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Omnivorous Masculinity: Gender Capital and Cultural Legitimacy in Craft Beer Culture

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Abstract

Peterson's "omnivore-univore" hypothesis has stimulated a lively debate among cultural sociologists, but the effect of omnivorousness upon gender inequality remains underexplored. By analyzing the gendered valuation of beer types in craft beer blogs and in open-ended surveys with 93 craft beer bar patrons, this article demonstrates that a shift toward omnivorousness does not necessarily reflect a shift toward progressive gender ideology. These findings indicate that the same ideological conflation between femininity and illegitimacy that dominates the univorous American mainstream beer culture has been reproduced—albeit repackaged—within the American craft beer culture. Men are free to consume a range of beer types without consequence within the confines of the omnivorous craft beer culture, but women remain subjected to gendered judgment depending upon their beer preference. This imbalance signifies the emergence of a "hybrid masculinity" within the omnivorous craft beer scene that superficially signifies gender-blindness while ultimately maintaining the patriarchal status quo. These findings contribute towards the sociology of gender and the sociology of consumption by demonstrating the gender contingencies of cultural capital accrual that reinforce women's subordination.

Keywords

omnivore, hegemonic masculinity, hybrid masculinity, femininity, cultural capital, gender capital, craft beer, alcohol

Introduction

For over a century, sociologists have theorized the relationship between social status and consumption. According to Thorstein Veblen (1899) and Pierre Bourdieu (1984), individuals cultivate status or "cultural capital" through the conspicuous consumption of highbrow goods. However, according to another school of thought, this "snob" value system has been recently replaced by a value system that privileges omnivorousness, loosely defined as an ability to appreciate quality highbrow and lowbrow goods (Peterson and Kern 1996; Peterson and Simkus 1992). Indeed, this cultural shift toward omnivorousness has been documented across North America, Australia, and Europe, stimulating a lively debate among cultural sociologists about its social implications (Bryson 1996; DiMaggio 1996;

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DiMaggio and Mukhtar 2004; Emmison 2003; Holt 1997; López-Sintas and Katz-Gerro 2005; Peterson 1997, 2005; Peterson and Kern 1996; Peterson and Simkus 1992; Warde, Wright, and Gayo-Cal 2007). Racial and class inequalities feature routinely within this academic discourse, but gender inequality remains underexamined (Bihagen and Katz-Gerro 2000; Christin 2012; DiMaggio 2004; Lizardo 2006; Ruby and Heine 2011; Sherman 2011; Sparke 1995; Sullivan and Katz-Gerro 2006). Due to this oversight in the literature, it remains unclear whether the genders have equal access to cultural legitimation through omnivorous practices. The present investigation fills this gap in the literature by exploring how omnivorous experimentation affects not only consumers' cultural capital and perceived cultural legitimacy but also their masculinity/femininity status—or what Tristan Bridges (2009) called their "gender capital." By analyzing both of these forms of capital in tandem, this study is able to illuminate the gender contingencies of cultural capital that ultimately reinforce gender inequality within omnivorous culture. This project advances research on gender inequality, by demonstrating how even seemingly progressive cultural value systems preserve the status quo.

For the purpose of this study, I turn to beer culture in the United States, which is dually comprised of a largely univorous mainstream beer culture—that is dominated by the consumption of Industrial American Lager (IAL; for example, Pabst Blue Ribbon, Budweiser, Miller, and Coors)—and a relatively omnivorous craft beer subculture. Much has been written about the valorization of masculinity within the mainstream beer culture, but relatively little has been written about gendered value systems in the exponentially growing craft beer subculture (for exceptions, see Darwin 2017; Maciel 2017; Withers 2017). This oversight is problematic, given women's minority status within craft beer culture; though estimation varies, women comprise only one quarter to one third of craft beer consumers in the United States (Press Release 2014; Southern 2017). Do these women contend with the same gendered value system that notoriously dominates the univorous mainstream beer culture, one that privileges all things masculine? Or does this omnivorous craft beer subculture provide an alternative ideology to the mainstream beer culture, one that is more egalitarian?

To explore these research questions, I focus on the relationship between a beer's perceived gendering and the beer's—and the drinker's—perceived cultural legitimacy. I structure this investigation into three parts: first, I review the literature on gender and beer culture; next, I conduct a preliminary content analysis of gendered beer rhetoric on the Internet to determine whether certain beer types are considered more masculine or feminine, or more culturally legitimate or illegitimate, than others; finally, I test the external validity of these findings by conducting open-ended surveys with 93 craft beer bar patrons themselves. My findings reveal the gendered value system that reinforces women's subordination within omnivorous culture. In this case study, beers that are considered masculine are of higher cultural value than those that are considered feminine. However, men can legitimate their consumption of any beer type, be it masculine or feminine, through invocations of risk-taking and experimentation—traits which are consistent with cultural scripts of "doing masculinity" and of omnivorous consumption (West and Zimmerman 1987). As a result of this asymmetrical gendered value system, any beer can become the "right beer" when men are the consumers; meanwhile, it remains incumbent upon women to prove their cultural legitimacy through the exclusive consumption of masculinized/highbrow products. These findings make two important contributions to the sociology of gender and culture, by (1) illuminating the gendered contingencies of cultural capital accrual and (2) demonstrating how omnivorous consumption functions as a mark of social privilege.

