicon Valley that she credits are 1) the decentralization of the industry within Silicon Valley, 2) the geographical proximity of the individual firms, 3) the balance of collaboration and competition between firms, 4) the relationship between the semiconductor industry and the surrounding schools and 5) the quick turnover that encouraged startups and risks within the industry (1996). The informal communication and collaboration between individual companies allowed for the rapid growth in the area because there was a sharing of technology allowing for mutual advancements. The decentralization of these firms was characteristic of the area and allowed for the multitude of paths of advancement to function in conjunction with each other (1996). This is as opposed to the more stagnant vertical structure of companies on Route 128 that could take weeks to implement a change in comparison to the day or two a similar change would take in Silicon Valley.

In this paper I argue that the way in which craft beer has positioned itself within the beer industry largely parallels these principles that made Silicon Valley successful. They style themselves as a collaborative group that is fundamentally different than their macrobrewery counterparts. Craft beer is often associated with the collaboration that happens between breweries as they function via a “we all float together” mentality. It is this set up of craft beer as a uniting brand that has allowed for the smaller breweries to be successful. This relationship is what is portrayed to the consumer, but it is more complex than that. Not everyone in the industry is friends and there is still the element of competition present, just as it is in Silicon Valley. I argue that craft beer can also attribute aspects of its success in carving out a space in the beer market – one that is actually viewed as threatening to macrobeer – by establishing itself as a meta-organization. By meta-organization I mean that all the craft breweries are functioning under the same conception of craft beer, which both unites them and leads to competition. The

unifying label of craft beer helps to draw in consumers and establish industry practices, but it also creates expectations of difference that individual craft brews and the meta-organization do not always live up to.

The question here is: “What creates the image of craft beer, and how is it being replicated?” In order to assess this question, two concepts must be understood, branding and organizational fields. Branding tends to be focused on interactions with the consumer and the product. It is about consumers associating a product with specific cultural ideas and identities (Bookman 2013). An organizational field is a concept that is focused more on the social interactions between individual companies within an industry. An important aspect of this concept is that companies are taking each other into account when deciding their actions (Fligstein 1995). Both of these concepts are useful for interpreting the image of craft beer. The focus on ‘community’ and collaboration that are so central to craft beer both require the consumer and business awareness, respectively.

These ideas of community and collaboration seem to be rooted in and dependent on craft beer being very different than the macrobreweries. These differences span beyond the greater variety of taste profiles that craft beer has introduced. It also touts itself as working together and committed to not only creating a quality product, but also to individual craft brewers being invested in their local community and being businesses that are about doing good things around them. This has decentralized the image of craft beer and allowed for individual actors to thrive.

Another important theory that has been applied to craft beer and needs to be taken into account is that of resource partitioning. This is an ecological concept that has been applied to the craft beer industry (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000). As applied to breweries, this theory argues that through defining a target audience, a brewery can determine who it is competing against and

hence establishes different competition sectors. There are the generalist firms (macrobreweries) who compete for the widest swath of the market and therefore their segment of the market is defined by economies of scale. The larger firms prevail and the smaller generalists are out-competed or coopted into larger ones. This is what happened after prohibition and led to the initial rise of macrobeer. Out of this wide, nonspecific target audience, room in the market is created for a specialist niche to form. This is the segment where craft beer has established itself.

The foundation of taste allows for a more narrow specialization to exist. According to resource-partitioning, craft beer survives because it is not in direct competition with the macrobreweries. I argue that the meta-organization of craft beer is what defines this niche of the market and allows for resource partitioning to take place. By focusing on community and collaboration, craft beer allows for its consumers to participate in “performative branding” (Bookman 2013). The niche is established by the target audience creating their identity with the product, which in turn creates this image of craft beer that then is reaffirmed by the individual breweries through the organizational field.

The interest of the collaboration is that the industry shares what makes them unique with other brewers by collaborating on different brews. This aspect goes against the ideas of competition in markets, but must be beneficial in some way and is more complex than it looks on the surface. This aspect of community and collaboration will help me explore the extent to which the discourse around community in the craft beer movement actually is acted upon. Most craft breweries mention community on their websites, but how does that actually play out in the business?

## Methods

In order to see how effective and true this image of community and collaboration is in craft beer I focused on craft breweries in Fort Collins, Colorado (which is sometimes referred to as the “Napa Valley of Beer”) as well as on craft breweries in the Philadelphia area. In order to explore these two aspects of the creation and role of community I performed a mixture of participant observation and interviews. When doing my participant observation I went to different taprooms and watched and noted the goings-on. I paid specific attention to interactions amongst fellow consumers. Breweries often implement different tactics to get people to stay and come back. These can include games and communal tables. I specifically focused on how these influenced interaction within the taprooms.

I also participated in the on goings-on of the taprooms, including striking up conversations with fellow taproom goers if it seemed appropriate. Additionally, I attended some brewery sponsored events that are held in the taprooms. The overall goal of the participant observation was to get a feel of the space and atmosphere of each taproom. This helped to explore the common themes between them as well as any divergences.

With my interviews I spoke with brewery owners, tour guides, and brewers about their role within the brewery and how they viewed craft beer and the role of their taproom. I reached out via email in order to set up official interviews with owners and brewers (Appendix A). I had a list of set questions for each formal interview (Appendix B) and recorded these with the permission of the interviewee (Appendix C). These interviews were focused on getting a sense of what was important to the people behind the brewery as well as their perceptions of craft beer and the relationship to the consumer.

## The Scope of the Research

I only researched breweries in two specific locales, Fort Collins and Philadelphia, which might limit the applicability of my findings to the craft beer movement as a whole. What people told me might have been self-censored due to other interests for which I may not be able to account. Even with these limitations, my findings are grounded in empirical research.

In order to investigate how craft beer portrays itself and how individual breweries operate on a daily basis, I have broken it into the three key aspects of craft beer. In my first chapter I look at how craft breweries portray themselves outside the physical brewery, including through the use of innovative advertising and digital media. This entailed looking at their websites and label art and assessing what these aspects say about them as individual companies as well as craft beer as a whole. This is then compared with how macrobreweries advertise themselves and what they include on their websites to educate the curious customer. This is about the identity creation potential. My next chapter looks at what the experience is of actually visiting these breweries. The interaction between production and consumption in a brewery taproom is a unique aspect to craft beer and is definitely one of the defining practices is within this subsector of the beer industry.<sup>5</sup> The following chapter specifically investigates the collective identity as well as the individual identity of breweries. It also looks into who the consumers are and what value they find in craft beer over macrobeer and if the image of craft beer is true to the experience. The final chapter looks at the collaborative aspect of craft beer and what function it is serving for the breweries involved.

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<sup>5</sup> Macrobreweries also host tours and have tasting areas, but this do not reflect the bar-esque feel that a craft brewery taproom does. Macrobreweries tend to be about going on the tour, not sitting and splitting a flight with friends or having a pint by yourself after work. They do not have to rely on this interaction and therefore do not place as large of an emphasis on it.

## Chapter 1: How Craft Breweries Portray Themselves

Craft beer has positioned itself as being a different kind of beer as well as a different kind of industry. Craft beer reintroduced America to the hoppy IPA, the deep, dark roast of the English porter and countless other styles being produced domestically. This divergence in beer flavor is not the only way that craft beer has tried to distinguish itself from the macrobeer industry. Craft beer has also established itself on the fact that they do not use traditional advertising techniques, like television commercials. The craft brewery industry relies much more heavily on their websites and label designs to get customers to buy their product. It is up to the website to tell the brewery's story, inform people about their beer options and let people know where to find them. In addition to countering the flavors of macrobeers, craft beer is often framed as a different kind of business practice that is counter to the big macrobreweries and their style of business. According to the Brewers Association, "Craft brewers have distinctive, individualistic approaches to connecting with their customers" (2015). This is the identity that is portrayed through websites and labels.

Despite this claim of craft breweries having "distinctive, individualistic approaches," their websites tend to be somewhat formulaic (Ibid.). There are certain aspects of information about the beer and company that are apparent on all the websites. These subsections of the websites are an About Us/History section, something related to community outreach, sustainability, and a section describing their beers. While all the brewery websites possess these elements it does not mean that they are all the same. There are aspects that distinguish each brewery some in order to differentiate them from the pack.

## About Us

One of the main purposes of the website is to inform people about the company's history, ethos and mission. This typically comes in some form of an "about" section. The location of this section and what they call it varies, but it is always fairly apparent on the website. Some breweries have their story of how they came to be on their home page, or a separate section tab. These histories and stories all tend to locate the brewery in time and often times accentuate the homebrewer to brewery story. Not all craft breweries follow this trajectory, but it definitely is a common theme, someone taking their passion and hobby and making it a business. They also explicitly mention what makes their beer unique and special. This comes in the form often emphasizing the importance of trying different beer styles, being "artisanal" and mentioning "craft." Some go as far as to mention that "they make serious beer, despite not being serious people" (Yards Brewing Company 2015). This is an important statement about craft beer in general, opposing the sentiment that just because it varies from the well-known American lager; it should not be taken seriously. It is also framed as being a "fun" industry (beer is meant to lead to a good time after all). The product must be quality while the industry is fun. The idea of a fun industry and emphasis on 'artisanal' allows for consumers to act as co-creators of the brand of craft beer. They recreate the image by attending events and visiting taprooms.

Along with the story of how they came to be, this section also is used to set a brewery apart from the pack. This comes from the branding of the breweries. This can range from the brewery having a theme, like Pateros Creek Brewing Co., Equinox Brewing Co., Yards Brewing Co. or 1933 Brewing Co. Each of these breweries has committed to a theme. The portrayal of these themes tends to be apparent in the beer names. Yards and 1933 focus on historical events in order to establish their identities. Yards is focused on the Revolutionary history of Philadelphia

and produces “British inspired ales” and plays off of historical beer in the US. 1933 is named after the year that the 21<sup>st</sup> amendment was ratified and prohibition in the US came to an end.

These breweries have used historical events in order to establish a brand to their beer. Yards is able to weave their physical location into their historical context. Other breweries establish their brand more heavily off of their physical locale. Philadelphia Brewing Co. does this by referring to the history of their building, which is the oldest brewery in Philadelphia that is still standing (2015). They also have a beer named “Kenzinger” which is a play on Kensington, the neighborhood in which they are located. Philadelphia Brewing Co. is not unique in focusing on the local history to distinguish them. Whether that is the beer history, in the case of Odell Brewing, or the natural history, like Pateros Creek Brewing Co. Pateros Creek is the former name of the river that runs through Fort Collins. They seek to embrace “local history and local ideals to bring forth some new styles that speak to the community.” They try to stand out by emphasizing Fort Collins.

