ABSTRACT

ROBERTS, NATHAN ANDREW. Tapping History: Retrojection, Bridging, and Invented Tradition by North Carolina Craft Brewers (Under the Direction of Dr. Michaela DeSoucey)

The growth of the American craft beer market in the past decade offers an exemplary case for examining how localization occurs as a social and contextual process. Although Watson’s (2014a) analysis for the Brewers Association stated that breaking the 3,000 mark for the number of craft brewers in the United States represented a return to the local, there is more to localization than simply where firms are located. This research examines the case of the craft beer market in the Triangle region of North Carolina to understand how localizing markets deal with limited state-level heritage and brewing traditions. Utilizing qualitative methods and drawing upon prior research, I identify strategies for localization. These include: (1) creating a group brewing identity; (2) creating heritage by revising, writing and bridging history; and (3) traditions of invention (Paxson 2013). The use of heritage and traditions represent novel uses of the past, which draw upon retrojection (Berger and Luckmann 1966) of current meanings and understandings into the past, to compel ostensible alignment with the present. Brewers tap histories to localize their products.
Tapping History: Retrojection, Bridging, and Invented Tradition by North Carolina Craft Brewers

by
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In memory of my mother, Theresa Roberts. Thank you for your unwavering support, patience, and confidence.
BIOGRAPHY

Nathan Roberts is a graduate student at North Carolina State University. He was born in 1986 and grew up in Elk Creek, Virginia. After leaving Wytheville Community College (WCC) in 2007 he worked several different jobs. Following the global financial crisis and being laid off, he decided to return to finish his associates degree. Following his graduation from WCC in 2011, he enrolled in the undergraduate sociology program at University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). His professors and instructors encouraged and fostered his interests in sociology. He graduated from UNCG in 2013 and began his graduate studies at NCSU in the fall of 2014. His research interests include globalization, consumer culture, and nationalism.
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INTRODUCTION

In 2014, craft brewing added $55.7 billion to the United States’ economy (Brewers Association 2015a). That same year, the number of breweries in the U.S. topped 3,000 for the first time since the 1880s (Watson 2014a). Since 2014, the number of craft breweries\(^1\) in the United States has reached over 5,000 (Chappell 2017; Brewers Association 2017). This rapid growth of craft brewing, Watson (2014a) argues, represents a return to localization of the brewing industry.

However, localization is a social construction process involving embedding of markets and products in social relations, territory, and culture (Bowen and Mutersbaugh 2014; Hinrichs 2000, 2003; Bowen 2015; DeSoucey 2010, 2016). According to Watson (2014a), the economic growth of the craft beer market will eventually reach a “saturation point.” This point will make more breweries smaller and locally based, to facilitate differentiation from each other. However, Watson’s argument rests on a narrow assumption that localization is based upon economic “forces,” scale, and site of production. Localization

\(^1\) The terms “microbrewing” and “craft beer”, while not being synonymous often overlap in the literature, especially research on the mid-1990s-microbrewing boom. The craft beer label has become a more accepted nomenclature with the institutional support of the Brewer’s Association. The Brewers Association uses “microbrewer” to describe a market segment producing less than 15,000 barrels of beer per year (https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics/market-segments/). They provide a general definition for craft brewing based upon three criteria: “small” (less than 6 million barrels), independent (less than 25% share ownership by “alcohol industry member that is not itself a craft brewer”), and traditional (meaning “beers whose flavor derives from traditional or innovative brewing ingredients and…fermentation”). See https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics/craft-brewer-defined/. I follow this convention in my discussion referring to the brewers and breweries that I researched as craft breweries, craft beers, and craft brewers.
involves more than just these economic factors. This project redirects research and theorizing on localization of craft brewing to examining how brewers embed markets and products in locality.

Previous research on craft beer localization has emphasized breweries’ locations and reconstruction of place-based meanings. This research (Schnell and Reese 2003; Mathews and Picton 2014), drawing on Flack’s (1997) concept of “neolocality,” has examined the strategies for conveying connection to place by breweries. Neolocality is defined as the process of reconstructing the meanings attached to place by localizing businesses (Flack 1997). By focusing on historical references in branding strategies (Schnell and Reese 2003) or use of built environment and industrial history (Mathews and Picton 2014; Lamertz et al. 2016), this research has focused on rhetorical claims and discursive practices of localization. However, this research often disregards how the cultural practices of food and drink production become components for defining local culture and identity in the work of localizing markets.

Researchers of food in sociology, anthropology, and history has shown how food products become connected to place as part of the work of constructing cultural heritage and tradition (Bowen and De Master 2014). This vein of research has examined embedded social relations of food production (Bowen 2015), the construction of food as a symbol of national identity (DeSoucey 2010, 2016), the use of terroir claims, the perceived effects of agricultural, production processes, and natural influences on products (Bowen 2011; Paxson 2013; Kopp 2016; Fourcade 2012; Trubek 2008), and the invention of food “traditions” (Hinrichs 2003; DeSoucey 2010; Paxson 2013). This research stream also shows how
localized foods becomes culturally entrenched as representative of local culture. Paxson (2013) extends this to examining (re)developing localized markets for new artisanal goods in the United States in places that do not have an existing local culture of production. Her research analyzes the strategies that artisanal cheese producers use to construct novel cultures of food production, simultaneously drawing on and altering established traditions and cultural understandings.

I extend this research by combining theories of neolocality and the localization of food. My analysis examines how neolocal producers of craft brewers construct a craft beer market and embed brewing as part of a place’s cultural heritage and tradition, using beers as strategic devices to characterize local identity and cultural particularity. This construction process makes craft brewers’ practices and material symbols cultural resources for defining “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983). In particular, I draw upon Paxson’s (2013) concept of “tradition of invention” to analyze how craft brewers localize their products in a place that does not have an established tradition of brewing. Further, I draw upon sociology of temporality (Maines, Sugrue, and Katovich 1983; Flaherty and Fine 2001), and the sociology of markets, to examine how craft brewers are creating a tradition of brewing and attempting to redefine place-based cultural identity.

North Carolina provides a useful case for examining processes of neo-localization due to its limited historical connections to brewing and the brewing industry. Similar to other places in the U.S. (Baron 1962; Kopp 2016; Shears 2014), local breweries and beer producing taverns were established in the state by European colonialists and immigrants (Myers and Ficke 2016; Baron 1962; Kopp 2016). Yet, North Carolina never established a
well-known or well-regarded “brewing tradition.” Furthermore, industrial concentration and homogenization of beer following the repeal of Prohibition, limited brewers’ existence in the state until recently (Shears 2014; Kopp 2016; Chapman, Lellock, and Lippard 2017).

In the last couple of decades, however, North Carolina has benefitted significantly from the growth of the craft brewing industry. In 2014, craft brewing added $1.2 billion dollars to the state’s economy (Brewers Association 2014). In 2016, the number of breweries in the state reached 200 (Tiberii and Jacobs 2017). With the most breweries in the southern United States, North Carolina is viewed as the top state in the region for craft brewing (Purvis 2015).

I conducted a qualitative case study of the Triangle region of North Carolina to analyze the discourses, identities, and strategies of contemporary craft brewers with regards to how they construct the idea of “local.” Primary data for this study comes from 13 semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted between June and November of 2016. Additional data were collected from websites and secondary data sources, such as news articles, tourism books, and blog posts. The analysis shows how the localization strategies around craft beer are involved in reconstructing the meanings of place and brewers’ cultural identity. I use Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) under-utilized concept of “retrojection” to analyze brewers’ uses and revisions of the past in the work of the present (Maines et al. 1983; Flaherty and Fine 2001; Katovich and Couch 1992). Brewers in my data actively draw upon and revise the state’s past to legitimate the development of brewing as a cultural practice in the present.

I begin with my theoretical orientation, which includes economic sociology, the social science of food, neolocality, and the sociology of temporality. Then, I provide a
background of North Carolina craft brewing to contextualize the industry and detail key events that shape my analysis. I then discuss my methods and data collection strategies. The analysis points to different processes and strategies used by brewers in establishing the craft beer market and ideas regarding the heritage of brewing in North Carolina. Namely, I find that by creating and relying upon a “strategic group identity” (Sonenshein, Nault, and Obodaru 2017), brewers’ accounts of their goals and motivations downplay their stated focus on competition, instead directing their focus to capturing market share from the “Other” of macro-breweries and maintenance of the product category. To do so, they revise the history of North Carolina in tourism texts and branding, specifically focusing on brewing as a continuation or extension of North Carolinian cultural practices and history. Finally, they also replicate Paxson’s (2013) “tradition of invention,” treating brewing as a living culture, drawing upon some past styles and traditions but breaking with others to develop a North Carolina specific “tradition” that touts the “taste of place.” I conclude with a discussion and summary of my findings and implications for future research.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Culture in Markets

Many economic sociologists view markets as social constructions (Granovetter 1992), meaning that market actors embedded in social relations (Granovetter 1985) use and alter cultural understandings (Zelizer 1978; Wherry 2012a, 2012b, 2014) in a dialectic process (Levin 2008). For example, markets draw upon institutionalized cultural understandings, such as gender and race (Almeling 2007) or national identity myths (Fourcade 2011;
DeSoucey 2010, 2016), both reproducing and changing cultural values and understandings. For example, the valuation of nature taps into cultural values that associate protecting nature as part of national identity, while simultaneously legitimating nature’s economic value (Fourcade 2011).