Cultural Capital and Gender Capital

When a self-identified "beer geek" places an order in a craft beer bar, that individual engages in conspicuous consumption, understood by Veblen (1899) as a process through which individuals demonstrate and maintain social hierarchy. Bourdieu (1990) later advanced Veblen's

theory by specifying that practices are valued differently, depending upon the class backgrounds (habitus) of members within that cultural field. For instance, an order for Budweiser in a "dive bar" may establish the drinker as a legitimate member of that culture, but the same order in a craft beer bar may signify illegitimacy to fellow patrons. To give an impression of cultural legitimacy, one must order the right beer, in the right space and in the right context. By thus demonstrating one's knowledge of the given culture's values, a person cultivates a type of social status that Bourdieu (1984) called "cultural capital."

Significantly, the assignation of cultural capital is neither natural nor inevitable, but rather systematically structured in favor of the dominant party in that culture. Within the context of a patriarchal society, this process of legitimation oftentimes benefits men. As Bourdieu explained:

> The paradox of the imposition of legitimacy is that it makes it impossible ever to determine whether the dominant feature appears as distinguished or noble because it is dominant . . . or whether it is only because it is dominant that it appears as endowed with these qualities. (Bourdieu 1984:92)

Thus, theoretically, beer that is considered "masculine" may carry higher cultural capital, not because it is objectively superior, but because men are culturally dominant. According to this paradox, IALs such as Budweiser are not necessarily popular due to their quality but rather due to their symbolic association with a dominant expression of masculinity that Raewyn Connell (1987) termed "hegemonic masculinity."

"Hegemonic masculinity" is a configuration of gender that ensures the subordination of women and of those men who fail to distance themselves from the feminine or homosexual "other" (Connell 1987, 1995). Within the context of this gender value system, consumption practices that are the least associated with femininity/homosexuality confer the highest gender capital (and therefore status) upon men and vice versa. Through these practices, people "do gender" (West and Zimmerman 1987). Men can also "do masculinity" through an appropriative form of hegemonic masculinity called "hybrid masculinity" (Arxer 2011; Bridges 2009; Bridges and Pascoe 2014; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Demetriou 2001; Messner 2007). This process of appropriating (and masculinizing) practices that have been deemed gay or feminine protects men against losing their masculinity status, or what Bridges (2009) called their "gender capital."

Bridges's (2009) notion of "gender capital" is central to this cultural analysis because it concisely translates the gendered power dynamics of hegemonic masculinity into a Bourdieusian framework. Indeed, Bridges (2009:84) proposed his understanding of gender capital in such terms:

> Gender capital is the value afforded contextually relevant presentations of gendered selves. It is interactionally defined and negotiated. Thus, gender capital—similar to both cultural capital and hegemonic masculinity—is in a state of continuous (though often subtle) transformation.

This reformulation of hegemonic masculinity into a capital metric creates exciting possibilities for cultural sociologists. By analyzing cultural and gender capital fluctuations jointly, sociologists can possibly identify cultural arenas that require one gender—but not the other—to sacrifice one form of capital in exchange for the other. This type of hybrid analysis has the potential to illuminate how gender inequality is maintained within cultures that superficially seem gender-blind.

One field that would benefit from more nuanced gendered analysis includes omnivorous cultures. Research on omnivorous cultures has been on the rise since Peterson (1992) proposed his hypothesis that Bourdieu's highbrow snob has been replaced by the highbrow omnivore. Peterson based this assertion off of his findings that members of the middle and upper class who consumed highbrow music such as classical also tended to listen to lowbrow music such as pop. Numerous studies have since confirmed and nuanced Peterson's hypothesis, generally focusing on music and food preferences (Bryson 1996; DiMaggio 1996; DiMaggio and Mukhtar 2004; Emmison

2003; Holt 1997; López-Sintas and Katz-Gerro 2005; Peterson 1997, 2005; Peterson and Kern 1996; Peterson and Simkus 1992; Warde et al. 2007). Although music literature tends to omit gender from analysis, foodie literature acknowledges that seemingly omnivorous consumers tend to award lower cultural capital to feminized cuisines such as vegetarian entrees and desserts, favoring masculinized cuisines that feature meat (Browarnik 2012; Nath 2011; Vartanian 2015). These studies indicate that masculinized consumption practices facilitate higher cultural capital accrual within omnivorous cultural fields; however, they do not explore whether men and women enjoy equal access to this cultural capital. Therefore, the present study expands this extant omnivorous literature by identifying how gendered value systems in omnivorous culture disproportionately facilitate men's accrual of cultural capital, effectively reinforcing hegemonic masculinity and maintaining gender inequality.

The Masculinization of Beer

Foodie literature has illuminated the gendered valuation of certain food types, but research on the gendering of alcohol has remained relatively limited, with one exception: the research corpus that declares beer a masculine product. Indeed, numerous studies have documented how men negotiate their masculinity status through beer consumption within the contexts of pub culture and sports culture alike (Campbell 2000; Campbell, Law, and Honeyfield 1999; Gough and Edwards 1998; Kirkby 2003; Mager 2005, 2010; Rowe and Gilmour 2009; Strate 1992). In addition, others have argued that beer consumption is central to homosocial bonding among men, a key component of "doing masculinity" (de Visser and Smith 2007a, 2007b; Eriksen 1999; McCracken 1993; Measham 2002; Thurnell-Read 2012; Wenner and Jackson 2009; West and Zimmerman 1987). This research corpus on beer and masculinity is truly expansive, but its limitations are twofold: these resounding conclusions that beer is masculine tend to reduce beer to lager; and by extension, this body of literature tends to restrict cultural analysis of beer to the mainstream beer culture, which is largely homosocial and univorous (for exceptions, see Chapman, Lellock, and Lippard 2017; Darwin 2017; Thurnell-Read 2013, 2016).

