

THE ROLE OF AESTHETICIZED MARKETS IN CONTEMPORARY FORMATIONS OF
SOCIAL CLASS AND GENDER

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is situated at the crossroads of sociology, anthropology, and marketing. Theories of the former two disciplines inform phenomena of the latter. The focal phenomenon is the role of aestheticized markets in contemporary formations of middle-class masculinity and femininity in the U.S.

Aestheticized markets are those that incorporate refined notions of beauty, originality, and superiority. This process has been a core force in the expansion of consumer markets in early and late capitalism. In addition to opening up new markets, the aestheticization of markets opens up new subjectivities. It instills in individuals the desire to better themselves through the quest for novel, sensory-pleasing experiences, and it offers them renewed resources to define their social affiliations.

My dissertation studies the formation of gendered and classed subjectivities using the empirical contexts of two middle-class, gendered markets that have been recently aestheticized in the U.S.: craft beer and knitting. Unlike three decades ago, craft beer drinkers can now indulge in a variety of flavors and premium styles, produced by more than 3,000 breweries. Likewise, knitters can now indulge in a variety of colors and premium fibers, as noted by a number of high-circulation magazines and scholarly papers. I studied these markets for about four years, conducting participant-observation, interviews, and document analysis.

The results of this fieldwork are organized in two empirical chapters. The first focuses on the institutional and non-institutional processes that alter middle-class men's relationships with the aesthetic dimension of a particular market; the empirical context is craft beer. The second empirical chapter documents how middle-class women deploy the ideological and material resources provided by aestheticized markets in gender struggles; the empirical context is knitting.

Together, these chapters explicate how gender positions shape the way middle-class individuals learn and display aesthetic expertise. The knowledge of these processes provides both theoretical contributions to the literature on taste, class, and gender, and managerial insight into how market institutions can develop programs that initiate a meaningful, long-term engagement with consumers based on classed and gendered approaches to aesthetic involvement.

I. INTRODUCTION

A market becomes aestheticized when it incorporates refined notions of beauty, originality, and superiority (Featherstone 2007; Levy and Czepiel 1974/1999; Slater 1997). This process has driven much of the expansion of consumer markets in capitalism. In the 18th and 19th centuries, refined conventions altered the aesthetics of American houses, landscaping, and clothing, thus propelling American industry (Bushman 1992; Lynes 1949/1980). At about the same time, aesthetic rules framed French foodways, thus forming the prominent field of gastronomy (Ferguson 2006). In the 20th century, movies became artistic expressions and, over the last four decades, refined versions of coffee, olive oil, hamburgers, beer, and bourbon formed solid market niches in the U.S. (Baumann 2001; Carroll and Swaminathan 2000; Holt and Cameron 2010; Risen 2014). More recently, the aestheticization of consumption extended to cleaning markets. Method Products, a California-based company founded in 2001, introduced a distinct line with pleasant fragrances and nice-looking packages for household cleaning products. Although operating in a category dominated by large corporations such as Unilever and Procter & Gamble, this aestheticizing strategy led Method to successfully enter a mature market.¹

In parallel to opening new markets, the aestheticization of consumption produces new subjectivities. It instills in individuals the desire to enlarge themselves through the quest for novel, market-mediated, sensory-pleasing experiences, such as the taste of different foods, the look of different decoration styles, the sound of different operas, the smell of different perfumes,

¹ <http://www.inc.com/profile/method-products>

and the touch of different fabrics. From the 17th to the 19th centuries, three mechanisms chiefly propelled this quest.

First, the diffusion of the romantic ethic, as a counterpart to the Protestant ethic, encouraged those in the more affluent social strata of many Western countries to elevate their sensibilities from quotidian, pragmatic concerns through the appreciation of arts, music, and literature (Campbell 1987; Slater 1997). Second, the fall of sumptuary laws legalized the commercialization to non-elite groups of then-exotic items, such as imported spices, fine fabrics, and noble drinks (Campbell 1987; Featherstone 2007; Karababa and Ger 2011; Slater 1997). Third, the increased social mobility brought by the historical conjunction of capitalism and democracy in early modernity shaped aestheticized markets and cultural refinement into a key medium for people to construct and express social affiliations (Elias 2000; Gronow 1997; Simmel 1957). As illustrations of this socio-historical configuration, Victorian American middle-class women embraced refined sensibilities as a way of marking the respectability of their families and of themselves, thus reinforcing distinctions between the middle-class and the working class. In the Progressive Era, American middle-class men adopted refined leisure to signal their ability to distance themselves from work (Bushman 1992; Campbell 1987; Veblen 1899). In the late 20th century, middle-class Americans consumed arts as a way of displaying social position and upward social mobility aspirations (Levy 1980/1999). At present, they construct eclectic knowledge of musical genres and embodied taste of fashion as symbolic boundaries that distinguish their social strata from others (McQuarrie et al. 2013; Peterson and Kern 1996).