Markets can also work to integrate groups promoting social solidarity. Fourcade and Healy (2007) refer to some of these markets as “moralized markets.” As Weber, Heinze, and DeSoucey (2008) show in their analysis of the grass-fed beef and dairy market, for example, producers worked to define the cultural and moral values surrounding a new product category, which facilitated the emergence of a collective identity and community of producers out of geographically separated individuals. Sonenshein et al.’s (2017) analysis of food trucks extends this argument, showing how producers create “strategic group identities,” which provide social resources for a producer community, decreasing pressures for competition and facilitating collaboration.

Finally, localized food research has theorized material commodities and markets to examine the intermingling of social and economic values, providing shared meanings around social value orientation (Paxson 2013). Cultural anthropologists have similarly shown how even mass-produced commodities such as McDonald’s hamburgers and Coca-Cola can infiltrate and influence cultural identity and values based upon localization processes (Watson 1997; Miller 1998). Material commodities (especially consumables) can function as shared symbols, through which other kinds of identities outside of the market can become important (DeSoucey 2016).
Localized Food Markets

One thread of local food research examines how the material quality and production of food becomes institutionalized as cultural heritage or indicative of specific social relations based in community or place-based ties. DeSoucey (2010, 2016), for example, shows how foie gras and other edible cultural products become protected by law as symbols of national identity, or “gastronationalism.” Bowen’s (2015) research examines how relations between producers and state actors limit who has access to the cultural protections and monopoly rents (Harvey 2002) that they provide. Her analysis of mescal and tequila in Mexico shows how elite producers of tequila institutionalized exclusion as part of defining particular products as cultural heritage, but not others. The cultural protections for production reinforce “symbolic boundaries” that determine whose and which cultural practices become labeled as heritage (DeSoucey 2010).

Cultural protections on food traditions can stagnate production. Codification of the methods, ingredients, and equipment permitted in production, can turn living cultures into “museums of production” (Bowen and De Master 2011: 81). Moreover, the uncritical assumption that “local” is inherently better, in and of itself, has been called a “trap” by researchers (Born and Purcell 2006). Born and Purcell (2006) argue that outcomes of production are inherently contextual and not necessarily based in scale or geography (see also Hinrichs 2000). Yet, some newly developing localized markets treat cultural products, such as food and drink production, as living cultures, which allows for creating new cultural variations and innovations that embed them in place (Paxson 2013; Bowen and De Master 2014).
Paxson’s (2013) research examines how small-scale, artisanal cheesemakers localize their products based upon variation and innovation. She argues that part of this localization process involves redefining past traditions, developing the concept of “tradition of invention” to analyze how artisanal producers localize their novel products as “traditions.” Traditions of invention involve localized producers redefining or creating new traditions within the U.S. context, while drawing upon established traditions.

Localized producers focus on invention and innovation of ingredients, production processes, and training, emphasizes narratives related to American national identity and modernity (Paxson 2013). Following this line of thought, producers can then use new ingredients and novel production practices to make their products (such as, in my case, adding blueberries or peaches to a beer). These processes facilitate innovation, integrating new elements into ostensibly established traditions. I argue that actors purposely evoke the particularities of place by adding new styles, ingredients, and practices to these traditions.

The second strategy of localization that Paxson (2013) details is “reverse-engineering” of terroir, turning the “taste of place” (Trubek 2008) into the place of taste. The concept of terroir emphasizes the shared effects of nature and culture on products (Kopp 2016; Paxson 2013). These perceived effects, based upon local environment, climate, and the cultural practices of agricultural production, link products to territory and places. Producers in the U.S. redefine the general concept of terroir to fit within their cultural context. In the case of artisanal cheesemakers, this involves individualizing the effects of terroir to the farm and producer (Paxson 2013; Bowen and De Master 2014).
Ideas about heritage also factor into localization processes. Bessière (1998) argues that markets can drive rural tourism around heritage products, expressing some consumers’ “deep yearning for a balance and a return to the past” (Bessière 1998:24). Heritage acts as a cultural discourse for localizing products, in the same way particular traditions act as symbols of locality (Bowen and De Master 2014). Constructing histories around practices and symbols as components of a group’s traditions ostensibly imbues them with a sense of historical continuity and inevitability (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). However, in the U.S. and globally, industrialization has led to the concentration and homogenization of products, such as cheese and beer (Paxson 2013; Kopp 2016). A break in continuity of practices has necessitated producers to draw upon, yet reconstruct, their tacit understandings of heritage.

**Neolocality**

Neolocal market actors use history in their processes of localization, attempting to emphasize or redefine the social meanings attached to place (Flack 1997; Schnell and Reese 2003; Mathews and Picton 2014). According to researchers of neolocality, the social changes associated with globalization and deindustrialization have deconstructed the meanings of place (Flack 1997; Mathews and Picton 2014) which otherwise allow actors to define their social identity (see Giddens 1991; Gieryn 2000). Neolocal market actors use of history allows for presenting and marketing locally based identities for the businesses (Flack 1997; Schnell and Reese 2003).

Branding and marketing are methods for emphasizing and reasserting the value and particularity of place. Schnell and Reese (2003) examine the use of historical references to
key events in a place’s history in branding. This history is not based upon brewing, but instead on general history. For example, Schnell and Reese (2003) discuss how Cleveland-based Great Lakes Brewing Co.’s “Burning River Pale Ale” references city history, namely the Cuyahoga river catching fire due to industrial contamination. This shows that the brewery is “from there” and knowledgeable about the city’s history. Mathews and Picton (2014) extend this research, showing how craft brewers draw upon the built environment to create neolocal connections. By locating their breweries in old industrial buildings, possibly but not necessarily associated with the brewing industry, breweries tap into the ways post-industrial architecture denotes history and identity of place. Many brewers use location to create images of continuity with urban and peri-urban industrial history.

Although not squarely in the neolocal literature, Lamertz et al.’s (2016) analysis of the development of craft breweries in Canada further shows how historical references are used in localization. They examine how craft brewers draw upon “identity remnants” from past organizations to situate themselves in the history of brewing and place. This research, along with the emphasis on heritage and tradition in localizing markets, directs my analysis to how the past is strategically used in the present to legitimate and make sense of present actions.

Sociology of Temporality

These above themes and concepts imply processes of rewriting tradition for purposes of historical continuity (Hobsbawm 1983; Trevor-Roper 1983; Paxson 2013). Trevor-Roper’s (1983) case of the Scottish clan tartan and kilt, for example, shows how “mythical pasts”
(Maines et al. 1983:164), with falsified histories, are used to legitimate current practices and invent traditions. Mythical pasts are symbolic constructions with no empirical historical referent, and can deflect attention from when and how actors use them to maintain advantage and power by manipulating social relationships (Maines et al. 1983). Maines et al.’s (1983) theoretical elaboration of G.H. Mead’s theory of the past argues that mythical pasts are only one dimension of this process. Another dimension of Mead’s theory of the past is “implied objective realities” (Maines et al. 1983), which are based in social memory, allowing for varied interpretations of historical events. Actors selectively draw upon historical events to situate their present forms of action as inevitable (Maines et al. 1983). The use of shared pasts situates actors in interactions or social identities (Katovich and Couch 1992).

I argue that the process of reconstructing the past to legitimate, understand, and situate actions in the present, denotes what Berger and Luckmann (1966:160) term “retrojection.” Retrojection refers to the strategies and processes social actors use to reinterpret and realign actors’ or groups’ pasts to legitimate new forms of action following social changes (Berger and Luckmann 1966). The concept of “retrojection” helps us understand how actors create a sense of historical continuity by revising the past. Actors retroject new meanings and forms of action into the past to orient and direct their present actions (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Berger 1963). Retrojection allows actors to focus on components of the past that offer plausible examples and explanations of the current practice or meaning (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Flaherty and Fine 2001). I argue that retrojection is a strategy that localizing actors use to create implied objective realities and pasts, such as heritage and traditions in neo-localizing markets. As a strategy that actors can use to rewrite
objective pasts situated in the present, retrojection directs our attention toward how the past becomes creatively used and understood in the present.

**BACKGROUND**

The Brewers Association (2015b) ranks North Carolina ninth in the nation for number of breweries per person. North Carolina is first in the southeastern region of the United States for craft beer, and has become a craft beer destination (Purvis 2015). The city of Asheville won or tied for Beer City, USA four times between 2009 and 2012, when the competition ceased (Glenn 2012). Large-scale craft breweries in Western states, like Sierra Nevada, New Belgium, and Oskar Blues, have opened East Coast branches in North Carolina (Glenn 2012).

However, historically North Carolina was not identified with brewing. Instead, cultural and market identification was based upon agricultural production of tobacco and small-town production of furniture and textiles (Coclanis and Kyriakoudes 2007). There were early taverns and even some industrial breweries established in the state, as colonial and settler expansion brought people with previous brewing traditions into different regions (Baron 1962; Glenn 2012; Hartis 2013; Myers and Ficke 2016). But, the maintenance and establishment of brewing cultures within settlements describes most regions of the U.S., as migrants often brought their brewing cultures where they went (Baron 1962; Kopp 2016). For example, German migrants settling in the Midwest in the mid-19th century brought their lager brewing culture, helping to establish what would eventually become the taste and style of industrial beers (Kopp 2016; Baron 1962; Carroll and Swaminathan 2000). Regardless,
the growth of craft brewing in the United States and North Carolina has been increasing craft brewers’ share of the beer market (Brewers Association 2015b).