Another strategy that is used to attract customers is a type of statement that connects them with their customers. These statements are about getting to the core of the company and may or may not be labeled as a mission statement. Below are a few examples of these statements:

“To manifest our love and talent by crafting our customers' favorite brands and proving business can be a force for good.” – New Belgium Brewing Company

“Our humble beginnings taught us to take our craft seriously but not ourselves, and instilled in us a strong desire to be a positive force in the communities we serve.” – Yards Brewing Company

“We also believe that there is more than just great beer behind a successful brewery. It’s our company’s values that put our community, environment and people right up there with the bottom line.” – Philadelphia Brewing Company

“Provide unique, quality craft beer to the consumer within a relaxing, entertaining atmosphere that promotes interaction and education of the craft beer experience.” – 1933 Brewing Company

“Our philosophy is “Create Share Savor,” as we are inspired to create high quality craft beer... to share with friends and family... and to savor the experience!” – Fort Collins Brewing Company

“To have some serious fun making our art!” – Zwei Bruder Brewing Company

All of these statements work to connect the “art” of crafting a high quality product with the people who buy it. They are all saying something about breaking down the stereotypical image of production as an assembly line. Instead, making craft beer is an art form that is done for the people. All of these breweries specifically mention the community or consumer. This is important because they are illustrating that the craft beer industry as a whole likes to distinguish itself with its connection to its community beyond just selling a product. The sentiment that beer is something to be shared and enjoyed in a communal way is something that is very prominent in the craft beer movement. It also allows for the consumer to be intrinsic to the craft beer image. Craft beer cannot promote community if they do not have a target community. Therefore, the target consumers get to help shape the way craft beer is viewed. It is about having a unique identity that is linked to the meta-organization by a common thread. Consumers tend to consume craft beer as a whole, not just beer from one or two specific breweries. People do have loyalties and favorites, but part of the appeal of craft beer is the variety and ability to create a unique identity through the multitude of amalgamations of beer taste an individual can establish. This means that individual breweries need to create enough of an identity that they can have a unique image that is dictated by the meta-organization.

Breweries often use the experience of interacting with the threshold of production and consumption as a means of attracting customers. Take for example 1933 Brewing Co., which has founded itself on the premise of educating people on their beer and craft beer in general. The interaction they hope to achieve will not be an “us teaching them” situation according to the website, instead it will be an “interaction” that will help both parties learn, the consumer about beer and the brewery about the consumer’s wants (2015). This emphasis on growing together through interaction is an interesting take on community. Even if you cannot visit the taproom, by visiting their website and reading their mission statement, you are now informed about their goals and what makes them special which they hope will make you reach for their beer the next time you have an opportunity.

### **Philanthropy/Community Ties**

Another common factor amongst craft brewery business practices is that of connecting with their surrounding community. This is one of the most heavily emphasized aspects of craft beer. While all breweries are focused on creating a quality product that people want to drink, many are also concerned about being a positive industry in their location. This sentiment is apparent in some of the mission statements of these types of breweries. New Belgium includes “proving business can be a force for good,” Fort Collins Brewing says “to share with friends and family,” and Yards as “a strong desire to be a force of good in the communities that [they] serve” (2015). These are just a few examples of these types of statements made by breweries. Within these statements one can see their multiple viewpoints on community and how they incorporate more than just a high quality product into their brewery’s business plans.

There are some important factors that play into what the role of community is in craft beer. There are many different ways of defining community and these different communities can

be incorporated into a brewery's identity in many ways. Many craft breweries define at least one of their communities in relation to their brewery's physical location. This definition of community tends to relate to how employees are encouraged to get involved with the area that surrounds the brewery and speaks to that reoccurring theme of business "doing good" which is so apparent in the craft beer industry. To help embed this idea of having a positive impact on the community around the brewery, some breweries set up ways and incentives to get employees to volunteer. New Belgium has what they call their "Beer Scouts." This is a group that connects employees with volunteer opportunities. They have a monthly shift at the Mission (a homeless soup kitchen across the street from the brewery) as well as other opportunities. To help encourage their employees to be involved in the community around them, New Belgium in addition to facilitating opportunities also offer paid time off for volunteering. Two hours of volunteering is equivalent to one hour of paid time off. This is a way that they trying to embed the idea of "doing good" into their identity.

Other breweries also have organized ways to help facilitate participation in the local community. Odell Brewing has Odell Outreach, which is about providing employees, along with their families and friends, opportunities to be involved in the Fort Collins community. In addition to facilitating getting employees out into the community, some breweries will also organize events that engage both their employees and the surrounding community. Breweries have organized neighborhood clean ups, river clean ups, days at the food bank, among other things.<sup>6</sup> It tends to be the larger craft breweries that have the ability to organize such events and have dedicated employee groups to organizing community outreach. These events can be focused on the land right outside the brewery and therefore be serving two purposes. Not only is the brewery

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<sup>6</sup> Philadelphia Brewing Co. used to host neighborhood clean-up days around their brewery in Kensington, though they have since ceased doing it. Odell and New Belgium have both organized river clean ups.

helping out the neighborhood around them look a bit nicer, but they are also making their facility more attractive to customers. This personal gain can sometimes be the motive behind such events. It is not always about “doing good,” sometimes it is about looking good in the eye of the customer. Neighborhood clean ups are one way that breweries can help improve an area, but also lead to other changes. Sometimes the inspiration for a cleanup is to attract people from outside the neighborhood to the facility. These actions are still overall having some benefit to people beyond the brewery, but the motive may not be as selfless as some might think.

This does not mean that the smaller breweries that might only have a hand full of employees are not also finding a way to engage with the people around them and their customers beyond creating a quality product. Often these smaller operations will host events at their location. The way these events occur tend to come from requests. Groups will request to hold a fundraiser at a brewery and then it is up to the brewery to decide whether or not they can do it. Many breweries get many more requests than they can handle. This leads some breweries to establish a set of causes that they are committed to and then doing their best to support requests that fit those guidelines (Odell).

Along with hosting events to support organizations in their taprooms, craft breweries also make in-kind donations to organizations for their events as well as on occasion dedicating a portion of proceeds from a particular beer to a specific cause. In Odell’s taproom they donate the proceeds from the flights to a charity of the month. Other breweries donate all the tips collected in the taproom to a monthly charity (Horse and Dragon). The donation and sponsorship of events is a great way for breweries to give back to the communities they serve and attempt to live up to their statements about being businesses that do good things. Again this reinforces the cyclical reproduction of the craft beer image.

This type of community engagement through donations and support for organizations outside the brewery is not the only way that breweries incorporate the idea of community into their business practices. There is also another aspect of community that many breweries hope to foster; the creation of community and merriment around their product. Beer is often called America's beverage and it is not uncommon to suggest getting to know someone over a cold beer. In line with the sentiment of communion around beer, many craft breweries try to encourage this communion over their beer and in their taprooms. They try to foster community through how people interact with the physical brewery as well as other activities that may or may not be linked with a cause.

Craft breweries are production businesses that are opening up their doors to become a threshold between production and consumption. This idea is a business practice moving beyond just the production of a product to the production of a presence in the community, through both involvement in the surrounding community and the creation of an internalized social space. The mere existence of a taproom is a change in business practices, connecting the consumption to the production. This involves creating an atmosphere that encourages people to come to the brewery instead of buying a six-pack and sitting at home or going to a bar. Different breweries have different approaches for doing this. Some offer free brewery tours to make it an attraction, others offer weekly events. Live music is a common theme in the taprooms, it allows for supporting the local artist community as well as giving a reason to visit. Other events that happen are weekly quizzos or the occasional game night. Pateros Creek even hosts a monthly knitting event called "Pints and Purls." Brewery websites are used as a platform to share this information with potential customers. These are examples of breweries narrowing their target audience to help situate them in their own niche.

Along with more frequent low key events that are meant to get people into the taproom and interacting with each other, breweries sometimes also host larger annual events. Some examples of these are New Belgium's Tour de Fat and Philadelphia Brewing's Annual Holiday Party. Tour de Fat started out being a bike parade through Fort Collins that ended with a festival outside New Belgium with events and music. Since its start, it has expanded to being held in 10 cities nationwide. In general, the Tour de Fat is meant to celebrate bikes and good beer. It is an event that draws people of all ages to dress up and ride their bikes around town then go and listen to live music, drink a beer (if they are of age) and watch bike themed events. Each Tour de Fat benefits a local bike advocacy group. This relates back to New Belgium's logo of a bike. They have branded themselves with a bike, their logo, their flagship beer (Fat Tire Amber Ale) and many aspects of the brewery are bike themed. It makes sense then that they are sticking with that image and using their largest event to promote bicycle awareness.

### **Sustainability**

Through Tour de Fat, New Belgium projects the "beer and bikes" theme. The promotion of bicycles is part of their larger sustainability emphasis. Sustainability is something that most breweries are talking about and is often also addressed under their community engagement tab on their website. Sustainability and reducing their environmental impact tends to be an aspect of brewery business practices that embody business as a force of good.

Brewing is a very consumptive process and requires a lot of water and energy to turn water into beer. Therefore many breweries work to show that they understand this and are doing their best to reduce their impact in order to not be a drain on the surrounding community.

Sustainability is also a buzz word and can help to create a certain aesthetic in the brewery with

the use of repurposed industrial materials as furniture in taprooms. All of these aspects of sustainability influence brewery management practices as well as image.

In regards to water and energy consumption, many breweries are actively attempting to reduce their impact through altering their production systems. With energy use this can be as simple as shutting off cooling systems when outside temperature drops below a certain temperature and then using outside air for cooling. Other changes include using solar panels on site or buying wind energy. The advantage of these types of energy changes is that it is an easy thing to display to consumers who actually visit the brewery. Yards has a large sign painted on the front of their building saying that they are 100% wind powered. These changes to the business-end help to lead to a more positive effect on the areas around the breweries as well as make for good selling points for environmentally conscious consumers.

Water consumption is also a place that many breweries look to reduce their impact. A lot of the reduction of water use comes from having a large enough brewery in order to be able to increase efficiency and reuse water throughout the brewing process. Currently on average, a brewery uses seven gallons of water in order to produce one gallon of beer. Breweries like Odell, New Belgium and even the macrobrewery, Anheuser-Busch are operating at a level closer to 4:1 gallons of water to gallons of beer. Brewery water reduction strategies tend to be something that is seen more on the slightly larger craft brewery websites because they have the infrastructure to be able to do it (The Coloradoan 2015).