This dissertation takes up this thread to explore the interplay between aestheticized markets and contemporary formations of social class and gender. In consumer research, this interplay has

been largely analyzed through a research tradition that runs through Veblen (1899) and Simmel (1957), and that was epitomized in the work of Pierre Bourdieu. In its later form, this tradition emphasizes that early life experiences determine one's aesthetic dispositions, which in turn constitute a coherent matrix of tastes that individuals employ across diverse markets (Bourdieu 1990; Holt 1998; Sallaz and Zavisca 2007). This matrix of tastes is politically relevant for two interlinked reasons. First, it signals hierarchical social positions. For example, the preference for abundant food, straightforward humor, functional furniture, and familiar vacation destinations characterizes lower socioeconomic status groups; the preference for delicate food, complex humor, stylized furniture, and exotic vacation destinations characterizes higher socioeconomic status groups (Bourdieu 1984; Holt 1998; Levy 1966/1999). Second, this matrix of tastes structures people's access to resources that are consequential for their social trajectories. For example, people often socialize with those who share similar tastes, and they often find in these taste-similar groups their economic and romantic partners (Bourdieu 1986; Üstüner and Holt 2010; Warde 2011).

This theoretical tradition has been of great importance in revealing consumers' participation in aestheticized markets as a key mechanism for signaling and reproducing social positions, even when individuals are embedded in consumption cultures and events organized around communal values (Hebdige 1979/2012; Kozinets 2002; Schau et al. 2009; Schouten 1991; Thornton 1996). However, the prominence of this tradition in consumer research has left undertheorized at least three aspects of the interplay between aestheticized markets and the social formations of class and gender.

First, this tradition tends to conceptualize people's aesthetic dispositions as static (Hennion 2001; Hennion and Teil 2003; Lahire 2003). As such, it overlooks the fact that individuals often

develop heightened aesthetic expertise in specific markets over their lives. For example, some middle-class Argentinians become experts in opera in ways that are disproportional to their knowledge of other cultural forms (Benzecry 2011). Likewise, during adulthood, middle-class Americans often develop aesthetic expertise in just a few consumption areas, such as wine (Holt 1998; Lamont 1992; Stebbins 2007; Strong 2011). The recurrence of focalized aesthetic competence invites the exploration of the institutional and non-institutional processes that transform the relationship of individuals with the aesthetic dimension of specific markets over time (Arsel and Bean 2013; Benzecry 2011; Levy 1980/1999). This exploration should not dismiss the influence of social structure, but rather consider this influence a resource that people combine with others to competently participate in aestheticized markets (Swidler 1986). This dissertation adopts this theoretical approach in both empirical chapters.

Second, the aforementioned tradition tends to conceptualize people's bodies either as objects to display taste or as passive entities in which taste is inscribed and felt. This conceptualization reflects a broader trend in sociocultural studies, which, with a few exceptions (Benzecry 2011; Joy and Sherry 2003), have overlooked the role of the body as an active entity in appropriating taste (Howes 2005; Reckwitz 2002; Turner 1984). The role of the senses has been particularly overlooked in this theorizing, as Warde (2014, 294) recently noted, "Bodily processes, the senses (not just sight)... are integral to an account of distributed mind but remain under-represented in practice-theoretical accounts of consumption." A theoretical model of how consumers use their senses as they seek to embody taste is one of the contributions of the first empirical chapter of this dissertation.

Third, the aforementioned tradition has undertheorized one aspect of the dynamics between aestheticized markets and gender positions (Warde 2008). This tradition shows that working-

class and middle-class men use tastes for food, drinks, homes, and cars to construct *between-class* distinctions from other men (Lamont 1992; Lamont 2000). Likewise, middle-class women use taste for food, clothes, and their embodied mannerisms to naturalize their cultural hegemony over working-class women (Skeggs 1997). An understudied question is how people in different gender positions participate in aestheticized markets as a way of shaping *within-class* gender hierarchies. For example, how do women seek to shape patriarchy-induced scripts and hierarchies that accord more value to masculinized cultural forms (e.g., science fiction and sports) than to feminized ones (e.g., romance reading and fiber crafts) in the middle class? Documenting this process is one of the contributions of the second empirical chapter of this dissertation.

This dissertation thus explores these three research opportunities, taking an intersectional approach of social class and gender to engage with the following overarching question:

- How do aestheticized markets interplay with contemporary formations of social class and gender in the U.S.?