Undeniably, lager consumption and the cultures surrounding it have been explicitly masculinized within the United States. Following American Prohibition, beer became the masculinized alternative to the feminized cocktail (Mosher 2009). During the interwar years, beer advertisements reinforced this masculinization process by constructing women as the enablers of men's beer consumption, but rarely as consumers in their own right (Corzine 2010). Advertisers more explicitly masculinized the product during World War II, constructing it as a domestic comfort for which soldiers risked their lives (Corzine 2010). Veterans' subsequent high demand for beer propelled the development of IAL and the "Big Three" beer companies (Miller, Coors, Anheuser-Busch) that continue to dominate the contemporary mainstream beer market (Mosher 2009). This cheap lager has become an integral component of a "holy trinity" of alcohol, sports, and hegemonic masculinity within mainstream culture (Wenner and Jackson 2009).

For several decades, these homogeneous lagers dominated the American beer scene; however, not everyone was satisfied with this limited beer offering. As a result, an underground home-brewing culture began to form—by 1979, these home brewers successfully mobilized to persuade Congress to pass the Home Brewer's Act, which enabled them to open commercial craft breweries (Mosher 2009). Thereafter, a craft beer subculture emerged that continues to expand: 25 years later, the number of craft breweries in the United States totaled 3,400 (Press Release 2014). As the craft movement and artisanal connoisseurship became increasingly popular throughout the 1990s, women began to enter the craft beer scene at increased rates: women comprised at least one quarter of craft beer consumers in the United States by 2014 (Mosher 2009; Press Release 2014). Yet, despite women's exponential entry into this previously homosocial craft beer culture, very little research has analyzed the gender dynamics that they encounter (for exception, see

Darwin 2017). The present study builds upon the extant literature on beer—and on omnivorous cultures—by exploring whether women enjoy equal access to cultural capital accrual within craft beer culture.

Method

Blogs

This study proceeds in two parts: (1) a preliminary analysis of references to gender and beer within "beer blogs"—Web sites that publish articles about beer, which are written in a casual conversational style, and (2) a follow-up series of open-ended surveys with craft beer bar patrons. This investigation begins on the Internet in order to identify assumptions that beer bloggers make—or contest—about gender and beer preference. The Internet is an important field to include within this cultural analysis because it has been linked to the rise of the craft beer movement (Clemons, Gao, and Hitt 2006). Moreover, common-interest Web sites and blogs provide spaces where otherwise geographically disparate members of a subculture can collectively establish—and contest—cultural values (Clemons et al. 2006; Nemeth and Gropper 2008; Whitehead 2013). Therefore, beer blogs that contain key search terms such as *feminine beer, chick beer, girly beer, masculine beer, man beer*, and *guy beer* can lend valuable insight into the gendered value system that undergirds beer culture.

During the fall of 2014, I purposively sampled a total of 50 blogs that resulted from the aforementioned gendered search terms. I performed several rounds of close-reading these articles before deductively coding for references to beer type, taste, gendered terminology, and value-laden adjectives (e.g., "good," "bad"; Hsieh and Shannon 2005). Due to the purposive nature of my sampling, this selection of blogs is limited by design and not necessarily representative of all craft beer consumers' gendered experiences: indeed, only some craft beer consumers write blogs, those who blog tend to be socioeconomically privileged, and not all who write beer blogs discuss gender (Hindman 2009; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2010; Schradie 2011). Given the limitations that are inherent to such an exploratory blog analysis, I follow this preliminary stage of research with in-person surveys that test the external validity of my findings.

Surveys

For the second stage of this research, I conducted a series of Institutional Review Board (IRB)–approved open-ended surveys with craft beer consumers in four different craft beer bars around New York. Bars were located in the Bronx, Washington Heights, Greenwich Village, and Long Island. I selected these locations in an effort to account for gentrification and so as to theoretically diversify my sample. I sampled from within craft beer bars themselves in order to access a cross-section of those who comprise the audience during public performances of conspicuous craft beer consumption. In total, I surveyed 93 patrons about their associations between gender and beer preference, within a two-week window in the fall of 2014. The total sample included 63 men,[1] ranging in age from 21 to 58 ($M = 33.64$) and 30 women, ranging in age from 22 to 50 ($M = 30.06$). Age did not have any significant effect on people's associations so I do not include it as an independent variable in the following analysis.

In the interest of collecting data from as many respondents as possible, I kept my survey design brief, restricted to four cross-tabulated questions that only took up to 15 minutes to answer. I asked each individual to report the descriptors that came to mind when I said "feminine beer" and when I said "masculine beer," data that I manually recorded. After the individual produced operational definitions for these terms, I asked them to report whatever assumptions came to their mind, about men who prefer the beer type they just defined as "feminine" and about women who prefer the beer type they just defined as "masculine." I manually recorded key quotes and adjectives. Finally, I thanked them and debriefed them with more details about my study. I also manually recorded key quotes and reflections that arose during these debriefing sessions.