While the larger craft breweries are able to reuse water in different steps of the process, small and larger breweries often find a way to prevent other waste products from their beer production from making it to the landfill. This tends to be in the form of recycling the spent grains by donating (or selling) the grains to local farms for agricultural use. This unites these

breweries with a different subset of their surrounding community. Some breweries donate the grains to educational agricultural spaces (Philadelphia Brewing Co.) others sell it to farmers (Odell and Yards). In the case of Odell, they have actually named a milk stout after the dairy farmer with whom they do business. Yards also points out the ties of their grain exchange with a local farmer and bakery by highlighting the fact that bison and bread used in their kitchen come from the same places that receive their spent grains. This helps to integrate the breweries into the local economy beyond just being a producer of beer.

### **Macrobreweries**

Craft breweries are not the only breweries out there and it is important to understand their position in relationship to the macrobreweries of which they are so often placed in opposition. Most people are much more attune to these large companies because their advertisements are everywhere. They have TV and radio commercials, billboards as well as banners and ads at major sporting events. It is hard to avoid the macrobreweries. While their websites might not be as essential as a form of advertisement, they function to provide information to their consumers. For the most part these websites are much more formal. They lack a personality of some of the craft brewery websites. However, they also consist of the essential tabs that the craft beer websites all have, an About Us/History section, a community involvement section, and a section of sustainability.

While the same subsections of information are present on the website, they are presented in a much different way. Often times the craft breweries include a personal story of how the brewery came to be. In the case of macrobreweries, the history and about us sections tend to be separate and not as personable. MillerCoors does give the humanizing bit of information that Miller Brewing Company was started by Fredrick Miller using yeast he carried over from Europe

in his pocket (2015). This is not as much of a story or narrative to the creation and in the case of MillerCoors and Anheuser-Busch, the survival of these companies for over a century. It is not about the passion, it is about the facts and the chronology of events in the history of each company. Anheuser-Busch does a better job of giving more detail on how the brewery has stayed in business over time, but is still very prescriptive and can read more like a history book.

This more prescriptive approach to relaying information about them as a company may have more to do with the website being more of a supportive, educational tool for people, rather than an advertisement, like it is for many of the craft breweries. This also leads to these websites having a lot more information. Under all of their main sections there are at least another 4 subsections to choose from. These websites seem more like an educational, formal display than an encouragement to buy their product.

Since these macrobreweries are not limited to one or two production facilities, it truly changes how they interact with and define their community in their involvement section. Instead of being focused on organizations that are near to the breweries or having a committee of employees pick an issue that they want to support, there is a top down approach that consists mainly of financial donations, instead of volunteerism or in-kind gifts which is common place in the craft beer realm. Anheuser-Busch and MillerCoors both have similar main focuses in promoting responsible drinking (preventing drunk driving, responsible fan behavior, preventing underage drinking, etc.) as well as supporting education through college funds.

These values do distinguish them from the craft beer market, especially when the target of these funds and campaigns are looked at more closely. The responsible drinking campaigns are focused on colleges and large sporting events, things that are not associated with craft beer. Here, it is clear that craft beer and macrobeer are targeting different market places because their

products connect with different demographics. This is not to say that there is not competition between the two industries, but they are distinct from one another. The educational support of macrobreweries is not unique to them (Odell for examples tends to give educational groups preference when they ask for sponsorship or beer.) The approach to education is different though. Macrobreweries have much larger financial reserves and therefore can give much larger and consistent donations to partnering organizations. Anheuser-Busch is partnered with the Hispanic Scholarship Fund and UNCF (United Negro College Fund, a scholarship organization for historically black colleges). The targeting of these demographics is one that the craft beer industry does not participate. MillerCoors also supports [¡Adelante! U.S. Education Leadership Fund](#) (a Latino focused scholarship and internship program) as well as the [Thurgood Marshall College Fund](#) (a four year scholarship to 47 historically black colleges and universities).

In addition to these aspects of financial support, there is also an emphasis on the environmental sustainability of these macrobreweries. There is a focus on water use reduction, sustainable energy use, as well as less waste leaving the breweries. The process for doing this can be more effective than some of the smaller craft breweries because of the size of the macrobreweries and the infrastructure around them. That being said, not everything that is stated on their websites is being done at every one of their multiple breweries. While these companies are not branded by their sustainable efforts, it is clear that this is an important enough issue amongst consumers that they find it necessary to invest in this type of infrastructure. Whether this has been influenced by many craft breweries being very forward with their consumers with their environmental initiatives is unknown, but not out of the question.

## **Selling the Product**

In the end, the beer industry is truly a business about selling a product. Since craft beer does not use commercials and billboards like the macrobreweries, they must find ways to distinguish themselves quickly and effectively because not everyone is going to go to their website. The major aspect of advertising and fostering their “distinctive, individualistic approaches to connecting with their customers” that The Brewers Association claims is an aspect of the craft beer industry, is through the naming and labeling of their beers (2015). Craft beer names and labels are, for the most part, far more distinctive than those of the macrobrewers.

When looking at a shelf in a liquor store, you will see names like Levity Amber Ale (Odell), Troegator Dobblebock (Troegs), and Slow Ride IPA (New Belgium). These names contrast the macrobrewery names like Coors Light (MillerCoors), Budweiser (Anheuser-Busch), and Natural Light (MillerCoors). Along with these more varied names, the graphics are also more typically more complex and sophisticated. Artists are hired to do the label art for different breweries. Some craft breweries even have a standardized font or style of label so that you know that it is a beer by them, even if you do not recognize the name. These graphic designs tend to be more up front and stand out more than macrobeer labels (Appendix D1). They are more colorful and feature images along with words. Sometimes they include a brief story explaining the beer and the how it came to be. This makes these beers more whimsical and connects with the consumer on a different level.

The naming of the beers is actually one of the hardest parts of the job. There are many trademarks on beer names and there are only so many beer puns that can be made (The Coloradoan 2015). This leads to some breweries opting for more simple names based on the beer style. Stone IPA and Lagunitas IPA are both examples of this. Other beers have random names

and are inspired by other things. The stories on the labels help ground these names and make the consumer feel more connected with the company. It makes them more approachable and more local. Other breweries are more themed, like Yards, Equinox and Pateros Creek. Yards has many beer names related to the American Revolution. Equinox sticks with celestial themed beer names and Pateros Creek has names related to Fort Collins history. Having some sort of distinguishing features, like consistent label art or themed names, helps people recognize the specific breweries within the large craft beer image.

These more elaborate names and label designs play into the culture that the craft beer tries to promote. It is supposed to be less formal and more about the art and social aspect of the beer. By having these names and visual labels, people are able to form images of these breweries in terms of a company beyond just their product even if these images do not have a standard basis. By having more elaborate images and sometimes stories, it is now about how the beer is portraying the company, not just its flavor. This helps to establish the cultural aspect of the brand.

## **Conclusions**

Based off of the websites of craft breweries in addition to their label designs, it can be seen that they are focused on distinguishing themselves from the macrobreweries. There is also a heavy emphasis on what makes them more relatable and connected with their consumers. This helps to make craft beer seem like it is more invested in the people and the experience of drinking their product than their profit margins. It is about the beer, but it is also about a whole culture around the beer. This is a culture that is more fun, creative and innovative than macrobeer. The consumer comes away from these websites thinking that craft beer is about: different flavors, creativity, being invested in the surrounding community (through outreach,

events, and sustainability practices) and creating a social experience. This helps to establish their niche, they are positioned in opposition to macrobreweries even though they do not directly compete with them because of their specific target audiences.

In reference to Saxenian's analysis of Silicon Valley, craft beer is doing a similar thing by creating a different cultural paradigm associated with their product (1996). When you buy a craft beer you are buying into the ideas of community, sustainability, and a beer being about social relations as well as bold, creative flavors. Silicon Valley created a different workplace culture of fluid jobs, fast paced changes, and a willingness to take risks that was not present on Route 128 (Saxenian 1996). This willingness to take risks is what is consistent between Silicon Valley and craft beer. Craft beer is taking risks with the flavors of their beers and risking having flavors that do not match the marketplace. This is not the same type of risk that companies in Silicon Valley are taking. They instead were taking the risk of starting new startup companies (Saxenian 1996). While the risks are not the same, they both are related to the stability and success of a segment of the industry as well as being vital to the new image around the industry. This image is what consumers use to create specialist identities through alliance allowing for the risks to reap the reward of the niche creation.

Macrobeer is very consistent in their flavors and advertisement, relying on familiarity and consistency to make their product desirable. This is not to say that they are not doing things similar to the craft breweries. They too are involved in community activities, albeit their communities are much bigger and not localized as are the communities in which craft beer are involved. Macrobreweries are also involved in sustainability practices and are arguably more successful at these initiatives than some of the smaller craft breweries because their volume of production leads to an increased efficiency. Based off this, craft beer is different than macrobeer,

but it also has similarities that are often ignored in the development of its image. The way a brewery advertises itself is not what fully defines it, it is also about how people interact with the product and for craft beer, with the physical brewery. This more personal relationship with the production of the product is one of the unspoken defining characteristics of craft beer and must also be factored into the equation before the comparison between craft beer and macrobeer can be complete. This is how each portrays themselves but does not address the actuality of these images and relationships in practice.

## **Chapter 2: Observations from the Taproom**

A taproom of a brewery is not a typical bar. It is located within the actually brewing facility, it only serves that brewery's beer and it frequently has fairly limited hours and often closes before nightlife begins. With so many limiting factors, why do people go to these taprooms and what is the appeal of them? They have proven to be a very successful addition to craft breweries and are often times one way that craft breweries have defined themselves as different from the macrobreweries. Craft beer has established itself as not only a product that you purchase, but has also harkened back to the idea of being a neighborhood fixture that is engrained in the place around it. The idea of craft breweries being more situated and connected with place is one that can be explored more closely.

### **The Physical Space**

When going to visit taprooms, there seems to be a formula for the interior aesthetic. This common aesthetic can be seen in both Pennsylvania and in Colorado. The craft beer movement may not be as grounded in their locale, at least in their physical appearance as one might expect based upon how they are often promoted. You could take a taproom in Fort Collins, CO and transplant it to Philadelphia, PA and the design would not be that out of place. This being said, this does not mean that the identity of the individual breweries is not unique and related to their locale. The founding principles of these places and anything from their beer names to their community outreach are what tie them to a location.