As explained next, this dissertation looks into specific gender and social class positions. In what follows, I also outline the methodology adopted to study these positions in the context of two aestheticized markets. I then present the two empirical chapters that form the core of this dissertation. After the essays, I synthesize the findings and discuss future research opportunities.

METHODOLOGY

The interest of this dissertation in the sociocultural patterning of consumption makes market-oriented ethnography a suitable methodological approach (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). As

with much of marketing strategy research, ethnography studies specific real-world contexts to generate theoretical insights and extend existing theoretical formulations. The distinctive feature of ethnography is a primary concern with cultural meanings, socio-historical influences, and social dynamics that shape market action in the complex contexts of everyday life (Arnould and Thompson 2005). I employed ethnography as a methodological orientation in conjunction with the following research design.

Research Design

To better access the phenomenon of interest, I focus on consumer markets that have been recently aestheticized in the U.S. In addition to recency, the design includes markets associated with middle-class lifestyle. The middle-class was chosen as a focal group for two reasons. First, it is a large social stratum with significant buying power. Second, it typically embodies the values and practices of what scholars call the dominant culture of a society (Clarke et al. 1976; Skeggs 1997). As such, the engagement of the middle class with particular forms of consumption often indicates a broad shift in economic and cultural dynamics (Bushman 1992). Hence, sampling from this group enhances the dissertation's significance for marketing academics and practitioners. Finally, to address the gender-related gaps described earlier, the design includes contexts with different gender compositions. As I now explain, two contexts that match these criteria are craft beer and knitting.

Craft beer. Craft beer languished as a product category in the U.S. until the 1980s, but over the last three decades, it has attracted a substantial following (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000). In

this period, market institutions that advocate for craft beer have used strategies to create a premium beer segment. As photos 1 and 2 illustrate, they have introduced a range of brands and flavors that is remarkably wider than that of U.S. mainstream lagers (e.g., Budweiser, Coors, and Miller). They have also suggested a set of procedures and criteria that consumers should consider to fully engage with beer. Further, these institutions have portrayed this wider range of options as morally superior to that of U.S. mass producers of beer, arguing that craft beer has restored the cherished American value of market choice. Casual drinkers aside, most market actors in this consumption arena are male.