I analyzed this data by tabulating word frequency charts for the key adjectives that respondents associated with "feminine beer" and "masculine beer." I then ascertained how prevalent these adjectives were by calculating percentages for each sex, as well as for the sample as a whole. I organized quotes about those who preferred the "opposite" gendered beer by the speaker's inferred gender. I manually coded the quotes, based on whether the speaker thought highly, negatively, or neutrally, about a hypothetical drinker who preferred the other-gendered beer. I also coded for whether the speaker made accusations of gender-inversion about the hypothetical transgressive drinker. In general, these survey results confirmed the gendered value system that I noted during my preliminary Internet research.

Gendered Beer Valuation on the Internet

Gendered rhetoric about beer on the Internet indicates that some beers/consumers are perceived as more masculine and more culturally legitimate than others. Top Google search results for key terms (*feminine beer, chick beer, girly beer, masculine beer, man beer*, and *guy beer*) included articles about beers that are marketed as "for women," how to cultivate women's taste for beer, men getting teased by other men for enjoying fruity beer, and the popularity of bitter beers. The following section analyzes the gendered messages about taste and cultural legitimacy that these blogs convey.

"Real Women" Do Not Like the Taste of Beer

According to 20 articles within this sample, women are less likely than men to enjoy the taste of "real beer" and, therefore, must be coaxed into beer consumption through specialty beer products that are "for women" and/or through beers that do not "taste like beer." For example, the mainstream beer company Carlsberg targets women as consumers of the low-calorie beer "Copenhagen" by focusing on the beer's appearance:

> We can see that there are a number of consumers, especially women, who are very aware of design when they are choosing beverage products. There may be situations where they are standing in a bar and want their drinks to match their style. In this case, they may well reject a beer if the design does not appeal to them. (See O'Reilly 2014)

According to Carlsberg, women are concerned first and foremost with how they look while drinking beer—taste is inconsequential. This type of marketing exploits women's (real or imagined) anxieties about performing "emphasized femininity" (Connell 1987),[2] by suggesting that women can—and should—cultivate a hyperfeminine gender expression through the consumption of explicitly feminized products. Indeed, this process of product feminization has been successfully applied by other markets in the past: for example, Virginia Slims targeted female smokers by appropriating feminist rhetoric in their famous cigarette campaign, "You've come a long way, baby" (Barthel 1989). Problematically, this type of advertising indicates that the regular product (i.e., "real beer") is masculine by default; women can only maintain their femininity while consuming the product if they select feminized (i.e., "not real") versions of it.

This feminization marketing strategy infiltrated the craft beer market in 2011, when Chick Brewing Company released a controversial advertisement for the first woman-targeted craft beer called "Chick Beer":

> Chick Beer finally gives women a beer choice that suits their tastes and their style. The bottle is designed to reflect the beautiful shape of a woman in a little black dress. The six-pack looks like you are carrying your beer in a hip stylish purse. Chick's unique reflective bottle blings you up! It's fun, fabulous, and female! (Chick Beer 2011)

Paralleling Carlsberg's rhetorical strategy, Chick Brewing implies that "real women" (those who perform emphasized femininity) are apathetic about their beer's taste but deeply invested in their feminine appearance. Significantly, this rhetoric constructs women's gender capital and cultural capital as mutually exclusive; a woman cannot enjoy "real beer"

and be a "real woman." In response to this message, several prominent female craft beer brewers and consumers publicly condemned the product. As beer writer Lorna Juett (2012) exhorted in her blog post "'Chick Beer': A Lady Beer Nerd's Rant," "Dumbing women drinkers down to the lowest common beer denominator does not legitimize our presence in the marketplace."

Perhaps the most significant issue raised by "Chick Beer" is the marginalizing notion that, even within the craft beer culture, women's beer preferences are dictated by their gender more than their palates. Chick Brewing is not the first to invoke this myth: indeed, my sample included 20 articles that suggest that women find the taste of beer unappealing and, therefore, must be coaxed into beer consumption through fruity beers that do not "taste like beer." One such article is explicitly titled "How to Get Your Lady to Like Beer." Another article begins with "Does your lady drink more Chardonnay than IPA[3]? Try converting her—gently—with these crossover brews" (Hoffman 2010). This article goes on to define "crossover brews" as those with "hardly any bitterness" and "a ton of luscious flavor." In the description of each beer, "flavor" is further specified as fruitiness. This type of rhetoric tellingly conflates the colloquial concepts of "chick beer" with "gateway beer," rendering the ideological conflation between femininity and illegitimacy transparent. Similar findings have been noted in artisanal coffee culture, wherein "coffee snobs" consider sweetened coffee drinks to be less culturally legitimate than bitter coffee and not how "real coffee" tastes (Manzo 2010).