The aesthetic formula for a taproom starts with an industrial chic foundation. This includes exposed duct work, bricks and wood in many cases (Appendix D2). This industrial feel speaks to the fact that the buildings are actually working production facilities. Each brewery, to a varying extent, is negotiating the balancing act of being a place to hang out and drink a beer,

while still reflecting that they are a functioning production facility. In most cases this comes out through a refined demonstration of the industrial, having corrugated metal on the bar front (Appendix D1) or a reclaimed wood bar (Odell, Pateros Creek) and leaving the duct work exposed. Of the nine breweries that I visited, seven of them demonstrated this industrial chic look. The two that did not were Pateros Creek Brewing Company and 1933 Brewing Company in Fort Collins. These two breweries are more heavily themed than the others. Pateros Creek is named after the original name of the river that runs through Fort Collins and harkens back on the idea of the Wild West with wood paneled walls, and spurs and other knick-knacks that remind people of the Old West. 1933 Brewing is a prohibition themed brewery being named after the year the 21<sup>st</sup> amendment was ratified and prohibition was repealed. In order to stay in line with this image, the taproom is dimly lit, painted black, with low ceilings. It is meant to be reminiscent of a speak-easy in décor. On the black walls there are white quotations about beer and prohibition.

One aspect of taproom design that is extremely common in breweries, is that they have large windows (or at least some visual entry point) into the brewhouse (the area of the brewery with the tanks and fermenters where the beer is actually made) from the taproom. The placement of these windows varies, but they are all large and typically take up a full wall. In some breweries they are behind the bar, in others they are one of the side walls. These windows are one of the distinguishing features of a brewery taproom that really helps to separate a taproom from being just another bar. It visually connects the customer to the production side, at least through a visual connection. While I was at three of the breweries I noticed the brewer working on a beer, taking temperatures, adding grains, stirring brews, etc. This truly illustrates that these are working production facilities, not just a space to drink.

## **The Social Space**

The layout of the seating in the taproom is another aspect that helps to establish the feeling and environment of the taproom. Most taprooms feature tables that are designed for four to six people. These can accommodate the typical group size that is visiting the brewery. There are also often smaller tables and larger “community” tables. These larger tables are sometimes filled by a single group or by several smaller groups. When smaller groups are occupying they tend to sit at opposite ends of the table. This is a common phenomenon that is seen in restaurants, public places, etc. In Odell’s taproom during a bluegrass event, I watched people filter in and decide where to sit. The larger tables would typically fill in on the ends, and then on occasion people would fill the middle sections. In particular these tended to be individuals since there were no free tables.

The presence of these larger tables has the potential to encourage people to interact beyond their group, but in practice this is not observed as often. This is not to say that people do not extend beyond their groups and interact with other people. While most of the time I noticed people staying insular within their groups, at times there would be the exchange between strangers. I was approached multiple times at breweries for conversation. Not surprisingly, I was only approached when I was by myself or only with one other person, not when I was part of a larger group. Most of my conversations with other patrons of the taprooms were initiated with some comment about the beer (“Have you tried this one yet? It’s pretty good.” “I’m not a fan of this one”). Some of these conversations did not go much further than an exchange of opinion on the beers we were drinking. These interactions often came from other people who were also alone and standing at the bar looking for someone with whom to exchange a quick thought.

A few of these interactions did develop into more substantial conversations. One of these instances was at Philadelphia Brewing Co. I was standing at the bar drinking one of my six tasters while waiting for my tour group number to be called. I was by myself and the bar was full, but not too crowded. It was a standing bar and I had just had a brief exchange of opinions of the beer and brewery with another woman who was also by herself. A little after she left one of the guys standing next to me at the bar turned away from his two friends towards me to toss in his two cents on my latest sample choice. The conversation started off being about the beers we had tried, what we had liked, and then expanded from there. The reason that this conversation extended beyond the quick pleasantries has to do partly with the fact that both of us were familiar with beer terminology and demonstrated this early on in the conversation. The conversation started with Philadelphia Brewing Co.'s beer and our opinions on it. It then transitioned to homebrewing (both of us being homebrewers) then to life more generally (what we both did, what brought us there that day, etc.). This conversation went beyond superficial pleasantries and demonstrated the potential of a taproom to be a connecting ground for like-minded people. This need for beer knowledge is a form of social capital in these spaces. You can meet and engage with strangers, but a knowledge of beer, specifically craft beer, is often times required to extend a conversation beyond just pleasantries. This can limit the market and sense of community for some. It is almost like being part of a club, in order to fully engage with the social space of the brewery you must either demonstrate that you already have a basis of beer knowledge or that you are interested in expanding your beer knowledge. There is a snobbery associated with craft beer.<sup>7</sup> The delicate balancing act of creating a common link for customers

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<sup>7</sup> Anheuser-Busch decided to exploit this contention in craft beer in one of its 2015 Super Bowl commercials. In the commercial they emphasize that they are proud to be a macrobeer and that their beer is for people "who like to

through a love of beer while not making it an exclusive club is one of the many challenges that a brewery faces.

The flows of conversation between people in taprooms often have a fun, relaxing aspect to them. In order to help achieve this balancing act and encourage the “come sit and enjoy a beer and good company” atmosphere is embraced by many taprooms, they have games located within them. These range from the standard bar games, like pool to games from your childhood like Operation or lawn games on a nice day. On a nice summer day at the breweries in Fort Collins you will see most people outside of the taproom on the brewery patios. These become centers of relaxation and fun with people chatting and playing games. Some breweries just have shelves full of board games (Pateros Creek, Equinox). These board games actually get a fair bit of use from a variety of people. You can see young families, with small children, playing a game at their table next to a table of people in their mid-30s playing a game. Some breweries have shuffle board tables, which tend to be fairly popular, others feature darts and foosball. The presence and use of these games have proven effective at getting people to have fun and spend an afternoon at these breweries.

Horse and Dragon Brewing Co in Fort Collins keeps a deck of cards on every table in the taproom. The hope is that it will get people to sit and stay a while and have some fun. When speaking with one of the owner’s, I learned how much she enjoyed the idea of the cards. She said it was definitely an aspect that made the taproom more fun. She had even seen the cards bring different groups together for a round (of both cards and drinks.)

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drink beer” and that it is “brewed for drinking not dissecting.” These are direct criticisms of the pretentiousness that can be associated with craft beer.

## **Taproom Events**

The other time that I interacted with people at a brewery beyond just a quick exchange of beer opinions was during a brewery hosted trivia night. The event was run by “Geeks Who Drink” and was hosted by Pateros Creek Brewing Co. I was there with a friend just to observe the goings-on at a brewery-hosted event and to see how it differed from the typical taproom experience. The brewery was packed with nine different teams of 4-6 people. We were sitting in the far corner just watching when a guy came up to us and asked if we wanted to join his team. There were three of them and they were losing and could use some help. Once we pulled chairs up to their table names were quickly exchanged then the trivia took over. It was a fun time even though we were little help. However, our combined team did not finish last. Between rounds we talked about what people did (they were all either eye doctors or dentists). The rest of the teams there were definitely people who all knew each other. It seemed like many were regulars to these types of events (some teams even had team t-shirts).

Many taprooms put on events weekly in order to attract people and distinguish themselves as a destination. These events range from live music to trivia to knitting nights. The live music events tend to attract a crowd and showcase local musical talent. In Fort Collins it is not uncommon to see a live show at a brewery on a Friday or Saturday night that is featuring a bluegrass band or folk singer. Many times a number of people in the audience are actually friends with the band. It is interesting to see how the mood of the brewery shifts during these events. At Odell’s taproom, it is large and divided into two spaces, so that people filter into the space that suits their needs best. During a bluegrass show the main room had the band playing in one corner and most people there were focused on the band. In the back of the main room and in the side room, people were more focused on their group and the conversations that they were

having. Hosting these types of events prevents people from feeling like they have already “experienced” what the brewery has to offer and do not need to go again. Instead, they make it so that it is an ever-changing experience and the taproom can become a place people frequent like a neighborhood bar.

### **Community Events**

Not all the events that are associated with craft breweries happen within the physical structure of the brewery. Sometimes they take place outside or a single brewery’s walls do not bind them. Specifically, some events are designed to get customers to multiple breweries. One example of this type of event was the 12 Beers of Christmas that occurred in Fort Collins in 2014. Rather than a single event that was situated in a specific time and place, it was a connection of the breweries through a linking theme, in this case a winter beer (this could really be anything). These beers were then advertised together to encourage people to visit the 11 participating breweries. The event was advertised by the Fort Collins Downtown Business Association demonstrating just how embedded the beer industry is in so much of Fort Collins’ economy. There was nothing to this event other than a video of the brewers all singing their version of the 12 Beers of Christmas and flyers identifying the beers and where to find them along with a map.

Other events that expand beyond a brewery’s walls tend to be associated with festivals. These could be: The Colorado Brewer’s Festival or Philadelphia Beer Week. These are events that are not coming directly out of a specific brewery, but are linking many breweries and celebrating the industry. These sorts of events are aligning the individual breweries and creating an environment of celebration and consumption.

One event that is very apparent and that speaks to the fun loving, entertainment aspect of craft beer that was mentioned last chapter is New Belgium's Tour de Fat. The basics of the event are bikes, beer, and general "beermusement" (New Belgium 2015). It is an event that is put on by New Belgium, but expands beyond just encouraging people to drink their beer. This is a large festival that is focused on the role of bike culture. It is centered more around the bike than the beer. People of all ages join in with Tour de Fat because it is first a bike parade and then a music entertainment fest with beer. New Belgium is a leader in sustainability and is very focused on bikes and bike culture and use their appeal to support these types of ventures. This is an established festival in Fort Collins in the summer which further emphasizes beer's role in the city image of Fort Collins.

### **Tours**

This entertainment aspect of craft beer can also be emphasized in the taproom and brewery themselves. Some breweries feel more like a tourist attraction than a neighborhood joint and can almost be theme park-esque. One of these is New Belgium Brewing Co. They are the third largest craft brewery in the country and their original brewery (what they call the Mothership) in Fort Collins has become a city tourist attraction. The interior and the way the brewery is run reflect their popularity as an amusement center more so than as a neighborhood hangout. The interior is brightly colored and whimsically decorated. All the furniture is made from bike tire rims. There is quirky art on the wall that reflects different beer names. When you enter, there is a person checking people into tours (which can be reserved, and at times need to be reserved, two months in advance). Going to New Belgium is an event in itself. The tour even includes a ride down the employee slide. There are also far more employees working at New Belgium's taproom than seen in other breweries. Part of it could be the size of the brewery and

national popularity, which encourages tourism from around the nation. People can also take a self-guided tour of the brewery. This is facilitated by informative signs in one of the hallways behind the taproom that is open to the public. The hall features the “hop lab”, the “forest” (the room with all the foeders for their sour beers) and an entrance to Brewhouse One. The set-up of New Belgium makes it a fun environment, but not one that I would want to frequent. It is more about a show with a beer than a place to sit and enjoy a beer.