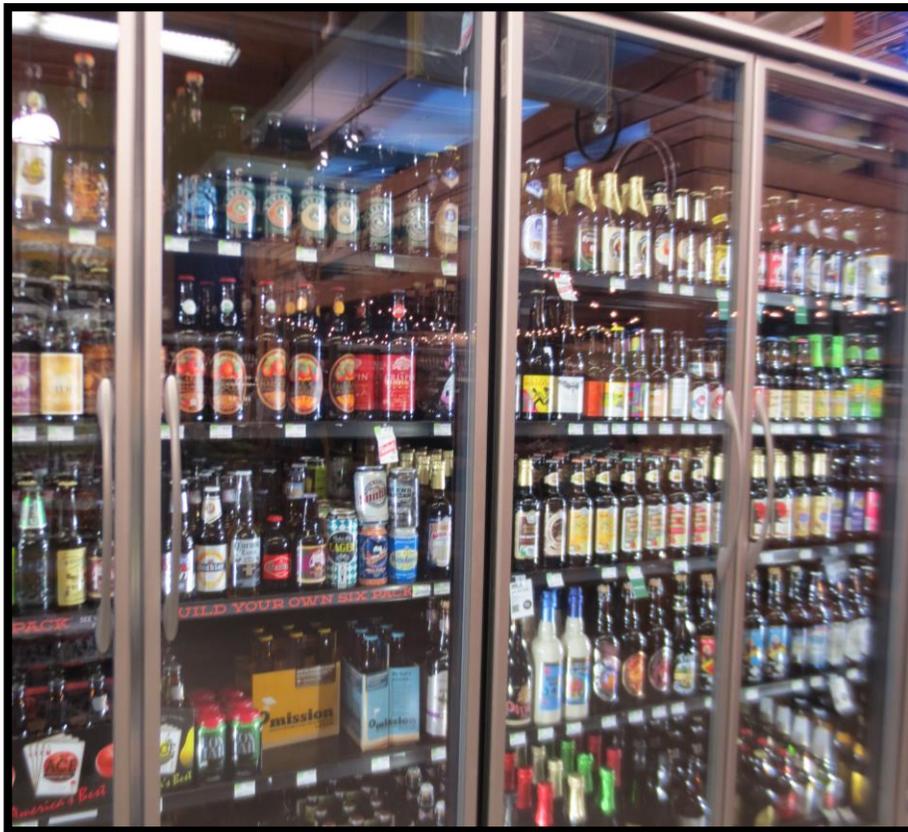


Photo 1: a small section of the craft beer aisle in an upscale grocery store



Photo 2: sample of craft beer styles

Knitting. Knitting has regained popularity in the U.S. since the late 1990s (Penn 2007; Wills 2007). High-circulation magazines such as *Parade* and *The Economist* have featured the comeback of knitting as a leisure activity, with knitting-related books selling well enough to occasionally make the *New York Times*' best-seller list (Garner 2004; Rochman 2013; *The Economist* 2006). In this period, market actors have introduced a range of fibers, colors, and designs that was rare to find in craft stores in previous decades (Wills 2007). As photo 3 illustrates, yarn now comes in complex colors and patterns; moreover, as photo 4 and 5 show, knitters can now use fancy needles to work on luxury fibers such as cashmere and refined types of wool, such as merino, mohair, and baby alpaca. Most market actors in this consumption arena are female.



Photo 3: sample of yarn colors



Photo 4 and 5: sample of fancy needles and of finished projects

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection in each context relies on the three ethnographic pillars: participant-observation, interviews, and document analysis (Wolcott 1999). Participant-observation exposed me to informants' embodied, spontaneous actions in real time and everyday life; interviews primarily gave me access to the ideologies informants use to make sense of their actions; and document analysis revealed some of the main sources of these ideologies.

The data analysis in each context followed ethnographic procedures (Emerson et al. 1995/2011). After each fieldwork event, I coded the material collected and wrote an analytical memo to record emerging interpretations. As I collected more material, I refined the coding systems and contrasted the analytical memos to deepen my understanding of the role of aestheticized markets in contemporary formations of social class and gender. I then triangulated the datasets from participant-observation, interviews, and document analysis to build a comprehensive account of the focal phenomenon in each empirical context (Belk et al. 1988; Lincoln and Guba 1985). The analysis thus moved between emic and etic views of the phenomenon.

The result is a theoretically oriented and empirically grounded interpretation of two cultural contexts that have been recently aestheticized. However, these contexts foreground different gender positions (middle-class men and women) and enlist different bodily senses (beer drinking primarily enlists smell and palate; knitting, touch and sight). Such research design allows for theory generation through the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This method does not require the selection of perfectly symmetric contexts at a given time, since a research program can add theoretically productive contexts gradually. Instead, it prioritizes empirical contexts that enhance the researcher's ability to generate theory.

For each empirical context, a stand-alone chapter was generated. These chapters employ specific theoretical frameworks and make specific contributions to consumer research; moreover, each chapter further specifies the procedures of data collection and analysis. After these chapters, the concluding section of the dissertation synthesizes the findings and discusses future research opportunities.

II. TASTE ENGINEERING: AN EXTENDED CONSUMER MODEL OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE CONSTITUTION

“The Ancients said that the animals are taught through their organs; let me add to this: so are men, but they have the advantage of teaching their organs in return.” – Goethe

A hint of caramel, notes of chocolate, and a pleasantly toasty aftertaste. The competence that some individuals develop to corporeally sense and verbalize the fine qualities of aesthetic experiences is both notable and intriguing. The prominence of this competence in consumer culture is largely driven by the aestheticization of consumption, which refers to the effacing boundaries between popular culture and high arts that instill in consumers the desire to better themselves through market-mediated aesthetic experiences (Featherstone 2007; Slater 1997). With the advent of industrialization, aestheticization soon extended to clothing and home decoration (Bushman 1992; Lynes 1949/1980). Later, eating developed into gastronomy and movies into a form of artistic expression (Baumann 2001; Ferguson 2006). Recently, premium styles of coffee, beer, bourbon, and olive oil have built solid market niches (Holt and Cameron 2010; Risen 2014). In social domains that instill the desire to better oneself through aesthetic experiences, what are the institutional and non-institutional processes through which individuals bind together the corporeal and discursive dimensions to become culturally competent?

Cultural competence refers to mastery of the tacit understandings, explicit rules, and accepted engagements that structure a social practice (Schatzki 1996; Warde 2005). Consumer research has richly explained how individuals deploy this competence to participate in status games (Arsel and Thompson 2011; Kates 2002; McQuarrie et al. 2013; Thornton 1996; Üstüner and

Holt 2010). However, most of these works take existing cultural competence as the starting point for their analysis; they overlook how this competence is developed, or they rely on the encompassing notion of habitus to explain its state (Bourdieu 1984; Holt 1998). As a result, consumer research has understudied the institutional and non-institutional mediations that constitute consumers' domain-specific cultural competence *after* habitus has instilled generic dispositions in them (Benzecry 2011; Levy 1980/1999). Arsel and Bean (2013) and Shove et al. (2007) offer notable exceptions by studying how consumers link objects, meanings, and doings orchestrated by taste regimes and do-it-yourself projects. We extend their work by focusing on consumer corporeality, thus answering the call of many scholars who have noted the unduly peripheral position of the body in social theory (Howes 2005; Ingold 2000; Reckwitz 2002). This call remains open, as Warde (2014, 294) states, "Bodily processes, the senses (not just sight)... are integral to an account of distributed mind but remain under-represented in practice—theoretical accounts of consumption."