Fruity/Sweet Beer Is Feminine, Not Legitimate

This association between fruity flavors, femininity, and cultural illegitimacy, is made explicit within 11 articles, including some defensive blog posts by male fruit beer enthusiasts. Although there were only five blogs of this category within my sample, they all highlight the aforementioned ideological conflation. For example, in "Is Fruity Beer Girly? Examining the Taste Profile and Gender Politics of Cherry Lambic, Watermelon Wheat Beer, and Blueberry Ale," author Troy Patterson (2014) warned his readers:

> Treating this matter with the seriousness it deserves, I'd like briefly to address any socially insecure bros who happen to be grazing these pixels: You need to know that, if you publicly drink a Fruit beer—there's a 20 to 30 percent chance that your fellow bros will tease you about it, possibly by way of strained ovary jokes. (Patterson 2014)

Similarly, in an article titled "Four Fruit-Flavored Beers that Won't Cost You Your Man-Card: More Fruit. Less Fruity," the following warning heads the list:

> Fruit-flavored beers have been much maligned by men the world over for being, well, of questionable masculinity. But these weeks between the brutal summer and much-awaited fall are the perfect time to try beers that are as flavorful as they are refreshing. You may not be toting them to Monday Night Football, but they're worth your time at any cookout or dinner party as this summer winds down. (Guest writer 2010)

According to these accounts, fruity beer consumption renders men vulnerable to diminished gender capital *and* diminished cultural capital because fruity beer is considered feminine and inferior. Meanwhile, as the previous section indicated, fruity beer consumption compromises women's cultural capital by confirming the marginalizing stereotype that women do not like "real beer," while reinforcing their gender capital as feminine.

Some male consumers of fruity beer contest their diminished capital by discursively distancing the fruity product from femininity and illegitimacy *but only when it is consumed by men*. For example, one article begins with the following quote: "Yes, men. This really is for you. Fruit beers. That actually taste like beer" (Dominick 2014). According to this quote, some fruit beers are "for men," and these fruit beers are also culturally legitimate ("taste like beer"). Conversely, this rhetorical construction implies that fruity beers for women are not

culturally legitimate (do not "taste like beer)." Another article, titled "In Defense of Fruit Beers: 5 Reasons You Should Drink Them," includes the following illustrative quote:

> Fruit ≠ girly. In what world is fruit for chicks? The saying doesn't go, "apple a day keeps the yeast infection away." Plus, those 100+ IBU Double IPAs you love so much? That's right, not only do they taste like grapefruit (holy shit, a fruit!), they're flavored with hops—a flower. Who's girly now? (Joliat 2014)

In this passage, Joliat reinforces his gender capital by repudiating femininity with disgust (reducing women to yeast infections); meanwhile, he reinforces his cultural capital by challenging the oppositional construction of India Pale Ale (IPA) as "real beer," by highlighting IPA's fruity flavor profiles.

Joliat renders transparent the ongoing theme of this section: male enthusiasts of fruity beer lend their efforts to legitimating the feminized product, but not to legitimizing femininity itself. As a result, this masculinization and appropriation of feminized products epitomizes Bridges's (2009) concept of "hybrid masculinity." Superficially, these writers advocate for a shift toward gender-blind omnivorous values within craft beer culture; however, by conditioning fruity beer's elevation through its disassociation from femininity, these men simultaneously reinforce an ideological conflation between femininity and illegitimacy. In essence, these writers justify their consumption of fruity beer by saying, "it's not feminine—it's good!"

"Real Beer" Tastes Bitter, Not Sweet

If any beer type is valued as the opposite of fruity beer, it seems to be IPA. In the above quote, Joliat implies that, in contrast to fruity beer, IPA consumption confers the highest cultural capital and gender capital upon men within craft beer culture. Indeed, bitterness and a lack of fruitiness appear to signify the "real beer" taste, according to the few "beer snobs" in this sample who perpetuate such a distinction—just as bitterness constituted the "real coffee" taste in Manzo's (2010) study. For example, in his blog post "IPA Hegemony," Dan Conley from Community Beer Works explained that "professing your love of them [IPAs] can show you're really 'one of us'" (see Sparhawk 2013). Significantly, Conley's rhetoric reflects a Bourdieusian snob value system wherein IPA consumption signifies "high taste." Similarly, Andy Sparhawk's (2013) response to Conley follows classic Bourdieusian logic:

> . . . innately we like the taste of sweet things as children, but perhaps do not take to sour or bitter flavors right away. But as we grow up and try new things, our brain figures out that not all sour and bitter flavors are bad, such is the case with IPAs.

Within the ideological framework of these "beer snobs," IPA constitutes an elite preference precisely because it is an acquired taste; moreover, it is inaccessible to those who lack the time, money, and desire to cultivate an appreciation for the taste. Following this same logic, fruity and sweet beers signify "low taste" precisely because they are easily enjoyed by those who have recently entered craft beer culture—the culturally illegitimate. Although neither of these authors explicitly masculinize IPA, the previous two subsections indicate that this gendering is implicit: men are supposed to "do masculinity" by eschewing the feminized taste of sweetness for the masculinized taste of bitterness, a taste that requires strength to endure. This underlying ideology, which encourages men to demonstrate their strength by cultivating a taste for initially abrasive flavors, has also been used to explain men's propensity to consume especially spicy foods (Alley and Burroughs 1991).

The rhetoric reviewed within this section lends preliminary evidence that the gendered value system within craft beer culture assigns lower cultural capital to feminized beer products. "Chick beer" is operationalized as beer that does not taste like "real beer," and/or beer that is fruity; reciprocally, "real beer" is operationalized as beer that does not taste sweet. Even the apparent renegades, the men who

consume fruity beer, reinforce hegemonic masculinity by challenging fruity beer's association with femininity instead of challenging the subordination of femininity itself. However, these blogs constitute anecdotal evidence at best; therefore, in the following section, I analyze the external validity of these findings through open-ended surveys with 93 patrons of craft beer bars in New York.