Just as beer is composed of four main ingredients, brewery tours are built from several key elements that just vary in the delivery. Tours are formatted around the process of beer making. Using this structure helps to transition people through the space and is at the core of their identity as producers. What differentiates tours is how much detail they go into and what aspects of their company in particular they emphasize. Since the tours are about introducing their brand and company mission to others, there is often a focus placed on the history of the brewery (who founded it, why they did, the company’s humble roots, etc.). This company history is an aspect that is only found in the formal tour setting. The more informal tours are really just focused on how the beer is made and showing people the facility. Despite there being a fairly consistent format to brewery tours some renditions are better than others. Craft beer prides itself in being the little guy who is doing things differently from the macrobrewers. Craft breweries are supposed to be more established in their setting and in a place that is rethinking the relationship between producing and consuming.

This relationship between producing and consuming is a fine balance, showing people what is happening and allowing them to feel more connected to the product. This is how tours can be very helpful, except when they are poorly conducted. At one tour, the guide did not allow for questions and I walked away from the tour questioning what I had actually learned on the

tour other than that he had a cool job because he could drink during it and that was part of his job. This drinking on the job shtick is common on these tours. While it is added on many formal tours, it can leave different impressions. Many tour guides say it once, get the chuckles, and then continue on sharing information with the tour. This shtick becomes a problem when it is the sole focus of the tour and it is repeated on multiple occasions.

Another aspect of a tour that can make or break it is how much the tour participants get to interact with the tour. Being able to ask questions and to feel like you have a say in the direction a tour goes is important. When you get to interact with the production, you become more invested in the product because you have become more intimate with it. When you can ask questions, you are becoming part of the process to an extent. It is a balancing act of incorporating the audience and making it entertaining while still presenting their brand in the specific light they want. The brewery's specific story is one aspect of branding, but there is also an emphasis on what they are doing that is good and how they are unique or at least linked to their place. It is this personal relationship that craft beer works on emphasizing. Another way tour guides connect with the tour is by initiating a toast with the sample of beer given out on the tour. This is an act of communion with strangers united by craft beer; this includes having people share what they are celebrating that day. This links the entire tour despite being strangers.

An aspect of this connection that rarely varies much during tours is the mention of sustainable practices. This is a comment on the industry as a whole since it is commonplace in craft breweries. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the tours also tend to make a point to mention their sustainable actions like the donation of grains. In all of these cases the breweries are transforming a waste product from their product into a productive thing for some aspect of their local community. When Yards speaks about these relationships to tours, they emphasize

that there is no exchange of money in these transactions. These relationships are about supporting the local economy and working with “local, sustainable, small businesses.” It is not just “yay earth”, this is a statement of being the “little guy” that is more relatable than the big breweries.

The statement of being invested in the community around them also comes from where the ingredients for the beer come from. Philadelphia Brewing Co. gets the coffee for their “Not Your Average Joe Porter” from a local coffee roaster. Not only is the coffee from the neighborhood, but the roaster drops the coffee off at the brewery in his station-wagon. It is tidbits like this that get the biggest reaction from the tour. You can see people turning to each other and talking about how cool that aspect of the brewery is. People tend to be more curious about the company, than the process of brewing. When people do ask questions they are about company business practices, logistics, etc.

### **Employees**

The number of employees and what kind of employees you encounter in a taproom helps to shape the experience as well. In many of the smaller breweries, ones that either only distribute to restaurants/bars or only have a small bottling line, there will only be one or two employees working the bar. This does not mean that they are the only employees working that day. The fact that you can see the brewers working and more often than not, and can ask them questions and talk to them helps to transform the taproom experience. You are not only consuming the product at its freshest, you are also seeing the process and being able to engage with the production on a more personal level. While you are not making the beer, you get to know more about it and meet the craftsman behind it. This brings the experience, and subsequent experiences of drinking that beer anywhere, to a more personal level.

The way the bartenders interact with the customers is also a point of interest. At Odell's taproom there are around five people working the bar, two at the register and three at the tap handles filling the orders. They appear to have fun with their job which helps to make the brewery feel more welcoming and like a place to come and stay for a while. During the bluegrass event, the bar staff was all dancing at one point. Many times these bartenders are knowledgeable about craft beer and are more than happy to give suggestions. The engagement of the staff with the customer is very important is shaping a patron's experience. I have found myself to have a preference towards the breweries where I got to learn something about the beer I was tasting and where the staff engaged me to some extent. It was even better when I got a chance to interact with a brewer who just happened to come into the taproom and say hi to people. This sort of action is akin to a chef making rounds at a restaurant. It makes the customer feel appreciated and special.

### **Local Ties- Social Engagement**

Breweries are interacting with their community daily, although this is not always apparent to the consumer. There are sales representatives out trying to get their beer on tap at local bars, there is the donation of spent grains, etc. They also perform more visible acts of community engagement. These come in the form of events as well as daily donations. Different taprooms advertise their community events and their commitment to doing good for the people who support them in different ways. In some cases this is a subtle decoration on the wall that may go unnoticed. Philadelphia Brewing Co. has the giant check from their annual large fundraising event to the side of the bar. Horse and Dragon Brewing Co. has a firefighter's suit hanging from the ceiling of the taproom over a sign explaining their how for every pint of "Fire Captain Irish Red Ale" purchased in the taproom, a dollar goes to the Firefighter Community

Compassion Fund (Appendix D3). They also have a tip jar on the bar that has the name of the charity on it that will be receiving that month's tips since they personally do not accept tips. Places like Odell Brewing Co. have a chalkboard at the entrance of the taproom with the charity (or charities) of the month listed (Appendix D4). Then on the chalkboards above the bar it reiterates that proceeds from flights benefit the charity of the month. Other breweries use photographs from events that they sponsor to help decorate the taproom. New Belgium has some pictures of Tour de Fat on the walls. These fit in with their more amusement park-esque, whimsical aesthetic because these pictures feature people on bikes in wacky costumes. These types of wall décor help to personalize each taproom to its brewery. They also can inform the customer about the company more subtly.

### **Impact of Locale**

When I was sitting and talking to someone at 1933 Brewing Co, he posed an interesting question to me about my research. He wondered had I noticed anything different between craft breweries in Fort Collins and Philadelphia. At first it was easiest to demonstrate the similarities between the places. The aesthetic was the same and to an extent the demographic. Most patrons to these breweries were presumably middle class, white, late 20-40 year olds. There was a slightly older demographic in Fort Collins, with more people in their 40s-50s. At all of the breweries at least one or two families with small children came in while I was there. What I did notice was that in Fort Collins people seemed to be more of regulars, and less likely to be going there as a special outing. This conclusion comes from noticing more people coming alone to the breweries and people drinking only pints. This might come from going to the Philadelphia breweries on weekends, when tours were a big part of why people were there. Along with people being alone in Fort Collins, there was also a larger growler culture of people coming and filling

up their personal growlers (refillable glass jugs) and leaving. The investment of breweries in bike culture is also more embedded in the Fort Collins scene. All breweries have bike racks in front in Fort Collins and they are often a sculpture-esque aspect. The bike is a major focus, from delivering kegs on a bike (Equinox Brewing Co) to giving a bike to every employee after a year (New Belgium).

### **Brewery Communities**

How a brewery defines its community is a complicated question. Craft breweries are often associated with the local movement that is becoming popular in the US, with the rise of farmer's markets, local business appreciation days, etc. Many craft breweries started as one of these local entities that really placed an emphasis on their place. This is still the case for many breweries. (It is not uncommon to find maps labelling a brewery's location on its product packaging.) Often times in these cases, when a brewery sponsors an event, picks a philanthropic entity to donate to, or encourages employees to become involved, it is in the same physical location as the brewery. This is changing though as markets and distribution areas of breweries expand. Craft breweries must make a choice in how they define their community: is it the town they are located in, their distribution network, or something else?

New Belgium Brewing is the third largest craft brewery in the country and has defined their community as their distribution network, which will soon be the entire continental US (New Belgium 2015). Despite their success and expansion, many Fort Collins residents love to claim them as their own. There is a pride aspect of being somewhere else in the country and seeing something that is produced in your town available for purchase. New Belgium is much larger than most craft breweries and therefore does have a slightly different balancing act that they must play when it comes to defining their community. The smaller breweries, still have that local

centric approach to much of what they do. This can be seen in the events they sponsor, the charities they support, and the collaborations and relationships that they forge within a perimeter of their physical locale. These aspects help the consumer see how the brewery defines their larger network and their relationship with the consumer.

Breweries also have to define the culture and community space within the work place. This is one aspect that is actually used at times to help attract customers. Breweries tend to try and create time for employees to interact and feel like they are not just a cog in a production machine. These efforts range from ping-pong tables in the bottling facility to daily beer tastings, to company retreats. These business practices speak to the industry as a whole trying to do something different. The extent to which this is actually different is something that must be evaluated. These aspects can be used as an aspect of branding at times.

### **Conclusions**

The experience in a craft beer taproom is one of the spaces in which the individual breweries can truly cultivate their identity and connection with the customers of their product. These spaces become the proving ground as to whether the community-centric mission statements are being achieved. There are definite efforts by breweries to recreate the idea of the neighborhood brewery that also served as a community center that was akin to the earlier beer scene in the U.S. before it became about consistency on massive scale being what defined the modern and good. The inclusion of the long tables and standing bars can be physical organizations that can influence unplanned interactions, but in practice there are not as many cross group engagements as the image of craft beer might suggest. These interactions depend on a need for beer knowledge to be able to engage which therefore narrows the customer field.

This narrowed customer base is what craft beer has been built upon because it rose out of filling a particular niche in the industry. This homogeneity of the consumers as well as the consumers is similar to the homogeneity that was fundamental to the success of Silicon Valley. Many of the founders of Silicon Valley had a collective identity that allowed them to align their visions and practices within the industry (Saxenian: 1996). This concept of a collective identity also appears in craft beer and helps to strengthen the concept of a craft beer as a meta-organization. Each of the individual breweries has autonomy within the collective, but plays into certain images and business practices.