Our research makes two contributions to consumer research. First, it maps the set of practices through which consumers bind discourses with corporeality to become competent in social domains that valorize cultural refinement. We identify three such practices: institutional benchmarking, autodidactics, and cooperative scaffolding. Because this set of practices enlists the dimension of human action that uses knowledge, experimentation, and speculation to further understanding (Lévi-Strauss 1962), we conceptualize it as *taste engineering*. Theorizing taste engineering as a process to further cultural competence addresses a gap in consumer research and in social theory: how individuals make their bodily perceptions meaningful and intelligible (Desjarlais and Throop 2011).

Second, we reveal how consumers develop cultural competence through cooperative engagement with others (Becker 1953). Consumer research has theorized the display of cultural competence in consumption-based groups as primarily a competitive endeavor (Arsel and Thompson 2011; Kates 2002; Schau et al. 2009; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Thornton 1996). Appropriate to this theoretical approach, scholars usually conceptualize cultural competences as subcultural or field-specific capital, which actors convert into symbolic benefits. We complement this approach by foregrounding intersubjective cooperation as a mechanism for the creation and dissemination of cultural competences in a social domain. We use the term competence rather than capital to be consistent with our focus on building rather than deploying such understandings. Whether cultural competence is used later as cultural capital in status competition depends on the trajectory and governing logic of a particular domain (Lahire 2003).

Our contributions are based in the empirical context of craft beer, a domain recently aestheticized in the U.S. This recency allows us to study the cultural competence in the process of its formation and constitution. Our purposive sample is of aficionados, consumers who employ a serious approach towards learning and performing a practice (Stebbins 2007). This research design allows us to observe the development of cultural competence in the subjective area of taste, so we can access information-rich instances of meaning negotiation (Patton 1990).

Because the constitution of cultural competence involves body, mind, materiality, and institutionally provided resources, we employ a strand of practice theory as our theoretical framework. After outlining this strand, we review the literature on consumer cultural competence to specify our theoretical contribution. The paper follows with an introduction to our empirical context and the research design. It then provides an ethnographic account of individuals' trajectories in developing cultural competence and discusses the implications of our research.

PRACTICE THEORY

Practice theory has grown into a heterogeneous school of thought, with the emphasis given to institutions being one source of heterogeneity (Schatzki 1996). Bourdieu (1984; 1990) assigns a clear role to school and family in shaping individuals' habitus. However, once institutional norms become embodied dispositions, the influence of institutions in his theorizing recedes to the background. Habitus, a generic set of dispositions, remains the key mechanism to explain why individuals engage with particular practices over their lives.

In contrast, practice theorists such as Swidler (2003) find it analytically useful to consider how institutions continuously shape people's engagement with practices. In this view, institutions pattern social life through discourses that legitimize particular goals within social domains. However, most institutions do not fully regiment people's paths toward competence (Goffman 1961). Instead, individuals use cultural capacities that are unevenly distributed in social space to construct distinct strategies of action, a concept that refers to socially shaped ways of pursuing goals in social domains (Sewell Jr. 1992; Swidler 1986).

Swidler's framework combines Bourdieu's focus on social conditioning with the continuous influence of institutional discourses. In her book *Talk of Love* (2003), she uses the romantic domain to exemplify this framework. Marriage is an institutionally patterned goal in American society, but the path toward marriage is unclear. The lack of clarity forms the space where culture flourishes, where individuals combine socially conditioned capacities into distinct strategies of action to pursue their goals.

Hence, the Swidlerian strand of practice theory assigns a clear role to institutions while allowing for socially conditioned consumer creativity. We draw on this strand to examine how consumers pursue institutionally patterned goals of cultural competence in a social domain where they find a loosely enforced institutional path for doing so. Thus, rather than focus on the formation of habitus, we ask *how* this set of generic dispositions comes together into strategies of action geared towards the development of domain-specific cultural competence in adulthood.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE CONSTITUTION

We ground our study of consumer cultural competence in social structure, showing the socially negotiated process of transforming one's sensibilities and understandings within the boundaries of one's habitus. This grounding distinguishes our work from research that notes the processual development of competence without engaging with the role of social conditioning (Belk et al. 1991; Celsi et al. 1993; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Further, we study how consumers deploy habitus into a strategy of action to reflectively develop cultural competence that binds body techniques, perceptions, and sayings. This focus extends studies of the constitution of cultural competence that examine the connection of objects, meanings, and doings (Arsel and Bean 2013; Belk et al. 1991; Hennion 2001; Teil and Hennion 2004).