Gendered Beer Valuation Offline

Definitions

In general, my respondents' definitions of "feminine beer" and "masculine beer" reflect the gendered value system that I identified in the previous section. Moreover, the gender of the respondent does not appear to significantly influence gendered beer definitions: 83.75 percent of the terminology attributed to "feminine beer" achieves concordance between the genders, and 88.73 percent of the terminology attributed to "masculine beer" achieves concordance as well. Respondents' definitions of "feminine beer" parallel Internet definitions of "chick beer" and "gateway beer": they define "feminine beer" as *light* (in color, taste, and calorie count) and *flavored* (fruit, coffee, pumpkin), associated with beer types including Wheat Beer, flavored lager, and low-calorie beer. Respondents also explicitly reference fruit as a descriptor of "feminine beer," but not of "masculine beer"; similarly, they associate lager with "masculine beer" unless it is flavored, in which case it becomes a "feminine beer." In contrast to "feminine beer," respondents define "masculine beer" as *strong*, and *heavy*, including dark beers (Stout, Porter, Brown, or Dark Lager), IPA, and unflavored lager. Finally, IPA registers as the most oft-referenced beer type associated with the phrase "masculine beer," confirming Joliat's assertion that this bitter "real beer" is associated with masculinity.

A few differences between male and female respondents' definitions warrant mention as well. Male respondents—but not female respondents—associate "feminine beer" with details about the beer's appearance such as *pink packaging* and *tulip glassware*. Indeed, such details were central to the aforementioned advertising rhetoric for beers that target women; however, women do not associate these superficial details when they imagine "feminine beer." Instead, women report technical terminology and jargon about taste profiles and beer categories; meanwhile, men use negative value-laden descriptors such as *bad* and *crappy*. These differences indicate men's relative lack of education about femininized beer types. These differences also indicate that men associate "feminine beer" with beer that tastes *bad* and is, therefore, deserving of lower cultural capital.

Significantly, when respondents describe "masculine beer" and "feminine beer," the adjectives illustrate hegemonic gendered ideals; this finding suggests that gender capital can be cultivated through strategic conspicuous consumption. As one respondent succinctly observed about Guinness, "If you're going to act like a man it's what you drink." Indeed, while describing "masculine beer," men imagine the drink as *rich, powerful*, and *bold*; similarly, women describe "feminine beer" as *pretty, aromatic, expensive*, and *flowery*. Both genders imagine "feminine beer" as *light, sweet*, and *refreshing*, illustrative of emphasized femininity; similarly, both genders imagine "masculine beer" as *stout, heavy, strong, bitter, full*, and *rough*. Of further note, "masculine beer" is defined as high alcohol while "feminine beer" is defined as low alcohol or even nonalcoholic, reflecting the masculinization of alcohol consumption itself. As one respondent quipped, "that's what men are; strong and filled with alcohol."

Transgressive Consequences

Female respondents tend to attribute high cultural capital to women who prefer "masculine beer" (56.66 percent), or report an ambiguous opinion (43.33 percent), but none voice a lower opinion of her. Women's positive evaluations of the hypothetical woman tend to focus on her personality and perceived expertise, such as "She's a badass bitch who knows what she's

doing"; "She's a stud, she rocks, probably drives a pick-up truck, independent"; and "She's an experienced beer-drinker." Conversely, female respondents attribute lower cultural capital to women who prefer "feminine beer." In the words of one female respondent, "If a girl ordered it I'd think she knows nothing about beer." Tellingly, this same respondent clarified that if a man ordered a "feminine beer," she would assume he was making an informed choice. This finding suggests that women are encouraged to perceive men's tastes as legitimate regardless of their beer choice, but women must order "masculine beers" to achieve a comparable impression of cultural legitimacy.

Although men also positively appraise female transgressive drinkers' cultural capital, they are more ambivalent about the hypothetical woman's gender capital. The sexualizing rhetoric that some of these male respondents espouse warrants closer scrutiny for two reasons: because female respondents do not similarly sexualize male transgressive drinkers and because it reveals the conditions under which transgressors' gender capital decreases. Most men who sexualize the transgressive female consumer do so through rhetoric that elevates her erotic capital (Hakim 2010). Examples include "Does she have plans on Friday night"; "She likes to be on top"; "She's very hot"; and "Kinda hot. It's always hot when a woman does something a man does like when she drinks whiskey or a Manhattan." However, those who attribute her with lower erotic capital do so through masculinizing and heteronormative rhetoric, indicating that women risk diminished gender capital if and when they drink "masculine beer": "Marry her unless she has testicles then no"; and "That's cool, but she can't be a dude, growing a beard and brewing at home. I like feminine girls. If you want to try it though, that's cool." Significantly, all of those who attribute her with lower erotic capital and gender capital associate "masculine beer" with lager. It would seem that of all the beer types, this one is "too masculine" for women to consume without sacrifice. Indeed, regardless of the respondents' own gender, people tend to report that women are *cool* if they drink IPA or stout, but *trashy* (lower gender capital) or *ignorant* (lower cultural capital) if they drink lager.