Along with this outward collective identity for the brewery's relationship to the customer that strays from what the macrobreweries are doing, there are also breaks from how the company interacts with its employees. The idea of a factory, which a brewery is, as a place where employees punch-in, do a repetitive task for eight hours and then punch out every day is not the business practice of craft breweries. Instead, there is a focus of embedding the idea of community beyond the outward connections of the brewery and making sure to facilitate it amongst employees. Silicon Valley's shift in business practices by decentralizing the industry was also reflected in the employee experience where all employees including founders were placed on the same level and informal communications is how ideas spread (Saxenian 1996). While this reconfiguration of office life was a reflection of the fast-paced ever changing corporate structure, it also parallels with the employee practices of craft beer. The ping pong tables on the canning facility, the daily home cooked employee meals, and daily beer tastings are all practices in craft breweries. These are not so much about generating new ideas, but instead about creating happy employees and having that portrayed to the customer since many of these breweries are open to tours. These aspects are not always explicitly said on tours, instead they

are practices that are believed to help make people enjoy their jobs. This helps the image of craft beer, because if the employees like what they are doing, the product becomes more personable and therefore further differentiates itself from the can of macrobrewed American Lager that has no distinguishing characteristics.

Craft beer is able to distinguish itself from macrobeer by promoting both community in their facilities and around their product. The success of this promotion in practice is not as successful as it might be advertised, but it does influence the cultural paradigm of craft beer as a whole. The shift of cultural practices relates to Silicon Valley's shift of culture, but it is different in how this divergence relates beyond the company because it is more a part of why people are buying the beer than why the semiconductors were successful.<sup>8</sup> This takes into account the individual breweries within the craft beer label, but they do not act in isolation. Part of the appeal of craft beer is how the breweries work with one another. This is part of what creates the organizational field and also must be added to the equation.

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<sup>8</sup> There is an interesting article, "Loving the Local" that cites that more craft beer consumers weigh the idea of the local into their beer decisions.

### Chapter 3: Collaboration amongst Craft Breweries

Collaboration between breweries is an important aspect of the craft beer movement. It often manifests itself as multiple brewers working together to come out with a product. The typical process of collaboration for breweries is that different breweries will send their master brewer to work with another brewery's master brewer to create a recipe. Then the brewers will each return to their respective brewery and using their yeast strain, make the beer. This aspect of the craft beer is sometimes referred to as "collabeeration" (New Belgium 2015). This is the most common type of collaboration in craft beer, but not the only type. Breweries also collaborate with other businesses ranging from restaurants to chocolate shops to golf courses to create unique brews.<sup>9</sup> Craft breweries also collaborate with each other not to create a product, but instead to achieve some other goal. This type of collaboration is most often used to establish uniform business practices. In the case of sustainability, it can be used to promote craft beer as a model to other industries.

In all of these types of collaboration it is about all parties bringing something to the table and having a joint product emerging. The product is typically a beer, but it can also be a change in business practices or even a house (I will address how this can happen later.) These types of business principles are important to explore because they help to establish the image of the industry. Earlier I spoke about individual breweries defining them, but they also feed off of each other in order to support the rise of craft beer. By starting off being the little guy against the big macrobeer industry, craft breweries needed to work together to create an identity in order to grow their sector of the market. Now that craft beer has carved out a sufficient market niche, the

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<sup>9</sup> Odell Brewing Company and Dock Street Brewing Company have both collaborated with fish houses near their breweries to create oyster stouts. High Hops Brewing Company collaborated with Pelican Lakes Country Club to create a special, exclusive lager for the country club. Snowbank Brewing Company has worked with Nuance Chocolate in Fort Collins to create a beer using Nuance Chocolate as an ingredient.

image of working together may not be as complementary to individual brewery needs as it was in the beginning. That being said, by being founded on the principle of being a different industry that is not at odds with one another, but working together, has characterized the industry. There are enough, maybe even too many, craft breweries that the economic support that was once needed is becoming a hindrance. This is because customers have latched onto this collaborative, counter to macrobrewery image that defined craft beer in the beginning. Collaboration seems to imply that everyone is friends and that it is not a cutthroat industry. However with the rapid expansion of craft beer in recent years (yes we are still nowhere near the breweries per capita that the US had before prohibition, but the market place then was different and craft breweries were not distributing as far), there is a sense that the marketplace is approaching saturation (The Brewers Association 2014). There is talk throughout the industry that it is no longer we all float together and are chiseling out our sector of the beer market away from the macrobreweries. Instead, competition amongst craft breweries is starting to become apparent, yet there is still this dialogue and practice of collaboration. This disconnect is worth exploring.

### **Brewery-Brewery Collaborations**

Brewery-brewery collaborations are the most common type of collaboration in the craft beer industry and what comes to mind when thinking about collaboration in beer. These collaborative efforts can arise in a variety of ways. Sometimes they are done for a special event in the city. Philadelphia breweries often work to make a collaboration beer for Philadelphia Beer Week. There tends to be only one or two collaboration beers done for the Philadelphia Beer Week. In Fort Collins on the other hand, Fort Collins Beer Week is all about the collaboration beers. The 14 breweries in Fort Collins get together in different combinations of three to four brewers to create 10 unique collaboration brews. Each one is brewed at a different brewery and

then all of them are placed on tap at the same location. In addition to the location with all the collaborative beers, each beer can also be found in the taproom of the brewery where it was brewed (The Coloradoan 2014). This effort highlights the creativity of brew masters learning from each other and getting creative and is really about highlighting the potential of craft beer for an event that is centered on getting craft beer exposure. In the cases of local events done during the American Beer Week, working together allows for a highlight of what craft beer is in hopes to continue to expand its place in the beer market.

Collaboration beers have also been done for other events. Fort Collins breweries have done a collaboration beer as a fundraiser for Habitat for Humanity. It was called “The House that Beer Built” and involved eight local breweries. They worked together to make a beer that was then on tap in each of their taprooms. The profits from the kegs of the collaboration were then donated to help build a house through Habitat for Humanity for a family that had lost their home during the High Park Fire that burned just outside of Fort Collins in the summer of 2012 (The Coloradoan 2012). This specific instance of collaboration brought the breweries together for an event beyond their usual concerns. It was not about being at odds against each other or about the creativity and knowledge exchange between brewers. Instead, it was about a family that had been devastated and showing that these breweries believe in the community around them and will support them. This does help their image as the neighborhood place and it also helps to emphasize their role and importance in the community as some of their market places continue to expand outside of Fort Collins.

Events are a good venue for breweries to collaborate, but are not the only reason that breweries work together. Local breweries will collaborate with each other in other ways sometimes. These types of collaboration are sometimes due to personal relationships as well as

being more strategic in intent. There appears to be a network of friendship amongst many brewers. In Fort Collins, Equinox Brewing Co. made their Friendship Test Session Ale for a fellow brewer's wedding. It was made with the brewer of CB & Potts who was getting married, his brother, and an Equinox brewer. They describe this beer on their website as a "best man brew." In this instance, the collaboration was not about people outside who would be drinking the beer in the taproom; instead it was about friendship and celebrating a wedding of a friend.

This is not the only instance of this type of brewing as friends. Tired Hands Brewing Co. in Ardmore, PA has made a very interesting beer with their "good friend and 'fellow brewer from a Delaware brewery,' Ben Potts." Ben Potts is the owner and head brewer at Dogfish Head Brewing Co. a well-known brewery around the country that they nonchalantly mention. The way they made this beer really encapsulates Jean Broillet IV's sentiment of the craft beer industry changing for the worse. On his blog, in response to Tired Hands being sued by another brewery over the name of one of their beers he wrote: "As an industry, we are heading down a gnarled and paranoiac path that will only serve to isolate our customers by truncating the creativity of fellow beer producers; effectively losing sight of what made this industry so great when I entered into it nearly a decade ago... Collaboration, camaraderie, and a sense of infinite exploration" (2014). His collaboration beer with his friend at Dogfish Head truly embodied the last part of his statement. They used a game in order to randomly pick their ingredients. This led to an interesting one time beer in the taproom of Tired Hands.

While Broillet expresses fear that the industry is becoming too competitive, other breweries are still embodying the sentiment of collaboration. Sometimes collaboration brews are done in order to expand a breweries market. By teaming up with another brewery their name will be exposed to another set of consumers that might not usually see their name. This happens both

locally and nationally. The local collaborations can be larger, well established breweries helping a smaller, newer brewery carve out its brand in a rapidly growing market. The choice of these collaborations is a strategic one. There is a fear among owners of breweries that with the rapid expansion of the craft beer producers there could be a decline in product quality. Not every brewery makes good beer. This makes the choice of collaboration more strategic when it is between large and small breweries. There is definitely a choice being made about who you want to align your brand with. This does add more of the business, competitive side into the craft beer industry, while still allowing for the “we float together” sentiment to come through.

That alignment of the larger and smaller breweries can come from more personal relationships has been seen in many of the previous examples. This support from another brewery can come in the form of a beer or other entities. The brewer community tends to work closely with one another and can have flow between breweries, in the form of changing jobs. This exchange of brewers can be a positive or negative, depending on the situation. Sometimes brewers leave larger more established breweries to start their own breweries or to become master brewers in a different brewery. This type of relationship can lead to continued collaboration if the separation was made on good terms. The master brewer at Horse and Dragon formally worked at Odell and has maintained great relations with them. They have done collaboration beers together, which has brought more attention to Horse and Dragon because they are being exposed to Odell’s market in the taproom. They have also depended on Odell when they ran out of a grain. Despite some concern of craft beer becoming cutthroat, these two breweries have demonstrated the willingness to help each other out in a bind. Horse and Dragon was able to call up Odell and get the grain they needed to make their beer and not fall behind schedule.

Other local collaborations happen out of mutual respect. Instead of getting one brewery more exposure by being linked up with a brewery with a different marketplace, it is about demonstrating civility within the industry. New Belgium and Odell are two powerhouse craft breweries in Fort Collins. They opened around the same time and are located only a few blocks from each other. Just last year, they worked together to release FOCollaboration. This beer was bottled and distributed across the country (I even found it in a grocery store in Oregon.) When interviewed for an article about this beer, co-founder of New Belgium, Kim Jordan said, “*FOCollaboration* celebrates that camaraderie and the mutual respect of being a couple of brewers who grew up together in the same neighborhood” (The Coloradoan 2014). This idea of camaraderie is something that is definitely present amongst brewers. The fact that this beer was distributed across the country speaks to both Odell and New Belgium working to further the viewpoint that craft beer is a friendly industry. Whether or not there is underlying competition between breweries is not the point, instead it is about establishing at the very least an image of camaraderie. This image can be genuine at times and is part of the tension in the industry. Breweries can have employees who are friends and want to see each other succeed, but as more breweries start to compete for the same sized slice of the market it gets more difficult for each brewery to succeed.