We conceptualize the strategy of action through which consumers develop cultural competence as *taste engineering*, a set of learning practices that combine institutionally provided resources and individuals' socially shaped dispositions. These individuals' goal for cultural competence goes well beyond replicating cultural authorities' discourses or emulating aspirational groups' lifestyles (Adorno and Horkheimer 1944; Leibenstein 1950; Veblen 1899).

Instead, their goal is to master the three elements that constitute a social practice: understandings, which involve a tacit sense of what to say and do; rules, which involve explicit prescriptions and instructions; and the teleoaffectivities, which refer to ends, purposes, beliefs, and emotions implicated in a practice (Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 1996; Warde 2005).

Our second contribution addresses Arsel and Bean's call (2013, 913-4) for inquiry into the cocreative aspects of tastemaking. To do so, we employ a seminal concept in practice theory: communities of practice (Wenger 1998). This concept refers to groups of people who interact to learn to perform a practice, while mutually making sense of its surrounding institutional discourses, social relations, and individual identities. Although underused in consumer research, this concept "has been disseminated and redeployed on a very broad front" in the practice theory tradition (Warde 2014, 284). Communities of practice differ from other constructs of consumer collectivities such as subcultures (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) and brand communities (Muñiz Jr. and O'Guinn 2001) in highlighting the importance of learning for transforming the personal identities that form a social domain. Further, the concept of communities of practice does not assume competitiveness as the prevailing form of a practice sociality (Schatzki 1996). Within such communities, learning often is collaborative, as practitioners collectively identify and work to close their competence gaps (Wenger 1998). Our work highlights the collaborative practices consumers employ to reduce the gaps between institutionally patterned goals and their current cultural competences in the empirical context of the American craft beer revival.

EMPIRICAL CONTEXT: THE AMERICAN CRAFT BEER REVIVAL

The U.S. beer market was fragmented until the early 20th century, but then two world wars and Prohibition (1920-1933) forced many breweries out of business (Barr 1999; Burns and Novick 2011). A few large breweries survived these turbulent times by leveraging their diversified assets to produce revenue in other markets, such as railroads and non-alcoholic beverages (Burns and Novick 2011). After WWII, large breweries such as Budweiser and Schlitz quickly resumed beer production in large scale (Knoedelseder 2012). The legal and moral legacy of Prohibition led these firms to please the average consumer at low cost by offering one beer style: American lager (Burns and Novick 2011). Through mass advertising and distribution, these firms suffused the market with this style, which features less than 6% alcohol, pale color, and little aroma or flavor. American lagers thus became the dominant beer style for about four decades, with only a few imported brands as aesthetic and symbolic counterpoints (Barr 1999). Their hegemony was not simply an ideological artifact (Thornton 1996), but a commercial and regulatory structure that maintained a limited range for consumer choice.

The craft beer revival began with the 1960s-1970s countercultural movements that questioned the standards of food production and consumption in the U.S. (Belasco 1989/2007). These movements criticized the overuse of chemicals and the reduction in flavor from industrial production that prioritize shelf life and transportability, thus providing the ideological basis for the current significance of markets for organic, craft, and locally grown foods (Belasco 1989/2007; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007). Craft beer gained particular traction after 1978, when President Carter re-legalized beer homebrewing, an activity that Prohibition had banned. Some Americans then began to experiment with different beer styles and turned their leisure into a profession. After languishing as a cultural-economic category until the 1980s, craft beer has attracted a substantial following among predominantly male, white, non-rural, and well-

educated consumers (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000; Holt and Cameron 2010). From fewer than 100 in the 1980s, about 3,000 craft breweries now operate in the U.S. In the otherwise-stagnant American beer market, craft beer sales have grown 10.9% in the last decade, reaching 7.8% of overall beer volume (Berman 2014; Jones 2013).