North Carolina was the first state to legalize Prohibition (Glenn 2012), cementing a legacy of restrictions on alcohol production that brewers in the state have since had to confront. Restrictions on location of breweries, as well as beer’s alcohol content and distribution channels have been major factors in the recent development of North Carolina craft beer. The development of the craft beer market in North Carolina, and the U.S. generally, has been shaped by post-prohibition legislative hangovers. Excise taxes that remained on the books and laws governing distribution of alcohol facilitated the concentration of the brewing market following Prohibition, and limited the existence of smaller, more diverse breweries (Kopp 2016; Tremblay and Tremblay 2005). The removal of these restrictions, namely the removal of excise taxes in 1978, allowed homebrewers to make more diverse styles of beer and begin opening microbreweries beginning in the late-1970s and early-1980s (Chapman 2015; Kopp 2016; Hindy 2014).

The initial legislative hangover confronted by North Carolinian breweries related to location and point of sale. The first craft brewery in North Carolina, Weeping Radish in Manteo, faced legislative restrictions against opening a restaurant and brewery in the same space (Myers and Ficke 2016). Weeping Radish, working with the office of Senator Marc Basnight, was successful in lifting the restrictions on serving in-house brewed beer in a restaurant (Myers and Ficke 2016). This loosening of restrictions on restaurants aided the development of other brewpubs (a restaurant and brewery combination) throughout the state in the early 1990s. Breweries such as Spring Garden Brewery (later renamed Red Oak
Brewery) and the first post-prohibition brewery in Asheville Highland Brewing led the way, and were followed by a number of other breweries during the 1990s. Craft brewing in North Carolina grew steadily with an average of 1.2 breweries opening annually during the 1990s, as represented in Appendix A, Figure 1.

The second legislative hang-up related to alcohol by volume, or ABV. According to legislation written following the repeal of prohibition, malted beverages in North Carolina were required to be under 6% ABV (Myers and Ficke 2016). The ABV restriction meant that beer styles being popularized in the growing American craft and import beer market were excluded from the state. The restriction on style meant that national and regional craft breweries could not sell their full beer portfolio in the state, decreasing the likelihood of expansion into the North Carolina market.

A movement among brewers and their supporters, called “Pop the Cap,” emerged in 2003, and sought to raise the ABV cap on beer (Myers and Ficke 2016; Glenn 2012; Hartis 2013). The movement was led by Sean Wilson, along with a coalition of brewers, consumers, and All About Beer Magazine (Myers and Ficke 2016). The group hired lobbyists to press for raising the ABV cap, arguing that this would give beer aficionados access to more beer styles and boost the state’s economy.

Pop the Cap was contested throughout the state. Counter-movements of “neoprohibitionists”—as Pop the Cap activists referred to them—including religious conservatives and conservative legislators, attempted to block it (Glenn 2012; Hartis 2013). Framing contests around brewing followed. Pop the Cap activists framed their arguments based on economic impacts and development in the state, and opponents arguing that raising
the cap could generate a variety of social problems. In one article, for example, a counter activist attempted to relate higher ABV beer to car accidents and drunk driving (LaGrone 2004). Distributors also organized against Pop the Cap due to decreased market share for the brands they represented. Nonetheless, the movement was successful, with Governor Mike Easley signing House Bill 392 in 2005, raising the ABV cap from 5.9% to 15%.

Following Pop the Cap, North Carolina saw an increase in the average number of breweries founded every year. Between 1986 and 2005, on average 1.15 breweries opened per year (see Figure 1). From 2006 to 2016, the average increased to 14.1 per year, an increase of 1,126%. Brewers began to diversify the styles of beer they produced and innovate styles of beer, helping to expand the market in North Carolina. In part, the Pop the Cap movement and actors involved helped to create the craft beer market’s “sticky culture” (Fine 2013), integrating the brewers and consumers into a community with a shared social identity and memory.

Bolstered by Asheville’s craft brewing prominence, North Carolina has grown into a craft beer tourist destination, with an attendant shift in the state’s place identity. Although Asheville is often featured in media stories about North Carolina craft brewing, the craft beer market has grown throughout the entire state (Myers and Ficke 2016). Breweries have been involved with tourist promotions and with helping redevelop downtown areas (Hudnall 2016; Trogdon 2016). All About Beer Magazine, published in Durham, North Carolina, hosts annual World Beer Festivals in Durham and Raleigh, attracting breweries from all over the world. Museums, universities, and community and technical colleges have all moved into
promoting craft beer and brewing in the state by holding events, housing training programs, and researching agricultural development of hops and malts.

**DATA AND METHODS**

To examine how craft brewers localize their products in regions with limited heritage and traditions of brewing, I conducted a case study analysis of craft brewing in the Triangle region of North Carolina. The aim of the case study is not to generalize about the behavior of craft brewers throughout the United States. Rather, the aim of this case study is to provide an in-depth examination of these particular craft brewers, identifying the strategies and processes that they use to localize their products. By contextualizing a single case, researchers can observe variations in processes (Small 2009), which can create new questions to help to develop our knowledge of these processes (Becker 2014). Such case studies move beyond identifying sets of variables and outcomes, instead examining how and why outcomes are reached through these particular strategies (Becker 2014; Rivera 2008; Small 2009). These strategies and processes can then be generalized to other cases, which may appear to be completely unrelated, as “generic processes” (Becker 2014; Charmaz 2014).

The Research Triangle region of North Carolina is located in the central part of the state. It is home to the state capital, Raleigh, and two other urban centers, Chapel Hill and Durham. The Triangle is also home to three research universities and a number of smaller metropolitan, suburban, and rural communities. This region offers an opportunity to examine the localization processes of a neolocal industry in an area with diverse and sometimes
contending histories. Geographic distribution of the brewers in the region also allows for examining how the processes of localization occurs in different locales.

The Triangle currently has a thriving craft beer scene, with 38 breweries in operation (including three early entrants into the market) (Myers and Ficke 2016) and more on the verge of opening during the 6-month course of my data collection from June 2016 to December 2016. *All About Beer Magazine*, an industry and popular media source on brewing and craft beer, and the North Carolina Craft Brewers Guild are also located in the Triangle. Further, the movement to lift the ABV cap began in the Triangle region, with Sean Wilson, the leader of the movement, being based in Durham.

Data for this analysis come from 13 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with members of the regional brewing community. The interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. Eleven interviews were with brewery owners or workers, including brand managers and brewers. Two of the 11 were women. Only one participant was non-white. To gain more contextual knowledge, I also interviewed a community college brewing program coordinator and a local farmer working to develop and provide locally sourced ingredients for the market. To construct my interview sample, I began with “cold call” emails to people listed on brewery or organization websites. I also used snowball sampling, asking interviewees to recommend others for inclusion. I also sought participants—such as women, minority group members, and early entrants—who could offer historical, change, and/or diverse perspectives.

I approached the interviews as guided conversations (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015), having a set of questions but being open to broadening the discussion based upon emerging
themes. My interviews were content coded for general themes that emerged and analytic memos written based upon these themes. When analyzing my interviews, I treated each as a separate case (Small 2009), which allowed for comparing similar strategies and how they differ between each participant. This strategy also pointed me toward new lines of inquiry to pursue in other interviews. It should be noted, that while the members of the brewing market I interviewed are located in a single region, they are also embedded in a number of different social relations and contexts. Brewers may not conceptualize their participation simply as being based in the regional market I examined. They are members of larger communities and markets of North Carolinian and national craft brewers, drawing upon different cultural and symbolic resources in their localization strategies.

To bolster and contextualize my interview data, I examined 38 brewery websites compiled from Myers and Ficke’s (2016) list of Triangle breweries, with a focus on the websites’ “About” sections. I focused on how the breweries present themselves as social actors (Goffman 1959) to consumers, seeking to discern the meanings and values they attach to their products and businesses. Additional secondary data come from the historical narratives presented in three tourism-oriented books written about North Carolina’s brewing industry, one general and two city-specific. The general brewing text, North Carolina Craft Beer and Breweries by Myers and Ficke (2016), begins with a history of brewing, and then offers short descriptions of breweries in the different regions of North Carolina. Although the specific cities described in the other texts are outside the Triangle region, these narratives provide further illustration of market localization strategies. Rivera (2008) similarly draws upon tourism texts in her examination of place-making in Croatia, analyzing how the
narratives are used to reframe cultural understandings of place. Tourism oriented books demonstrate a process of socially constructing public knowledge of the industry and the state’s identity. Further historical and secondary data are drawn from local news sources, such as the Raleigh *News & Observer* and *All About Beer Magazine*, with special attention to the Triangle region.