This close relationship and support is not always the case though. Some separations between breweries cause rifts. The idea of collaboration can also be viewed as more of a formality that is done for special events in order to fit into the prescriptive craft beer image. This is the side of craft beer that views it much more as a business that is competitive and only the best breweries will survive. In this viewpoint, it is all about promoting your brewery. Craft beer has been framed as an alternative to the macrobreweries, but that framework is not as prevalent

now. Instead of it being a David and Goliath story, it is now changing to having craft breweries competing against each other. When asked about who he considered the biggest competition, one brewery owner responded, “Our biggest competition is the brewery down the street. We are all competing for the same tap handles and shelf space.” This reflects the changing business of craft beer. Another brewery owner expressed how there is a disconnect on feelings towards collaboration between brewers and the sales team. The brewers tend to be all for working together and learning from each other, while the sales team tends “to hold their cards much tighter.” This has to do with the sales team being the ones actually facing the competition when trying to get their product carried over the other brewery’s product because there are only so many tap handles in bars and so much shelf space in liquor stores.

### **National Collaboration**

Collaborations do not only happen between breweries in the same geographic location. They can happen between breweries across the nation from each other. These collaborations are not only a learning opportunity for the brewers, they are also great opportunities for brand expansion. These types of collaboration can be bottled or only available by the keg. The way these collaborations happen is somewhat organic. Sometimes a specific brewery will reach out to another one, sometimes they are friends, sometimes they come from visiting each other. The network of brewer knowledge crosses the nation and abroad. Brewers are always visiting other breweries to get ideas, see what other people are doing and to talk with each other. A map in the taproom of Horse and Dragon Brewery helps to illustrate this. There is a map on the wall that shows where Horse and Dragon has visited, where other brewers have visited from and where Horse and Dragon merchandise has been spotted. While each dot on this map does not

necessarily imply collaboration, it does show the extent of knowledge exchange and connectedness of the industry.

The connectedness of the craft beer industry is not always as informal as visiting each other's breweries. Sometimes it goes beyond the friendly competition and involves lawsuits. The competition between craft breweries goes beyond just getting a tap handle in a local bar, it can become apparent between breweries that do not even distribute in the same area. These lawsuits tend to be about the name of a beer and happen over trademark infringement, specifically over beer names. This makes naming beer more and more difficult as more and more breweries appear. Not all breweries are latching on to this lawsuit bandwagon. Some are even working against it (The Coloradoan 2015).

Two breweries, Avery Brewing Co. and Russian River Brewing Co. both independently released a Belgian ale named Salvation. Instead of going down the litigation route, they decided to embrace the camaraderie that craft beer so frequently tries to promote. This led to the creation of the Collaboration, not Litigation Ale. They both decided to find a way to combine both of their Salvation beers into a new beer. This dialogue of collaboration reflects how the industry is changing and the image that is often projected by breweries may not in fact be the core of the industry.

### **International Collaboration**

While the industry as a whole may becoming more cautious about collaboration, individual brewers are all about the working together, getting creative and bouncing ideas off of each other. A lot of collaborations come from brewers traveling and visiting other breweries to see what they are doing. Then, sometimes a collaboration beer is brewed at both sites. These brews can span oceans at times. When I was in Argentina, I went to a craft brewery, Antares, in

Buenos Aires and found on tap IPA Odell. This beer came from Doug Odell, one of the owners of Odell Brewing, travelling down to Argentina and brewing with the brewers at Antares. This was after they had spent a few weeks in Fort Collins learning from Odell's how to use the new system that they had just purchased. Odell's has also done collaborations with breweries in England and Brazil. New Belgium has a beer named "Transatlantique Kriek" because it is a collaboration that spans the Atlantic Ocean. It is a kriek style sour made in cahoots with Breweryj Boon of Belgium. As the name implies, this is a beer that actually navigates across the Atlantic.

### **Brewery/Local Business Collaboration**

While breweries may not be as supportive of every other craft brewery in the country as the image of "we all float together" might suggest, many forms of collaboration are still benefiting more than just the beer industry. Some collaboration expands beyond the confines of brewery walls and into other businesses. These tend to be other local businesses that approach a brewery with an idea for a beer or an event that they would like a special beer for. These types of businesses range from fish restaurants wanting a special oyster stout (Both Dock Street in Philadelphia and Odell in Fort Collins have done oyster stouts in conjunction with a local fish house.<sup>10</sup>) These types of collaboration set up a challenge for the brewer and show the overlap between industries. This overlap can also be done in conjunction with other small, local businesses. Breweries have collaborated with teahouses, chocolate shops, etc. These beers tend to only be released in the taproom, but highlight the fact that a main flavor ingredient came from a specific business.

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<sup>10</sup> In addition to collaborating with the restaurant to make the oyster stout, the brewer also asked a brewer at Yards Brewing for advice because he had never made an oyster stout and the Yards brewer had. There is definitely a network of brewers who tend to be the more collaborative employees in the industry.

## **Business Collaboration**

As mentioned before, not all types of collaboration have to end with a beer. Sometimes they are collaborations between breweries in regards to business practices. This type of collaboration is truly about finding a way to make fast growing beer industry be productive, not harmful growth in their locales. A great example of this is the formation of BreWater in Fort Collins, CO.

BreWater is a coalition started by Odell Brewing in conjunction with several other Fort Collins breweries to discuss water conservation. This group exchanges businesses practices and looks for ways to work together in order to lessen the beer industries impact on water in Northern Colorado. It is easier for larger breweries to lower their water consumption per barrel than a smaller brewery because of the increase in volume. Through BreWater, both small and larger craft breweries are working together to see how they can all lower their water consumption. This technical aspect is not the only aspect of water that BreWater discusses, they also work together to leverage other water related changes in Colorado by using their business prominence (The Coloradoan 2015). This type of collaboration is about lessening their negative environmental impact in order to have a positive community impact. This is an aspect of the craft beer industry that people are proud of and is actually effective and is about more than just image. By working together, these breweries are having a noticeable impact on the community surrounding them.

Collaboration is one of the ways that breweries both work together and focus on the informal learning of brewers, as well as promoting other businesses and the local community. The reasoning behind it is not always the most important aspect of it. The fact that it is present is what is interesting. There is a complex foundation and under current to collaboration in the craft

beer industry, yet it still demonstrates an informal knowledge exchange and a type of alliance between certain breweries.

### **Conclusions**

Based off of the last two chapters we have concluded that craft beer boosts community, involvement and innovation as major separating factors from the macrobreweries. In practice these aspects of craft beer help to separate craft beer from macrobeer to an extent, but not as much as it is branded. Part of this is because of craft beer being the meta-organization and the individual breweries acting within this larger decentralized framework that can be akin to a large conglomerate decentralizing. This is the organizational field in which craft beer operates. There is no central command of craft beer, but decisions are made by individuals that reflect on craft beer as a whole, interlinking breweries across the country. This linking is integral to the image of craft beer as a defiant industry in relation to macrobeer because they are able to work together.

The role of collaboration and competition amongst these breweries is more nuanced than the story is normally portrayed. There is definitely a sense of “we all float together” because that is what strengthens the image of craft beer as a whole, but in the end all the individual breweries are fighting for their own survival and making calculated decisions about collaboration in order to protect their best interests. Saxenian points out that “In Silicon Valley industrial fragmentation did not lead to competitive vulnerability or economic weakness. In fact, it appears to have contributed to the flexibility and resilience of the industrial fabric” (Saxenian 1996). The beer industry as a whole has varying levels of fragmentation. Anheuser-Busch owns the agricultural operations that provide their base ingredients while MillerCoors partners with agricultural operations to buy its grains and hops. Rogue Brewing Company in Oregon is a craft beer

company that emphasizes the hyper-local and is starting to convert to an all in-house operation, meaning that they are growing their own grains and hops.

While the beer industry does not fit in with Saxenian's attribution of industrial fragmentation leading to a stronger industrial fabric, the decentralization and the unique identities of individual breweries helps to strengthen their position in the market. It is necessary for them to work with each other even if it is a calculated business decision because working together expands exposure as well as leads to the rise of different flavor profiles. In both Silicon Valley and craft beer the balance between competition and collaboration is what helps to strengthen the industry, but it also is a very calculated relationship. When it comes down to it, every individual company is looking out for its bottom line and not everyone in the industry is friends. The brewers are more willing to engage in the knowledge exchange while the business side is more focused on keeping their exposure and flavors more successful than the other breweries.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

Craft beer has poised itself as being the rebel of the beer industry, capitalizing on the niche of creating more complex flavors. This desire for more complex flavors by consumers also comes with the fact that these consumers are willing to pay a higher premium for these beers. This has allowed for smaller breweries to be able to become established and not be in direct price competition with the macrobreweries. Instead, there is a separate market in which craft beer is situated. While they are different from the macrobreweries because of the size of operations and the flavor profiles, there are definite similarities. The image as the counterculture of beer is more complex in practice than what is nominally said about craft beer versus macrobeer.

Based off the evidence in the prior chapters, we have seen that craft beer websites and labels are about demonstrating the uniqueness of an individual brewery within the framework of craft beer as a meta-organization. In order for craft beer to tap into the niche of these more expensive, versatile beers, it also needed to appeal to other aspects of difference from the macrobreweries. It is not just about having different flavors, but making the idea of a beer more personable and capable of being a distinguishing marker. Craft beer is as much about the identity of the individual breweries as it is of the consumer. Using beer taste as a way of defining an identity is what has led to an overarching concept of craft beer with different twists being implemented on the individual brewery level. The consumer allows for this to happen through performative branding. Since the consumers are using craft beer as an identity creator, they are helping to shape the general image of craft beer as a whole.

By creating a framework that depends on uniqueness, or at least an appearance of uniqueness, on the individual company level, craft beer has been able to allow for a larger scope of inclusion. Unlike Silicon Valley, there is not a dependence on a regionalism for success

(Saxenian 1996:161). Saxenian attributes much of Silicon Valley's success to its regional networks which allowed for learning and experimentation to span beyond individual firms (Saxenian 1996:161). Craft beer has also been successful because of its experimentation and collaboration between individual breweries, but that is not attributed to being in regional proximity. Instead, it is due to a decentralized connecting factor through the image of craft beer. The regional advantage of Silicon Valley had to do with allowing for different companies to manufacture different parts making it so that individual firms could be using the newest technology for more aspects because they did not need to be doing everything. Individual firms were responsible for staying up to date and using the state of the art technology for their aspect of the semiconductor industry. This allowed for the semiconductor industry in Silicon Valley as a whole to be functioning at a more technologically savvy level than firms that were trying to do everything themselves on Route 128 (Saxenian 1996).