During this revival, non-profit institutions have coordinated the promotion of craft beer as a product category and craft beer drinking as a social practice. Our fieldwork indicates that three institutions have been particularly influential, although others also are well respected (e.g., beeradvocate.com). The *Brewers Association* is a national organization that “promotes and protects small and independent American brewers, their craft beers and the community of brewing enthusiasts” (Brewers Association 2014). It collaborates with a second type of association, *Craft Brewers Guilds*, which are non-profits providing state-level support to the Brewers Association’s goal. These institutions jointly lobby politicians, publish craft beer magazines and books, manage educational websites, offer craft beer courses and certifications, and organize craft beer festivals and competitions. A third influential institution is the *Beer Judge Certification Program* (BJCP). While the other two associations mostly play ideological and regulatory roles, the BJCP focuses on the aesthetic conventions of beer. BJCP grants certifications for those who want to become beer judges. Moreover, for each of the 80 beer styles it recognizes, it specifies standards for aroma, appearance, flavor, mouthfeel, and overall impression. It also specifies other expected characteristics (e.g., range of alcohol volume) and suitable commercial exemplars. These standards are used to determine if a beer is typical for a style, but do not indicate whether one beer is preferable to another. Next, we detail our methods for studying the constitution of cultural competence in this context.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Our research asks how individuals develop cultural competence in an institutionally patterned practice by employing socially conditioned capacities. Hence, our research design samples both the institutional discourses that orchestrate a practice and consumers pursuing cultural competence in this practice.

Data Collection on Institutional Discourses

Key informant interviews (Campbell 1955) and document analysis (Ferguson 2006) were employed to study how the three aforementioned institutions—Brewers Association, Craft Brewers Guild, and BJCP—promote craft beer. The first author (male) interviewed both a senior executive of the Brewers Association and the president of the Craft Brewers Guild in the state where fieldwork was conducted. These semi-structured interviews lasted 1.5 and 2 hours respectively and were transcribed verbatim. They focused on the programs these associations implement to challenge the market dominance of large breweries. At the forefront of these programs is the aesthetic education of consumers.

Document analysis was conducted on a purposive sample of these institutions' key touch points with consumers (Snow et al. 1986). The sample includes a best-selling book on craft beer and homebrewing (more than one million copies sold) authored by the Brewers Association's president, materials from this association's websites, and the free magazine it distributes to people interested in getting started in craft beer. Additionally, the first author completed Beer 101, an online course offered by the Brewers Association to socialize novices into craft beer. We

also included materials from the state Craft Brewers Guild's advertising for the last five editions of the two main annual beer festivals it organizes. Finally, we analyzed BJCP's materials about the characteristics of recognized beer styles and followed the news on craft beer featured in the two newspapers of highest circulation in the state where fieldwork was conducted.

Data Collection on Aficionado Consumers

The primary data for this research comes from fieldwork with people intensively involved with the focal phenomenon (Patton 1990): aficionados actively seeking to develop cultural competence in craft beer. Aficionados' goal is connoisseurship, defined as the fine-grained, discriminative faculty to judge and express taste according to the aesthetic principles of a social world (Gronow 2004; Holt 1998; Latour and Latour 2010). They move toward their goal by attending courses, interacting with other aficionados, and reading books on their avocation (Benzecry 2011). They also often engage in productive consumption (Moisio et al. 2013). Just as "foodies" both eat in restaurants known for their great chefs and cook elaborate dishes at home (Lupton 1996), and music aficionados both go to concerts and often play musical instruments (Levy et al. 1980/1999), craft beer aficionados both drink commercial craft beers and typically brew beer at home. Our research design reflects this multi-faceted world. Favoring natural settings, we employed participant-observation, ethnographic interviews, and a personal journal to document institutional, collective, and individual aspects of the quest for cultural competence.

Participant-observation. The American Homebrewers Association has over 1,700 registered craft beer and beer homebrewing clubs. The first author actively participated for 2 years in one

of these clubs, a local chapter of this constellation of communities of practice. This club, located in a metropolitan area in the southwestern U.S., has about 80 members who pay nominal annual membership fees and meet monthly at a local craft brewery. From the start of fieldwork, the first author played the role of buddy-researcher to address ethical issues of confidentiality and credibility (Emerson et al. 1995/2011; Snow et al. 1986).

Our focal club conforms to the typical structure and activities of other U.S. craft beer clubs, as indicated by the key informants in our institutional dataset. A club meeting typically attracts from 30 to 40 members and lasts about 2.5 hours. Meetings begin with a lecture on technical aspects of beer making, followed by a structured tasting session during which an expert member discusses and serves about 2 ounces of two to four beer styles for other members to taste. The tasting is followed by a happy hour session, when club members drink small servings of about 4 ounces from the homebrews brought by peers. This sharing triggers further discussion on the technical and aesthetic qualities of craft beer. These sessions open a privileged window into the collective dimension of cultural competence development, as they occur in natural settings and involve people who have ongoing relationships with each other (Goffman 1989; Kitzinger 1994).