**ANALYSIS**

The localization of craft brewing in North Carolina and development of the craft beer market involves much more than simply opening breweries to meet demand. Brewers have established an embedded market community or “strategic group” (Sonenshein et al. 2017), that provides social and material resources that insulate them from some of the negative effects of competition. The collegiality and relationships between members of this craft beer community fosters everyday shared values that brewers use to differentiate their products and direct their actions. Brewers are able to remain colleagues with shared understandings about the growing market niche and product category. Through revising the history of the state, emphasizing brewing and alcohol production as a component of North Carolina’s culture, these brewers create a sense of historical continuity of the practice and market, allowing for collectively creating a story about brewing in the state. They also “bridge” to general historical events in their branding, redefining them to fit with their business and production practices. Brewers use traditions of invention (Paxson 2013) to establish new cultural
“traditions” that situate the market and products in place. I discuss each of these findings in detail below.

Brewing Community

The brewers I interviewed said that they did not necessarily view other craft brewers as competitors. Instead, they frequently mentioned that they were part of a community based upon collaboration and innovation. Darryl, when asked about competition in the craft beer market, noted:

Ultimately, when brewers look at competition, we’re thinking of the big guys because they are the ones who are more likely to be doing mergers and acquisitions, taking over, [and] coming into the market. There are some industry players who are doing little more deceptive tactics here and there, but by and large, we’re all in the same boat against the big guys.

Instead, these craft brewers view macrobrewers as an “Other” from whom they can differentiate themselves (Koontz 2010; Weber et al. 2008). By viewing themselves as primarily in competition with large industrial brewers, who are buying local breweries and taking local market share by selling “crafty,” but not craft, beers (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000), brewers form a strategic group identity. As Pete explains:

The only thing that’s remotely close to it, that I’ve run into, is the open-source coding industry…. Where the idea is, you take someone’s idea and…you take your take on it. And then everybody celebrates that. “OK, what are the best parts of this? Let’s figure that out, let’s figure it out together.” …Now can…these extremely collaborative industries only exist when they are…sub-industries of an industry that has a greater macro-component, so they always have market share they can eat into?... And clearly, I probably don’t even have to describe exactly how that same thing is at work in the craft beer industry.

2 All interviewee names are pseudonyms.
Pete’s account of his experience with “local” brewers shows how they foster a collaborative environment. Collaboration involves sharing ideas and promoting the development of the industry, market, and cultural product of North Carolina craft beer. Because the market-share that these brewers are attempting to capture is from the large breweries, they more readily cooperate.³

Brewers often gave examples of the collaborative nature of the industry. Both Darryl and Pete above describe how brewers provide help to each other:

It’s still very much a collaborative environment. People help…each other left, right, and center. The first day I was brewing [my assistant brewer] couldn’t make it in, and I had a guy from one of the other breweries come by and he literally helped me load my grain in and get it started on the brew day. A few hours later, somebody else had heard I was on my first brew day so they came down and helped me dig out my mash ton.

I get probably two or three calls, at least two calls a week from other brewers saying, “I just ran out of Amarillo hops, do you have any? I just ran out of rice, you mind if I come by and get a sack?” And I know I can go to these guys with the same questions, and, yeah, we just share back and forth. I can’t think of another industry that really does that very well.

These brewers are willing to share resources with each other, which creates a sense of reciprocity for time and work with the others in the strategic group. Darren describes how brewers share information to help each other out:

Yeah. It’s collaborative in that very much [so] it’s a lot of the small breweries against the larger breweries in terms of competition. We’re all very collaborative. Like, I’m good friends with a bunch of different brewery owners. We share ideas, we talk to each other about personnel problems, it’s

³ As these excerpts are based upon the brewers’ accounts, the reality may be more complex. Further research based upon participant observation would provide a better understanding of the practices of competition and cooperation in the market, which is discussed in the conclusion.
very collaborative and very friendly…. We’re all helping each other in that nobody’s sitting there going like “I’m totally going to screw this guy by giving him bad advice.”

Since craft brewing is still a relatively new industry, collaboration stabilizes the developing market. These brewers are also establishing the norms of participation for new breweries. Further, the general category of North Carolina craft beer and how it is represented to consumers promotes sharing of resources and collaboration. Johnathan, the brewing program director at a local community college, noted:

So, brewers [are] like “Wait, you want me to teach people to open up competing breweries?” I’m like, “Yeah, I do.” And they’re like, “OK?” And I’m like, “What we don’t want is a lot of breweries opening up with people who don’t know what they are doing.” And they’re like, “You’re right, you’re right.”

By sharing resources, including knowledge and information, brewers ensure that new market entrants do not stigmatize the product in consumers’ eyes (Sonenshein et al. 2017). Brewers’ participation in training of people entering the market allows them to maintain the valued category of North Carolina craft beer, ensuring that new entrants are capable of making “quality” products.

Part of what holds the community together going forward is the choice to remain independent, one of the components of the Brewers Association (n.d.) definition of craft brewers. In Ryan’s view:

But it’s just the things—we’re up against some billion dollar corporations, and you’ve gotta play the game sometimes. We just hope our customers understand. And I mean down to the local, I mean my singular customers not just my retail customers, my singular customers understand independent means something these days. You choose to be independent or you choose not to be independent…. 

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Being independent marks distinction between the macro- and “crafty” brewers (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000). Brewers appear to bond with each other around this shared valuing of independence.

As might be expected, brewers also share a strong interest in beer itself:

And that’s what I love about this industry. It’s built with friends and colleagues who share ideas. I hope that never changes. I love that part of it. I don’t love the sales part of it right now, some of it, but I still have very loyal customers. And the thing…is, beer is beer, but it’s the people and the sharing of beer with people, that’s the conviviality, I’m making up words now, that’s the most important part of it. Getting together with people you like, talking about it, enjoying it.

Brewers’ shared interests and willingness to help each other creates a collaborative community. They view each other as friends and colleagues based upon their shared interest in beer. The sales side of brewing, however, creates some tensions for brewers because of the impetus of competition.

Brewers are also future oriented in their understandings of the collaborative nature of this community. A number discussed the possible effects that increased market growth might have. Frederick draws on examples from more saturated beer markets:

If you look at places that are actually getting saturated, and there’s still a lot of saturating with craft beer consumption. Oregon and Washington are 80% craft. Eighty percent of their beer dollars go to craft. North Carolina, we’re at the national average, eleven. So, until we’ve got 80-90% of the market being local, no one’s going to be competing against each other really. They’re going to be competing against “Hey, you might wanna drink something with more flavor than [macro-brews] or something like that.”

Again, Frederick discusses how competition in smaller markets is geared towards capturing market share from larger breweries. His references to places where craft brewers command a larger share of the market shows a future oriented understanding of temporal and normative
changes around market scale and competition. The effects of increased growth of the market has already been noted by more established brewers:

…it’s changed who I compete with. I used to compete with Bass, Newcastle, Harp, Guinness, all your classic Great Britain beers and it was not easy to compete with them. But, I had a lot of advantages to them. I’m local; I’m fresher—I mean the beers going to be a week old, this stuff coming in is going to be three months old. I’m cheaper because that stuff’s all coming in and you gotta pay all that shipping and stuff…. So, I had a lot of competitive advantages, and I can’t use a lot of those in sales calls now because I’m not the closest one to a lot of people, because there’s so many in the neighborhood….

Between these newer guys, and the desperation sales tactics, and [macros] and their push right now, it makes the sales end of things much different than they used to be. It used to be just straight up. There’s a little messing around, people pushing your six-packs to the back and covering them up with theirs. But you just had to be diligent and hope your wholesaler was on top of things. But now, there’s very well-heeled interests out there that are doing a whole lot more than messing around. They’re causing a lot of trouble…. They put pressure on the distributors, on the wholesaler.

These brewers note the changes in foci and how their strategies have shifted around competition. Instead of competing with import brands, more and more they are updating their strategies for competing with people in the same geographical area. The changes in how this is handled, such as desperation sales tactics, negatively affects the collegiality and collaboration in the market. Brewers frame most of these changes and grievances in terms of large breweries’ sales tactics and abilities to manipulate distribution and wholesalers, upon whom many brewers are also dependent.

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4 Hindy (2014) notes that manipulation and pressure upon distributors and wholesalers precipitated the “Beer Wars” of the 1980s and 1990s.
Competition is still present, even if understated. As Darren said when I asked about collaboration and competition in the market, he responded “yes.” Still, Darren and others viewed competition in terms of outside sales around tap handles and shelf-space as opposed to production processes. All the brewers I interviewed had taprooms, where they could have some level of monopoly control over what they sold. Outside sales represented the “fierceness” of competition in the market:

There’s a mixture in there. It’s tough; it’s pretty fierce. I mean…almost every brewery that I know of has personal money in it. Their life savings is in their brewery. And if you don’t think they are going to be fierce when it comes to sales, you’re underestimating them. Because they want it every bit as much as you do, and they are every bit as local as you are, and they think they’ve got something better than yours…. But I don’t think there’s any nastiness to it or spitefulness to it. And even though it is super competitive, it’s friendly enough that you can go out and have a drink with these guys afterwards. And I mean, we’re all selling beer and we all like beer and stuff like that.

…it’s a very competitive market in that there’s limited shelf space [and] there’s limited tap space. And we are beholden to retailers and distributors to move product forward or to treat our product well. Which makes our section very thin. Our margins are very small and so it’s a very competitive market place in terms of placement. So yeah, there’s a lot of competition. That doesn’t mean it’s nasty competition. I’m not going to go and like slash somebody’s delivery vehicle tires, or even—like I don’t want to go out and badmouth somebody in the marketplace ‘cause I feel like that’s not warranted. I don’t want to go out there and get a lot of sales because I’m telling everybody how shitty everybody else’s beer is.