While breweries are not reliant on other firms in the way Silicon Valley firms are, there is an importance of collaboration and competition present that has contributed to the success of craft beer. The collaboration is not as much about the building blocks of the product, but instead about the commodification of the identity of craft beer. By working together, these breweries are able to keep innovating and creating more nuanced flavor profiles. In addition to this knowledge exchange in relation to the physical product, collaboration contributes to the identity that consumers are willing to pay a premium for and therefore become the "community" on which craft beer's image relies. By drinking a craft beer over a macrobeer, you are making a statement about preferring an industry that works together and is about fun and personal relations with the product, and between the creator and consumer. This identity statement is what craft beer networks have used to solidify their position and what has allowed this aspect to not be confined

by regionalism as it was in Silicon Valley. It is the idea and images of craft beer that are the backbone, not physical pieces.

Like most aspects of this investigation, the role of the physical proximity of breweries to one another, or lack thereof, is not as straight forward as it seems. While there are collaborative efforts across the country and craft beer is not confined to a region, physical proximity of breweries does play into things. Fort Collins has a much higher concentration of craft breweries than Philadelphia. This fact actually does influence how breweries interact and succeed. In Fort Collins there is much more collaboration between breweries, including informal ones that are inspired by friendships. The close proximity of these breweries helps with the logistics of the actual collaboration. There also is more awareness of craft beer in Fort Collins in general because the city is trying to integrate it into the city image. This means that there are more tap handles and shelf-space for craft beer leading to less of an emphasis on collaboration as a formality in order to fit the craft beer mold.

The biggest take away from all of this is that craft beer may not be as different an industry from the macrobreweries as they like to portray themselves. While each craft brewery is an individual actor, there is still an unspoken overarching link between the meta-organization that is dictated by the organizational field. This leads to business practices being different, but there is still a focus on being a successful business. The focus of craft breweries being like a neighborhood brewery that can function as a community center is achieved in some cases, but there is a certain level of beer knowledge required in order to access that community space. The largest similarity between macrobreweries and craft breweries is that they are both doing some sort of philanthropic venture and working towards making their process more environmentally sustainable. It is the outward projection of these practices that differentiate the two.

Craft beer may advertise itself as being the counterculture beer that is more creative and nuanced in flavor than the macro-lager, but just like their flavors, the implementation of their image is more nuanced. Many craft breweries are very similar and play into a similar aesthetic and dialogue. Craft beer then becomes about becoming individual enough to create a product that will make a customer feel unique and connected with their product while still fitting into a craft beer mold. In addition to this the heavy emphasis of craft beer on community is not always seen in practice. There are efforts within taprooms to foster community, but the starting market place is already narrow and requires certain demonstrations of capital to even have access to these spaces. This can especially be seen when breweries rely on people from outside neighborhoods frequenting their brewery more than the local people.

This is not to say that there is nothing good coming out of this community focus. Many breweries are doing something, whether it is in-kind donations, monetary donations, or employee time, there is a focus on integrating working for their customer and surroundings that might not be as big of a focus elsewhere. This is where being individual actors helps, breweries are able to instill this culture of involvement in all their employees because they are almost all having daily interactions with each other. Cross brewery collaboration might also be calculated for a benefit, but it does also still occur and provides the consumer with more flavor options because in the end craft beer is all about having choices and personal preferences. Whether it is picking out the subtle nuances of a specific hop in an IPA or deciding what card game to play, each craft brewery depends on consumers being open to trying different flavors and wanting different enough experiences in a taproom so that they feel unique, but it is still familiar.

## Appendices

### A: Recruitment Email

Dear (insert contact here),

My name is Alison Koziol and I am a senior Sociology/Anthropology major conducting research for my senior thesis at Swarthmore College. I am interested in the role that community has played in the craft beer movement and how it is included in the brewery itself. I would love to interview you and learn more about what led to the founding of the brewery, what you find essential to the brewery, what is unique about craft beer, anything you find interesting and want to share with me. The interview would be confidential and take about an hour. I look forward to hearing back from you. If you have any questions about my research, please feel free to ask.

Thanks,  
Alison Koziol

### B: Interview Questions for Employees

How long have you been working here?  
 What brought you to this particular brewery? (If owner, why did you decide to start a brewery?)  
 What was the inspiration for x (event, game table, etc.)?  
 What is your vision for your taproom?  
 What appeals to you about craft beer?  
 How often do you interact with other craft breweries?  
 What do you see as the difference between craft beer and macrobeer?  
 What makes you unique?  
 How do you attract new customers?  
 What is your favorite aspect of craft beer?  
 Is there anything I should know about your brewery in particular?  
 Do you see variations in your clientele on different days?  
 How do you see your interactions with other breweries?  
     Do you often talk with them, work with them?  
 How do you relate to the community around your brewery?  
     Do you have special events?  
 Craft beer seems to have a large focus on relations and community as a whole. What does your brewery do to promote community?

### C: Written Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study about community and craft beer. The goal of this research study is to understand how community and craft beer relate to one another.

This study is being conducted by Alison Koziol, an undergraduate student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Swarthmore College in PA. It will be the core of my senior thesis, which is a requirement for my major.

There is one qualification to participate in this study: You must be at least 18 years old and work for a brewery.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to participate in this study, you would be letting the researcher interview you. You may choose not to answer any questions, and you may discontinue participation at any time.

The interview should take about one hour.

I do not anticipate any risks or benefits as a result of this study, but it is helping me to complete my work in college.

The information you will share with me if you participate in this study will be kept confidential. Your information will be assigned a code number that is unique to this study. No one will be able to see your interview or my observations of your activities in the taproom.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at the following email address, [akoziol1@swarthmore.edu](mailto:akoziol1@swarthmore.edu), or the Chair of my department at university Professor Willie-LeBreton, Sociology and Anthropology, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore PA, USA <[swillie1@swarthmore.edu](mailto:swillie1@swarthmore.edu)>.

By signing below, you are certifying that you are at least 18 years old and agree to be interviewed.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Agreement to be Audio-Recorded:

I would like to record this interview. I will store the recording in a password-protected file on my computer and I will destroy the file when my research is complete. If you do not agree to be recorded, I will simply write notes. By signing below, you are agreeing to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## D: Images

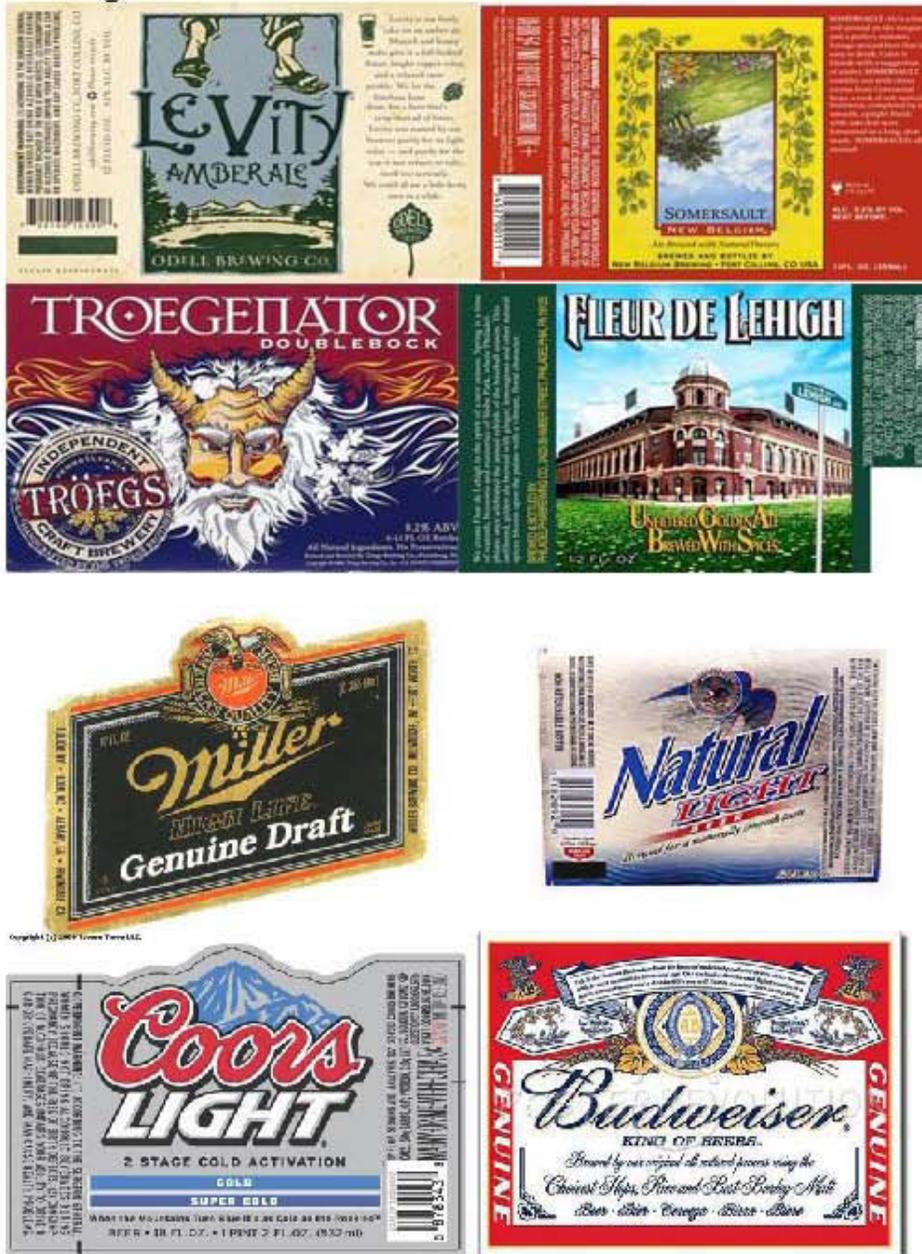


Figure 1: Craft beer bottle label designs (top) in comparison with macrobrewery beer bottle labels (bottom).



**Odell Brewing Company  
Fort Collins, CO**



**Horse and Dragon Brewing Company  
Fort Collins, CO**

**Figure 2:** The taprooms at Odell Brewing Company and Horse and Dragon Brewing Company in Fort Collins, CO.



**Figure 3:** Fire suit hanging from ceiling of Horse and Dragon Brewing Company in honor of fundraiser beer for the Firefighter Community Compassion Fund.



**Odell Brewing Company  
Fort Collins, CO**

**Figure 4:** Chalkboard at entrance of Odell Brewing Company stating who the charities of the month are and where the profits from all flights purchased in the taproom go.

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