In contrast, men can consume lager without being considered *trashy* or *ignorant*; in fact, this consumption practice can enhance a man's omnivorous cultural capital because it signifies that he is an open-minded "beer geek" as opposed to a closed-minded "beer snob" (Maciel 2017). This shift away from snobbery in craft beer culture has apparently enabled men to consume lowbrow/feminized beers without consequence: although every respondent reported some sort of assumption about the hypothetical female transgressive drinker (whether positive or negative), approximately one third of respondents from each gender refused to comment at all about male transgressive drinkers. Moreover, the two thirds of male respondents who did comment tended to excuse the drinker's preference through circumstantial explanations: "He wants to session[4] or he's at the beach or at a festive beer event"; "Depending on the mood, the drink order is different"; and "Maybe he's trying to drink the whole night." These justifications seem to indicate that within this omnivorous cultural field, anyone can drink any beer type they wish; however, upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that only men can drink any beer type they wish. These same men who refused to comment upon their fellow men's drinking habits readily commented upon women's: indeed, men tended to praise female transgressive drinkers (60.32 percent) or otherwise voiced an ambiguous opinion (30.16 percent), but none reported "no comment." These findings suggest two important conclusions: (1) as a general rule, those who prefer "feminine beer" are perceived as less culturally legitimate; and (2) men, *but not women*, have been liberated from this rule.

Discussion

Given the elevated cultural capital that respondents attribute to female transgressive drinkers, I conclude that "masculine beer" is associated with higher cultural capital than "feminine beer"; this asymmetry reflects an ideological conflation between femininity and illegitimacy

that ultimately reinforces male superiority within craft beer culture. Such a conflation between femininity and illegitimacy can also be used to account for coffee snobs' rejection of sweet coffee drinks (Manzo 2010) as well as the feminization of vegetarian cuisine within foodie cultures that favor meat (Browarnik 2012; Nath 2011; Vartanian 2015). Members of all of these consumer cultures cultivate cultural capital by rejecting feminized products.

Contrary to male beer bloggers' accounts of gender-policing, it is women who incur gendered judgments within this study. All of my respondents had an opinion about female transgressive drinkers, while one third refused to comment upon the consumption practices of male transgressive drinkers. It appears that women only have two socially acceptable drinking scripts to choose between, and both scripts construct gender capital and cultural capital as mutually exclusive. A woman can order a stereotypically feminine beer and enact the emphasized feminine "girly girl" script; this order reinforces her gender capital at the expense of her cultural capital. Alternatively, a woman can defy expectations by ordering a masculinized beer and enact the "cool girl" script; however, this order bolsters her cultural capital at the risk of diminished erotic/gender capital. Significantly, neither of these scripts enables the hypothetical woman to cultivate both forms of capital in tandem—she must always choose between the two. In addition, it is important to note that no matter what type of beer a woman orders, her order is interpreted within a hegemonic framework that ultimately reinforces male dominance within the craft beer culture.

To some extent, these results indicate that "you are what you drink," but along with the "what," the "who" matters as well. Women are considered *uneducated* if they consume fruity or flavored beers, and they are denigrated as *trashy* if they consume lager; however, men can consume these same beers without similar disparagement. This finding illuminates the symbolic interactionism that is active during moments of conspicuous consumption: consumption practices accrue different meanings depending upon the group identity of the consumer. Subordinate groups such as women reinforce their own cultural marginalization if they drink the "wrong beer"; therefore, they must consume the "right beer" if they wish to prove their cultural legitimacy. Theoretically, other subordinated groups encounter this cultural dynamic as well, due to their shared risk of confirming marginalizing stereotypes. Meanwhile, members of the dominant group are considered legitimate by default—recall that one respondent attributed ignorance to a woman who ordered a "feminine beer," but assumed that a man who ordered the same beer was making an educated choice. In other words, every beer is the "right beer" when a man is the consumer.

Men do not have to choose between their gender capital and their cultural capital within the craft beer culture; therefore, this culture enables men to enjoy the freedom of omnivorous consumption. Men can evoke a range of masculinities through different drinking scripts: traditional masculinity through lager consumption, risk-taking masculinity through IPA consumption, or hybrid "experimental" masculinity through fruit beer consumption. However, it should be noted that there are important class differences associated with the first two drinking scripts: lager symbolizes traditional blue-collar masculinity while IPA conveys membership within the middle-class subculture of beer connoisseurs (Maciel 2017). As one patron explains with regard to Pabst Blue Ribbon, "It's a shit drink and people drink it ironically to make a statement. It's a folk beer." In keeping with Peterson's hypothesis (Peterson and Kern 1996; Peterson and Simkus 1992), these middle-class omnivores symbolically appropriate blue-collar masculinity by ironically embracing the low-brow product that they associate with it. However, this ironic cultural capital is only accessible to male consumers—again, women risk denigration as *trashy* if they consume lager. Therefore, lager functions as a homosocial reserve of traditional masculinity within the craft beer culture, with implications of gender inequality that are not as ironic as the consumers might like to think; when any product becomes off-limits to women, then women's access to cultural capital accrual becomes restricted.

In addition to lager and IPA, men can consume fruity beer with impunity, so long as they consume it in the spirit of experimental omnivorousness. Men can justify the consumption of such a feminized product by constructing the act as a risk; this construction is effective because risk-taking is a central component of "doing masculinity" (West and Zimmerman 1987) and a key value within omnivorous culture. Yet, women cannot similarly invoke "risk-taking" when they consume lowbrow/feminized products because they do not transgress gender norms through this consumption practice. Therefore, omnivorous cultural values have enabled men to expand their culturally legitimate drinking practices into the feminized terrain, while these same feminized drinking practices remain indicative of women's cultural illegitimacy.