Even though brewers are cognizant of increased competition around outside sales, they drew important distinctions. To these brewers, others in this market space are not “nasty” competition. What tempers the negative aspects of competition are the shared interests of members of the brewing community, including linking craft beer to ideas about place and locale creating and maintaining the category of North Carolina craft beer. They still view
each other as friends, and see their shared interest in beer as taking precedence over market rivalries.

Brewers also remarked at length on key events in North Carolina’s brewing history, such as Pete’s description of “Pop the Cap”:

And then “Pop the Cap” happened… it is important to understand “Pop the Cap” not as a “Oh, we finally have beers that are higher alcohol and all that kinda stuff.” What it did was it opened up the market to breweries and distributors that could talk to breweries that had portfolios that were halfway over 6% and halfway under 6%. So, then they came in, even if their flagship was under 6% they hadn’t been here ‘cause they couldn’t sell their whole portfolio here. So, all of a sudden you have this rush of breweries on the market, that were all over the country.

Pop the Cap aided the establishment and solidification of North Carolina’s craft beer and brewing market, and it gave craft brewers incentive to collaborate and form a group identity. Collective memory of this campaign continues to promote a feeling of we-ness among members of the brewing community.

Part of what creates community are shared values and history (Durkheim 2001, 1951; Berger and Luckmann 1966). Brewers establish their community by creating an “Other” of macrobrewing, against which they define their group identity. They differentiate from the “Other” based upon their shared values. At the base of these shared values, for these brewers, is a fervent interest in beer. This shared interest allows for friendly exchanges and competition. Other shared values relate to the choices to be a member of this community. By helping new brewers enter the community and offering to train them, not only are brewers increasing the labor pool, but they are also ensuring that North Carolina craft beer will not be
devalued. Brewers’ references to a shared experience, such as the Pop the Cap campaign, creates a shared history in pursuing a shared future.

*Creating Brewing Heritage*

Brewers’ shared concern with marketing a quality product associated with place influences their portrayals of the heritage of brewing in North Carolina. As Bowen and De Master (2014) and Bessière (1998) note, heritage allows for establishing connections to place for products and markets. Selling material commodities also sells symbolism and nostalgia (Bessière 1998). However, industrial concentration and homogenization of brewing, along with climate, limited the historical development of brewing in North Carolina. As a neocal market, members of the brewing community are still establishing what that “heritage” might entail.

*Revising and writing history*

To establish a heritage of brewing in North Carolina, craft brewers and beer journalists have rewritten the history of the state in tourism-oriented books. These books draw loosely upon historical documents and accounts to show that brewing has occurred in the state. These texts represent “implied objective realities” (Maines et al. 1983) based upon actual historical events that are reconstructed and emphasized in the present through social memory. That is to say, these are not “falsified” or “mythical” pasts (Hobsbawm 1983; Maines et al. 1983) but are based upon actual history, and in this case, provide ample
references. The social function of these texts is to establish the heritage of brewing in North Carolina in service of the present, intertwining brewing with ideas about the state’s culture.

One example of a city-specific historical text on brewing is Hartis’s (2013) *Charlotte Beer: A History of Brewing in the Queen City*, which begins with colonial settlement of Charlotte. Hartis tells the story of Captain James Jack, a tavern owner in Charlotte referred to as the “Paul Revere of the South” (Hartis 2013:13) because he delivered documents written in the wake of the early battles of the American Revolution to the Continental Congress (Hartis 2013). Hartis uses this story to create a historical connection to brewing, positioning a tavern keeper (assumed to have made his own beer) as a key figure in Charlotte’s and North Carolina’s history.

Many of the claims made about brewing in Hartis (2013) and in Glenn’s (2012) *Asheville Beer: An Intoxicating History of Mountain Brewing* are implied. For example, the lack of historical records of brewing in North Carolina in both texts is explained away:

The reason there seems to be a dearth of beer-related records for colonial Charlotte is likely because beer was so commonplace that it needed not be mentioned (Hartis 2013: 15).

But there’s no doubt that beer was here in the early days of Asheville’s history. The drink was just so ubiquitous that its existence wasn’t worth writing much about (Glenn 2012: 17).

Both references imply that the reason for the lack of historical records on beer is because of its ubiquity (rather than its shallowness). Academic historians, such as Baron (1962) and Kopp (2016), concur that brewing and beer were common in most early European settlements in North America, with migrants bringing and establishing their brewing cultures where they settled (Kopp 2016). Myers and Ficke’s (2016) *North Carolina Craft Beer &
Traditional histories of North Carolina say little or no brewing was done in the state’s past. They cite the warm, humid climate and ignore the generation of British, Scottish, German, and Czech immigrants who settles North Carolina. Having arrived from beer-drinking cultures, those immigrants were unlikely to forgo their favorite beverage simply because of a little weather….Christopher von Graffenried included in his *Account of the Founding of New Bern*…a letter from a colonist to a kinsman in Germany requesting that he send brewing equipment…. (Myers and Ficke 2016:1)

These authors tweak North Carolina’s history, treating brewing as an important part of life in North Carolina’s colonial period. With this rich past, the authors imply, it is no wonder that North Carolina is a hotbed of craft brewing today.

The strategy of revising the history of North Carolina to tout brewing is an example of retrojection (Berger and Luckmann 1966). A current form of action (brewing) is legitimated as part of North Carolina’s culture by highlighting brewing in the past. Reaching back in time, and associating brewing with key events in North Carolina, the authors create the impression of historical continuity in practices. The narratives in these texts proffer beer and brewing as an everyday, taken-for-granted part of the North Carolina’s history and culture.

These texts proceed linearly from colonial, or precolonial, alcohol production in North Carolina’s past to the present growth of craft brewing. Glenn’s (2012) focus on moonshining as a proxy for brewing culture is illustrative. Glenn discusses how members of Western North Carolina’s mountain communities have historically, yet illegally, distilled
liquor. Weaving the role of this particular alcoholic beverage into the founding narratives of Asheville, Glenn writes:

The first *Asheville City Directory* (1883-84) notes that when the first Buncombre County commissioners were appointed to select a location for the county seat in 1797, they originally chose a site roughly where Biltmore Village now sits….the commissioners were swayed by a taste of the local “mountain dew” at a small tavern….unanimously changed their minds, and, acceding to the wishes of the tavern-keeper, decided the ‘best place for a town to be, was where good whiskey was plenty,’” reads the account…. And a town that was founded “where good whiskey was plenty” would be *destined* [emphasis added] to become a city where good beer is plenty too. (p.22)

By claiming that whiskey production was *destined* to result in beer production, this excerpt makes beer brewing appear as an inevitable outcome and cultural practice. The past event is redefined as a sufficient predecessor for the development of contemporary craft brewing. The history established in these texts, finally arrives at key current events, such as Pop the Cap, which facilitated the current development of craft brewing in North Carolina.

All three books have chapters on Pop the Cap (Glenn 2012:104; Hartis 2013:68; Myers and Ficke 2016:222). Inclusion of Pop the Cap not only establishes recent history, but provides a concrete rallying point and explanation of the development of the craft beer market in the state.

*Bridging history*

Revising and writing history to establish a brewing heritage is only one retrojection strategy. Branding of place-based products often draws upon references to historical events relating products to places (Schnell and Reese 2003). Schnell and Reese (2003) examine references to the history of place, but references also draw upon industrial and brewing
history to situate these businesses in place (Lamertz et al. 2016). However, Schnell and Reese (2003) stop short of analyzing how this branding alters historical understandings of the events being invoked. I found that brewers also engage in these strategic uses of history in their branding and marketing. For example, the story of Captain James Jack, discussed above, is used in Old Mecklenberg Brewery’s branding of the “Captain James Jack Pilsner” (Hartis 2013: 14).

Brewers also reach outside of North Carolina’s brewing history to a more general history of place. By bridging history, tying an unrelated historical event to current practices, brewers establish stronger connections to place. Regulator Brewing Co., for example, draws upon the history of the Regulator Movement in naming and branding its beers. The Regulators in colonial North Carolina were mostly poor farmers from the western counties who, in 1766, rebelled against taxes levied to pay for the governor’s mansion in the eastern part of the state (Powell 1989; Zinn 2003). The Regulator Movement culminated in a violent confrontation in Hillsborough, NC, where Regulator Brewing Co. is located today. Regulator Brewing Co. draws upon this specific historical reference to tap into the general history of place. Its website’s “about” section states:

The Regulators in pre-Revolutionary NC fought for the small farmers’ right to participate fairly in the local economy [emphasis added]. Not only do we support this standard, we believe that products grown by local farms are better for us and our beer. (http://www.regulatorbrewing.com/about/)

Regulator Brewing Co. is not simply building upon a static reference to the Regulator Movement. Instead, it is relating the causes of the movement to the current values that bolster its marketing message, emphasizing the needs of the local economy to build local beer
demand. The Regulator Movement was directed toward contextually specific grievances of colonial government exploitation (Powell 1989). The brewery’s focus on ideas about the local economy transposes the movement’s grievances to the present, framing their business practices, such as local sourcing and supporting local farmers, as an extension of the movement. By creating these historical associations, the brewery anchors itself historically, spatially, and culturally in North Carolina.

Brewers have more “pasts” and traditions to draw upon than those associated with the state. In places where brewing industries are still being established, brewers can draw upon the general global history of brewing to convey the value and authenticity of their products. Carolina Brewing Co. provides an example of how brewers use “mythical” pasts (Maines et al. 1983) in branding a product:

The lion is a traditional brewing symbol, [sic] legend has it that before refrigeration the barrels of beer were stored in caves to keep it cool. A lion was perched at the mouth of the cave to ensure none of the tasty liquids were pilfered. We have been unable to confirm the story, but after a few tasty liquids it seems more likely to be true. (http://www.carolinabrew.com/faqs/)

By drawing upon the guardian myth of the lion, the brewery positions itself as a protector of craft, differentiating itself from industrial brewers.

Other breweries also draw upon the general history of brewing to legitimate and differentiate their products and businesses. According to Watson (2014b) there have been recent demographic shifts in craft beer consumption, such as the growing interest by women. The long history of brewing, moving from a household task often conducted by women (Baron 1962; Kopp 2016; Bostwick 2014), offers historical resources for legitimating women’s participation in the market. Bombshell Beer Company, which is female owned,
draws upon this general history of brewing, starting with the Sumerians to situate itself within brewing heritage:

History tells us that brewing beer was traditionally a woman's job. In fact, the creation of beer is credited to women! The goddess Ninkasi is recognized for creating the oldest beer recipe in existence, dating back some 3900 years. Until Medieval times, it was the woman's job to brew beer for the household and laws of that time stated that the tools of brewing were solely the woman's property. The role of men in brewing began to grow with the rise of monasteries during the Middle Ages. Until the age of "Enlightenment" and "Industrialization," women represented seventy-eight percent of licensed brewers. From that period on the role of women in brewing declined rapidly, which the founders of Bombshell say in jest, was the downfall of the art of brewing. (http://www.bombshellbeer.com/About/About-Us).

This excerpt provides a very broad history of brewing, cherry picking points for this brewery.

The brewery legitimates its current participation in a male-dominated market by citing a history of women in brewing. This strategy lends an “aura of authenticity” (Aupers, O’neill, and Houtman 2014) to its products, implying that male control of brewing has resulted in homogenized products.

North Carolina craft brewers are constructing revisionist histories of brewing in North Carolina, one that creates an impression of continuity and place-based embeddedness in cultural practices. In this way, brewers are presenting themselves as authentically local. The use of retrojection by brewers opens new historical and cultural resources that they can draw upon in their marketing. These resources provide different values and beliefs that are associated with the brewery’s identity. Brewers draw upon these resources to differentiate their businesses and products for consumers and others in the brewing community.
Tradition of Invention

The Brewers Association (2013) defines\textsuperscript{5} craft brewing as brewing based on “traditional” or “innovative” practices and ingredients. This definition institutionalizes a living culture approach to brewing, which allows for variations and continued development. The Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) also institutionalizes a living culture of U.S. brewing. The BJCP states that their guidelines for categories and styles are just that, guidelines. “…[The category and style guidelines are] suggestions, not hard limits. Allow for some flexibility in judging so that well-crafted examples can be rewarded” (BJCP 2015:v). Dogmatic acceptance of traditional styles, Mosher (2017) argues, would result in the homogenized products associated with industrial production. Overemphasis on traditions reduces living cultures to static imitations lacking creativity (Mosher 2017). American craft brewing in contrast, values local innovation that builds upon established brewing cultures.

Breaking with tradition

Historically, not all brewing rules and regulations (at least in their present interpretations) have allowed for much variation. The Reinheitsgebot, a 16\textsuperscript{th}-century Bavarian brewing law (often referred to as the “purity law”) is one such example (Smale 2016; Handwerk 2016). The Reinheitsgebot began in 1516 to restrict the use of dangerous ingredients and introduce

\textsuperscript{5} The Brewers Association’s (2013) definition is composed of three criteria, with production practices being only one. The other two are “small” (producing fewer than 600,000 barrels of beer per year) and “independent” (with 75% ownership being a craft brewer or someone outside of the macro-brewing industry).
taxes on brewing (Handwerk 2016), limiting the ingredients in beer to water, barley, hops, and (added later) yeast (Smale 2016; Handwerk 2016).

Although only ever legally enforceable in Germany (and granted status there as protected cultural patrimony [Handwerk 2016; Alworth 2016]), the law has been used as a foil in North American craft brewing’s practices and branding (Lamertz et al. 2016; Carroll and Swaminathan 2000). By following the Reinheitsgebot, some breweries are claiming to participate in a long and venerable tradition of making beer. However, many American craft brewers have resisted the ideas, as well as the practices, of the Reinheitsgebot referring to it as “art censorship” (Mosher 2017).

The North Carolinian brewers in my sample have contrasting views on the Reinheitsgebot. Some fondly mentioned it in discussing their products and approach to brewing. For example, Red Oak Brewery, which opened in 1991, discusses the Reinheitsgebot on its website. The website describes the major components of the brewing tradition and touts a specialty beer, the 1516 Heller Bock, to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the law. The website’s text, however, implies a living culture approach, situating the Reinheitsgebot within the social context of American and North Carolinian craft beer:

Although the Law of Purity has undergone some amendments over the years, the bottom line is that we adhere to the Purity Law of 1516 by using only water, malted barley, yeast and hops. Red Oak Brewery is committed to brewing the best beer possible using only very the best ingredients [emphasis added]. (http://www.redoakbrewery.com/law-of-purity.html)

6 As cited in Smale (2016) Grau has argued that the Reinheitsgebot has become nothing more than a branding and marketing tool. This sentiment is echoed by Greg Koch, founder and owner of Stone Brewing Company, in the same article.
By changing the focus to a more abstract category of “best” ingredients, Red Oak is using the Reinheitsgebot to legitimate its products as adherent to a longer tradition. Although Red Oak cites its use of the four main ingredients, it emphasizes the brewing law’s implication of using quality ingredients. This slight refocusing “opens” the tradition to introducing variation as long as all ingredients are “quality,” thus using the Reinheitsgebot as a baseline, rather than a ceiling for inventing new traditions of brewing.

In my interviews, brewers expressed one of two orientations toward the Reinheitsgebot. Often, brewers with more seniority in the market discussed adherence:

Almost all of our beers fall that way. And it’s just the way we—most craft breweries do it. And it’s not at all that hard to follow…as long as you do kinda the standard stuff. And that’s going back to us being kinda old school. We don’t make beers with strawberries, peaches, blueberries, coffee, chocolate—’cause all those things don’t fall under the Reinheitsgebot, and you know, get you [disqualified] for that. So, 99% of the beers we make would fall under that anyway. So, you know, we don’t talk about it a whole lot, but it’s just the beers that we make…. I think it’s harder making a really goo—not really good beer; but it’s hard to make eye-catching beer or newsworthy beer or flashy beer (emphasis added) when you’re only using the four.

For this brewer, the Reinheitsgebot establishes a norm that all brewers know and, more or less, adhere to—a common yet significant part of the cultural tradition of brewing, which all craft brewers understand and use. For this brewer, following the Reinheitsgebot adds value to the product by showing brewing skills. Working within its constraints requires brewers to be creative and skilled in using the limited ingredients to create noteworthy beer. Adherence to the Reinheitsgebot also aligns them with a more traditional style of brewing, which industrial beer in America has long disregarded, allowing for differentiation.
The baseline of the Reinheitsgebot also allows brewers to differentiate their products from others, by emphasizing innovation, creativity, and individuality. Another brewer I interviewed, whose brewery had opened in 2015 (though he had been in the industry for over a decade), noted his departure from the Reinheitsgebot:

There’s multiple sugar sources. To me, I’m using…separate sugar sources, so I’m not Reinheitsgebot dependent. At times in my life I have been. At the same time, I think I’ve moved beyond it in a comfortable fashion. I’m not as worried about that. I want the beer to turn out right. The process, the ingredients, the brew (emphasis added). The Belgians also believe that there are major ingredients in beer, they only have three though: experience, imagination, and creativity.

This account focuses on the production process as what matters in brewing, not just the ingredients. Ingredients are important, but craft is about the skills of the brewer and his or her involvement in the whole brewing process.

Another brewer, whose brewery had only been open about a year when I interviewed him, described the law as irrelevant to modern American craft brewing:

It was cool back in the day. I mean, no like so, in 1516 it was relevant…it was kind of important because people were adding additives that were toxic…. But I mean the way beer is right now, people, especially in the U.S. where people expect all the hops, there’s not much use for the Reinheitsgebot. Definitely, it came about as a necessity, obviously. After that it was cool for a couple hundred years, but it’s not really applicable anymore.