These findings indicate that different cultural value systems apply in omnivorous culture, depending on the consumer's sex: in this case study, men enjoy the freedom of omnivorous culture, while women remain accountable to the restrictions of snob culture that selectively condone highbrow consumption. Reflecting Bourdieu's paradox, it appears that any beer can become legitimate *when it is consumed by a member of the dominant group*. This finding has important implications for cultural sociology, because it problematizes the binary that otherwise positions snob and omnivorous value systems as mutually exclusive. Within this case study, it is clear that both value systems operate simultaneously, though only the most privileged group can engage in omnivorous consumption without consequence. It is worth looking more closely at whether such asymmetrical value systems covertly operate within other seemingly progressive and omnivorous cultures as well. Gender inequality is likely to prevail within consumer cultures that require one sex to choose between their gender capital and their cultural capital, while the other is enabled to cultivate both in tandem.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this survey research design. In the interest of brevity, I did not ask respondents to clarify their demographics. Future studies should analyze variables such as race and sexuality. In addition, as in any qualitative research on alcohol culture, there is a possibility that respondents were intoxicated; however, I attempted to account for this possibility by discarding data from any and all participants who conveyed signs of intoxication (such as slurred speech and unsteady eye contact). It is also important to acknowledge that the sentiments of New York craft beer bar patrons are not necessarily generalizable to the craft beer culture as a whole; I accounted for this limitation by including my preliminary analysis of Internet references to gender, legitimacy, and beer preferences. Significantly, the survey results reflect the same gendered messages that I detected within this sample of blogs.

In addition, to include as many women as possible in my sample, I purposively sampled women and convenience sampled men, oftentimes based upon their proximity to the women. As a result, my surveys with women often transformed into group surveys that included their friends and/or partners (these groups ranged in size from two to six people). Future studies might survey respondents outside of a group context. My positionality as a relatively young woman must also be taken into account; it is entirely possible that a researcher who is significantly older or male-presenting would collect slightly different results from participants, although they would not necessarily be more accurate.

Despite these limitations, this craft beer case study offers valuable insight into the gendered contingencies of cultural capital accrual, which can account for the delegitimization of femininity within other cultures as well. For example, the notion of "chick drinks" pervades alcohol culture beyond the craft beer subculture: women allegedly prefer white wine over red wine due to its lighter flavor; similarly, fruity cocktails and flavored liquors are considered "chick drinks" because the sweetness masks the taste of alcohol. Future studies should explore whether this same value system, which conflates femininity with illegitimacy, operates beyond omnivorous food and drink cultures, within other male-dominated

cultural arenas as well (e.g., sports, science, technology, engineering, mathematics). Are the less prestigious products and activities associated with femininity? Do women—but not men—within these cultures have to choose between their gender capital and their cultural capital? I suspect that the same patriarchal ideology that I have illuminated in this study operates within other male-dominated cultures as well, effectively reinforcing women's subordination.

Conclusion

The purpose of this investigation was to demonstrate how omnivorous cultural values covertly reinforce gender inequality. To accomplish this task, I examined gender stereotypes about taste within the seemingly omnivorous craft beer subculture. First, I reviewed the literature on gender and beer culture; next, I conducted a preliminary analysis of gendered beer rhetoric on the Internet to determine whether certain beer types are considered more masculine or feminine/culturally legitimate or illegitimate than others; finally, I tested the external validity of these findings by conducting open-ended surveys with 93 craft beer bar patrons. The findings reveal an ideological conflation between femininity and illegitimacy that undergirds craft beer culture, which ultimately reinforces the subordination of women.

This investigation has illustrated how omnivorous cultures can enable men to cultivate their gender capital and cultural capital in tandem, while restricting women to one form of capital accrual or the other. Significantly, craft beer consumers in this study only perceived feminized beers to be culturally legitimate preferences when men were the consumers; this is because men's consumption of these feminized beers can be justified through invocations of omnivorous cultural values such as "risk-taking." When women consume these same feminized beers, this act is not similarly constructed as "risk-taking"; rather, it confirms the marginalizing stereotype that women are only able to appreciate feminized/lowbrow beer. This asymmetrical expansion of men's culturally legitimate drinking practices results in the elevation of feminized products—*when consumed by men*—but not the elevation of femininity itself. Thus, omnivorous cultural values endow men with consumptive freedom, disproportionately facilitating their acquisition of cultural capital.

This study contributes to the sociology of gender and cultural sociology by illuminating the gendered contingencies of cultural capital accrual. It may seem as though omnivorous cultures have enabled consumers to enjoy all products, masculine and feminine alike; however, sociologists should take care to critically examine whether one sex enjoys greater consumptive freedom than the other within these seemingly omnivorous cultures. As Bourdieu noted, dominant groups possess the power to legitimize any product that they favor; this case study has further illuminated the caveat that such products are only legitimate when consumed by members of that dominant group. Therefore, when members of a culture declare it to be omnivorous, sociologists should ask, "omnivorous for whom"?

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Notes

1. I did not ask respondents to specify their sex or gender, due to my concern about maintaining a casual rapport. Instead, I assumed their sex and gender depending on whether they were male-presenting or female-presenting. As

a result, there is a chance that I misgendered some people.
2. Connell describes "emphasized femininity" as the oppositional gender expression that women are pressured to perform in the interest of sustaining hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987:184).
3. India Pale Ale (IPA) is brewed with hops and can oftentimes taste bitter.
4. "Session beers" are lower alcohol versions of popular beer types, intended for longer drinking sessions.

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