Another brewery, Mystery Brewing, describes its position on its website as:

We don’t really like the Reinheitsgebot. The German Purity Law of 1516 states that all beer must be made of 3 basic ingredients: water, hops, and barley. (They didn’t really know what yeast was back then.) We think that beer is best made with a wide variety of ingredients to lend flavor and complexity. We brew using a lot of wheat, rye, oats, different types of sugars, fruits, herbs, and spices because we believe that a painter with more colors on his palette can create a picture of even more depth and beauty than
These brewers emphasize the limits of strict interpretations, and characterize it as unduly restricting creativity in modern brewing. Brewers thus justify breaking with past norms and style guidelines. Another brewer, when asked about style guidelines provided by BJCP, says:

You learn which guidelines to pay attention to and which guidelines you can’t pay attention to. IBU’s [International Bittering Units], in my opinion, they don’t mean anything in the modern [emphasis added] context of hoppy beers because what we recognize as hoppy is so much more than bitterness. So, that’s certainly one that’ve I completely thrown out the window. Now color, clarity, mouthfeel, alcohol level, generally those parameters I try to stick inside of if I’m going for a specific style. And general ingredients. And to some extent, historical ingredients.

This brewer’s approach to style guidelines emphasizes his agency. Although working within very general frameworks for style, he alters these guidelines to create room for innovation.

Paxson’s (2013) artisanal cheesemakers did much the same as they differentiated their products from strict traditions based upon ingredients, characteristics, and production processes. The ability to break with traditions allows for beginning to update beer and brewing to promote cultural innovation.

As Paxson (2013) notes, scientific knowledge also helps new producers to control and understand their production processes. Adding general scientific principles and knowledge updates traditions based upon “modern” cultural values (see Giddens 1990; Paxson 2013). By learning the science behind the brewing process, brewers have more control and deeper understandings of what is occurring in the process. One brewer noted the context of contemporary production practices and the intermingling of art, science, and certifications in brewing:
But the actual fermentation is all science and the actual set up of the wort in beer, which is the liquid before you add yeast...is setting up the correct environment for the yeast to prosper. So, like, pH, premium nitrogen zinc level, and then sugar. And then the sugar content...determines...how much yeast you pitch....I think if anything, getting certifications made my recipes simpler. That I use less ingredients generally. I use less malt, like, less types of malt. So, like before I needed all these malt flavors in there, now it’s like, “Hey I can get these malt flavors from doing two things.” So yeah, it definitely streamlined the recipe process.

This brewer’s certifications and understanding of the science behind the brewing process allow for greater control and ease in production. The combination of expert knowledge with subjective experience (Paxson 2013) expands brewers’ control over the outcomes, while still permitting creativity. Combining ideas about scientific control with brewing elicits further departures from established traditions, updating them to the modern context.

**Establishing brewing traditions**

Brewers in North Carolina are constructing “new” brewing traditions and styles, attempting to establish a new tradition of brewing associated with the South generally and North Carolina specifically, and calling them such. The mission statement for Fullsteam Brewery in Durham, states on its website:

Fullsteam is a Durham, North Carolina production brewery and tavern inspired by the food and farm traditions of the South. Our mission: to pioneer the art of Distinctly Southern Beer. We brew traditional and experimental beers with a Southern sensibility, often incorporating local farmed goods, heirloom grains, and seasonal botanicals to guide our beer and our quest. The more we buy local, the more we directly improve the quality of life of North Carolina farmers, foragers, and agricultural entrepreneurs. We seek no

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7 Not all the brewers I interviewed, or in the Triangle and North Carolina generally, are as explicitly focused on creating a North Carolina style or tradition of brewing.
less than to build a Southern Beer Economy…one pint at a time.
(http://www.fullsteam.ag)

This approach to establishing a new tradition is inspired by Southern food traditions and perceptions of “Southern sensibilities.” But what are these sensibilities? According to Fullsteam’s “about” section:

Southern-sourced beer fosters **agricultural pride and prosperity** in a post-tobacco North Carolina. Through the **act of commerce**, we directly improve the quality of life of neighboring farmers, foragers, and agricultural entrepreneurs. We seek to build a **Southern Beer Economy**…one pint at a time [emphasis in original]. (http://www.fullsteam.ag/about/values/)

Establishing a “Southern” beer tradition is not simply an aesthetic goal, but also an economic one, intermingling cultural and economic values (see Paxson 2013). The goal of new beer and food traditions is to recreate “agricultural pride and prosperity” in North Carolina, moving beyond the stigmatized past of tobacco production to a local economy based in part around beer production.

Other brewers in North Carolina are also interested in inventing a more specific North Carolina brewing tradition by “creating” and marketing new styles of beer. One example is the “Durhamer,” a beer style designed to promote the local *terroir* of Durham. Seth Gross, inventor of the “Durhamer” and owner of Bull City Burger and Brewery in Durham said in an interview with WNCN:

“We have been working on [the “Durhamer”] for over a year after the idea came to me one night while contemplating the beer in my glass and the origins of style,” owner, Seth Gross explained. “Long ago, beer styles were defined and created by brewers having limited ingredients within their geographic boundaries. Similarly, this beer will showcase the ingredients we have locally to define the style and create something new,” Gross said. “Instead of adding a prefix or a suffix to a known style, such as creating a Black IPA or an IPL, we have created a new style from the ground up.”
To brew the “Durhamer,” brewers have to use Durham water and North Carolina grown hops and malts. Emphasizing the boundedness of geography and agricultural products connects the product to local agricultural terroir, even if not explicitly invoking the concept. Gross, by imitating historical practices in development of the Durhamer, taps into the history of brewing, creating a new beer style particular to North Carolina and to Durham. As with retrojection, tapping into brewing history adds a sheen of authenticity to the product and the process, even though it is nominally new.

However, some brewers discussed how they select the beer styles they brew based upon their interpretation of local tastes. One brewer said:

And to my eye, the North Carolina palate, not looking at beer nerds but looking at the range in general, tends away from really hoppy stuff and towards more malty and sweet stuff. I don’t know if it’s because everybody drinks sweet tea or whatever, but I really feel like people like sweeter, richer beers here. So, in developing an IPA…it was sort of that idea of coming up with something that I felt would fit the North Carolina palate well, so it’s a rich, malty beer.

This brewer’s perception of the “North Carolina palate” shows how his subjective understanding influences the style of beers that he makes. In this way, he conjures a new tradition (and market niche) that distinguishes North Carolina craft beer from mass-marketed hoppy beers. This tactic further distinguishes a local form of craft beer (less hoppy) from the general category of American craft beer. Brewers in the region also brought up making approachable styles and avoiding “weird” beer:

You know, like, one of the things I’m kind of a fan of saying is we don’t make weird beer. We really believe that you can still make good beer without it
going all the way to left field, you know. And just people are like, “Wow that’s interesting.” And I’ve had plenty of beers that are interesting that I’ll only drink one of. And I would rather make, you know, I would rather get behind a beer that is really good, that people wanna enjoy many of, that isn’t so unique as to be alienating to a wide audience.

Brewers often emphasized their need for consumers to drink more than one beer (safely) in a sitting:

I do also intend to aim, by and large, for a lower ABV. More sessionable ales. Most of my beers are between 4 and 5.5; IPA’s higher. I’ll…often make one beer that’s a little higher ABV, but most of them if you look at it, it’s an even 4 to 5.5…. And my thought process for that was real simple: that people can enjoy a couple more. That you can have two beers, three beers, and not worry about getting home safe.

So, we were really looking at the demographics when we said we want to make approachable beer. Worst mistake that happens is somebody has been in craft beer and loves a great IPA and then tells their friend, “Oh, I found the best craft beer. You’ll love it! I’ll guarantee you’ll love it.” And they walk them in and they’re used to drinking [macro-brewed light beer] and they give them an IPA, and they’re like “I just don’t like it” and then it turns them off from craft beer all together.

These two brewers discuss the craft brewers’ role in introducing new people to the market and the product as a cultural object (see Ocejo 2014). The hoppiness that seems to be common in craft beer and higher ABV, in their accounts, is off-putting. Although based upon subjective interpretations of consumers, the context of North Carolina craft beer is directing these brewers’ development of style.

*Adjunct terroir*

Prior research on localized food has shown how *terroir* enables particularizing the products to territories and places. There are, however, limits on using claims of *terroir*.
Paxson (2013) shows how artisanal cheesemakers reverse-engineer terroir, individualizing the concept down to local farms and producers’ practices. Craft brewers seldom mentioned terroir when asked about local sourcing. Although, as with the “Durhamer” example above, local ingredients aid in promoting unique to place styles and products, there are limits on using locally sourced ingredients in craft beer.

Although some small-scale breweries attempt to source the majority of their ingredients locally, this is not possible for all breweries. Due to climate, industrial concentration, and agricultural history, the major ingredients in beer are not always available locally. Local farmers are beginning to grow ingredients for brewers, but they have not yet been able to meet demand. Brewers, when asked about local sourcing, discussed hops as a major limit. One brewer said:

I think [local sources] definitely [have] grown, but at the same time it’s still in its infancy. Hop production will never be, with the current varietal base, will never be a major crop in North Carolina…. We don’t have the climate for it. Climatically speaking, hops grow best, the varieties we work with, at the 48th latitude. It means Germany or the Pacific Northwest are prime for it. A hop plant, on prime acreage, in the Pacific Northwest is producing roughly two thousand pounds per acre of hops. A hop plant in North Carolina, good acreage, good yield on a year produces between 800 and 1,000 pounds of hops.

The local farmer I interviewed also discussed these limits on hop production:

Hops, the window is 35 to 55 latitude. We’re right at 35. So, if you’re up near New York, Michigan, Oregon, Germany you’re up in 42-45 degrees of latitude. And they’re going to get 7 to 8 pounds of wet hops per plant. Where we get about 1 to a maximum of 2 pounds of wet hops per plant. Obviously, those data points compounded over a number of plants and acreage are going to yield significantly different. As well as the grain, there’s not a specific grain that’s adapted to consistently to produce here in the South Atlantic, so then there’s that measurement.
The development of new and hybrid hop varieties, typically in the Pacific Northwest (Kopp 2016), has limited transplanting and growing of hops in other regions. Aside from limits on production amounts, there are limitations on the price premiums that brewers are willing (or able) to pay for local ingredients:

A gentleman came to sell us locally grown hops one time. I said, “OK. How much is it going to cost me?” They gave me a number. I said, “You do realize that’s about 10 times what I pay today for hops?” And he’s like, “Well but it’s local.” And I said, “So are we. If I sell you a pint for 20 dollars will you drink it?” He’s like, “That’s expensive.” I said, “It has to work both ways.”

The added work involved in brewing with these local ingredients, often whole cone hops instead of concentrated pellitized hops, compounds the cost and effort:

We have looked at doing some local hops, but don’t really have the equipment to do whole-leaf hops. Whole-leaf hops, you gotta have like 10 times the volume that you would normally have. And my kettle, my brew-kettle, all of a sudden instead of putting a pound of something into it, you’re putting in 10 pounds of big cluster hops. It’ll clog the drains and it just has not, with my equipment, panned out. Plus, they’re wanting the same price that you pay for pellitized hops, and pellitized hops are so much more potent. If I look at 30 grams of pellitized hops it fills a [small] jar…and if I look at 30 grams of whole-leaf hops it fills the whole mason jar. And they’re wanting the same per-pound rate, but, yet I gotta use—it just doesn’t make sense.

The costs and difficulties in producing beer with locally grown hops means that one of the primary components that grants terroir to craft beer (Kopp 2016) is generally difficult to come by, and expensive when it is available. However, brewers have other options to integrate the taste of place into their products. Use of locally grown adjuncts, or different

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8 Historically, transplanting hops has been difficult as the plant was cultivated to grow in particular regions. See Kopp (2016) for a fuller discussion of the social history of hops.
sugar and flavor sources, allows brewers to give their beer a taste of place. One brewer discussed a series of beers that he makes:

We do a thing called [Local] Series where we’ll use a huge amount [of local ingredients]. We’ve got a peach beer about to come out, we’ve got a strawberry beer out now that we’ve done with strawberries from the farmers’ market.

Although not all brewers use adjuncts, some still attempt to create the connections to place with their use. This allows brewers to overcome the limits imposed by historical concentration of the market and agricultural production of the main ingredients of beer, while still giving their products a taste of place.

**DISCUSSION**

Research on localized food and neolocality reveal the use of history, tradition, and heritage in localization processes (Bowen and De Master 2014; Paxson 2013; DeSoucey 2010, 2016; Flack 1997; Schnell and Reese 2003; Mathews and Picton 2014; Lamertz et al. 2016). Paxson’s (2013) concept of the “tradition of invention” examines how newly developing artisanal and local producers draw upon past traditions while integrating contemporary and “modern” ingredients and practices to establish new localized markets and products. Further, these producers reverse-engineer *terroir* to cultivate distinction of their products. While some scholars have noted neolocality in relation to craft brewing, their
analyses have generally disregarded the actual product of craft beer in redefining the meanings and culture of place.

My research of the localization strategies of craft brewers in the Triangle region of North Carolina extends this research. My analysis shows how brewers’ novel uses of the past in the present (Katovich and Couch 1992; Maines et al. 1983; Flaherty and Fine 2001) allow them to tap into history, heritage, and tradition to localize their products and businesses. Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) under-utilized concept of retrojection is particularly useful for theorizing how the past becomes redefined to create a sense of inevitability and continuity of current practices.

I found that brewers downplayed competition by creating an “Other” out of macro-breweries from which they are attempting to capture market share. By defining an “Other,” craft brewers forge community among themselves. In this community, brewers share resources, such as time, labor, and even some ingredients, in promoting the development of a market for a quality product. The shared interests and historical events have promoted collaboration, influencing how competition is managed. The historical events that boosted the market, such as “Pop the Cap,” further allow brewers to recognize a shared history and collective identity for the group.

The present study focuses more directly on the heritage component in the development of the market than Paxson’s (2013) analysis of cheesemakers. Heritage bestows nostalgia and identity on products (Bessière 1998), adding to an “aura of authenticity” around the products (Aupers et al. 2014). As they revise the history of brewing in tourism-focused texts and branding, brewers draw upon “implied objective realities” (Maines et al. 1983) to
create a sense of historical continuity and inevitability in their actions. These revised histories retroject (Berger and Luckmann 1966) the current practices and values into the past. By aligning the history of different cities and North Carolina with brewing, brewing becomes a component of North Carolina’s cultural heritage.

Bridging histories further retroject contemporary meanings, such as the value of local sourcing and building a local economy, into past (and sometimes only loosely related) events, such as the Regulator Movement. By retrojection, a past event can be invoked to legitimate localized production in the present. Bridging into global brewing history allows craft brewers to legitimate their existence as protectors of the craft in the face of industrial production. Invoking global brewing history also creates boundaries that distinguish authentic craft brewers from the rest. The use of brewing history can also legitimate participation in the market, overcoming symbolic boundaries that may arise.

The tradition of invention (Paxson 2013) in craft brewing involves drawing upon institutionalized notions of brewing as part of a living culture linked to past traditions that is also able to establish new ones. Some brewers attempt to maintain the Reinheitsgebot tradition, for example, but even their maintenance involves retrojection. The tradition is not used statically, but rather is altered by modern brewers’ interpretations, emphasizing their values and practices. Reinterpreting the restrictions of the Reinheitsgebot focuses on the general category of “quality ingredients” instead of a limited set of ingredients, allowing brewers to utilize it as a symbolic resource (Koontz 2010). Other brewers have broken completely with the tradition of the Reinheitsgebot, viewing it as outdated and stifling of their creativity. In order to break with the tradition, brewers emphasize its limited
applicability in the current context of American craft brewing. This allows them to integrate new production practices based upon “scientific” understandings and various ingredients, often in a symbolically-laden way that emphasizes modernity and innovation.

Brewers socially construct a set of perceived North Carolina consumer tastes trying to develop a distinct tradition of brewing, creating both market niches and cultural traditions. Establishing new traditions combines social values and economic rationales, redefining and promoting the value of local beer through commerce. Tapping into a loose brewing history permits brewers to label their practices and products as authentic even when creating something new. Brewers, however, are unable to completely locally source the main ingredients of beer, such as hops and malt, and thus turn to adjunct ingredients, such as fruits, to give their products a taste of place.

By drawing upon traditions and histories both narrow and broad, localizing actors not only add value to their products based upon locality. They also change cultural understandings of place (Flack 1997). By embedding practices and products in a place’s identity, they offer new assertions of identity following social changes, combining both economic and social values. The products become symbols carrying different meanings that reaffirm and value place-based identity.

**CONCLUSION**

My analysis examined the localization strategies of craft brewers in North Carolina and how they are embedding the market in social relations, culture, and territory. As opposed to strict determination by economic criteria and place of production (Watson 2014a), these
strategies are not just rhetorical and based in branding. The material commodity of beer also factors into localization strategies. The beers that are produced and sold become particularized to place. These products carry meanings related to the place’s cultural heritage and traditions. The product and production process become symbols representing local culture and identity.

The strategies that the brewers in my sample used are: (1) relying on a strategic group identity to mitigate competition and provide shared values and understandings of involvement in the market; (2) creating heritage based upon revising, writing, and bridging history, all which involves retrojection to align the past with the present (Berger and Luckmann 1966); and (3) inventing new traditions that tout the “taste of place.” These strategies allow brewers to define their products and practices as components of North Carolina’s history and culture, while providing the flexibility to differentiate their products from macro- and national craft brewing.

This study has some limitations. Although brewers’ accounts in interviews point toward a collegial environment, even when competing, the reality is likely more complex. Interviews cannot reveal how competition and sales play out in real time, nor how collegiality is negotiated. Fieldwork would be needed to fully understand these processes. The scope of this research was to examine the strategies used in localization, not necessarily the unintended consequences that may arise from these strategies. Localization of products and markets can create symbolic boundaries that determine whose practices are seen as parts of cultural identity and heritage (Bowen 2015; DeSoucey 2010, 2016). Boundaries can be put toward varied ends, such as limiting access to markets and devaluing of cultures. Future
research should examine whose narratives and roles are excluded in the present interpretations of the past.

This study adds to multiple existing literatures. First, it contributes to the growing body of sociological research on craft beer and neolocality by focusing on the material culture of craft beer as well as how brewers interact with, alter, and understand the product in their localization strategies. Second, it contributes to research on localization by providing further empirical evidence of Paxson’s (2013) “tradition of invention,” examining how heritage and traditions are interpreted in the present by actors using the strategy of retrojection. Finally, this contributes to economic sociology by examining how consumer culture and commodities are used to culturally embed markets and products, creating social solidarity and group identity.
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Appendix A

FIGURE 1: North Carolina Craft Breweries Opened Per Year, 1986-2016

Figure 1: North Carolina Craft Breweries Opened Per Year, 1986-2016.