Ethnographic Interviews. To expand our understanding of informants' practices, the first author conducted 25 prolonged interactions with 16 craft beer aficionados away from the club setting. To add analytical depth to our analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967), about half of these interactions were with aficionados who are not members of a club, whom we recruited in craft breweries and craft beer supply retailers. In a typical interaction, the first author helped informants homebrew for as long as 5 hours at their homes, using nondirective probes to elicit informants' perspectives *in action* (Snow and Anderson 1987). In follow-up interviews, the

author documented aficionados' perspectives *of action* (Snow and Anderson 1987) about their consumption patterns, involvement with craft beer, and practices to refine their beer tastes. Follow-up interviews lasted from 1.5 to 3 hours; they were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. They began with grand-tour questions (McCracken 1988) and then moved to craft beer and homebrewing; questions explored specific events to understand informants' actions rather than abstractions (Charmaz 1995).

Personal Journal. Informants could articulate their current practices to detect particular beer qualities, but usually could not recall how they had previously linked particular bodily senses to words (e.g., a citrusy smell with the term grapefruit). Reflecting the emergent design of ethnography (Belk et al. 1988), the first author constructed a personal journal to make this cognitive dimension of cultural competence development more precise (Goffman 1989; Snow et al. 1986). This ethnography from the body (Stoller 1989) contains notes on the first author's learning process to detect and express nuanced flavor qualities of beer, such as spice and apple.

The Social Position of the Purposive Sample

The gender composition in our fieldwork sites generated a sample pool of mostly males. Although some females participate in these sites, they usually accompany their male partners who have this avocation, as is typical of other male-dominated social domains (McRobbie 1991/2000). As with previous ethnographic studies (Belk and Costa 1998), we draw on the predominant gender in this social world to provide a focused analysis, leaving gender comparisons as a future research opportunity.

Overwhelmingly, our informants are white, heterosexual, married, and employed, with at least four-year college degrees in professions that reward a methodical way of thinking, such as engineering, computer science, medicine, and business (Tables 1 and 2). Those with different professional backgrounds (e.g., creative writing) usually report interest in sciences and often have degree minors in related fields of knowledge (e.g., biology). The craft beer industry does not offer national demographic data on aficionados, but well-connected aficionados and the key informants in our institutional dataset confirmed that our sample profile matches what they regard as the typical range for aficionados. However, the gender profile of aficionados differs from the more gender-mixed population of casual craft beer drinkers.

Table 1: Craft beer aficionados interviewed

Names	Sex/Ethnicity	Age Group	Occupation	Education (major)	Club member	Tenure as aficionado*
Austin	Male/White	20-29	Software developer	Bachelor (Engineering)	Yes	5 years
Carlos	Male/Hispanic	40-49	Electric technician	Bachelor (Business)	Yes	3 years
Daniel	Male/White	40-49	Entrepreneur	Bachelor (Computer Science)	No	2 years
Giovanni	Male/White	20-29	Graduate student	Bachelor (Music)	No	2 years
Henry	Male/White	30-39	NGO director	Master (U.S. Diplomacy)	No	10 years
Jack	Male/White	60-69	Retired	Bachelor (Psychology)	No	15 years
James	Male/White	20-29	Engineer	Bachelor (Engineering)	Yes	4 years
Jerry	Male/White	60-69	Homicide detective	Bachelor (Criminal Justice)	No	1 year
Jordan	Male/White	30-39	Sales associate	Bachelor (Business)	No	10 years
Marc	Male/White	30-39	Entrepreneur	Doctorate (Microbiology)	No	10 years
Mike	Male/White	40-49	IT analyst	Bachelor (Business)	Yes	4 years
Parker	Male/White	30-39	High school teacher	Bachelor (Creative Writing)	Yes	3 years
Peter	Male/White	40-49	Business manager	MBA (Business)	Yes	2 years

Richard	Male/White	40-49	IT manager	Master (Engineering)	No	2 years
Ryan	Male/White	20-29	Graduate student	Master (Engineering)	No	3 years
Tom	Male/White	50-59	Entrepreneur	Master (Engineering)	Yes	1 year

Table 2: Additional craft beer aficionados referred to in participant-observation excerpts

Names	Sex/Ethnicity	Age Group	Occupation	Education (major)	Club member	Tenure as aficionado*
Bill	Male/White	40-49	Business manager	Bachelor (Business)	Yes	1 year
Brice	Male/White	30-39	Software developer	Bachelor (Business)	Yes	2 years
Craig	Male/White	30-39	Engineer	Bachelor (Engineering)	Yes	3 years
Derek	Male/White	30-39	Accountant	MBA (Finance)	Yes	2 years
Ferris	Male/Hispanic	30-39	Software developer	Bachelor (Computer Science)	Yes	5 years
John	Male/White	30-39	Economist	MBA (Finance)	Yes	1 year
Kent	Male/White	50-59	Physician	Doctorate (Medicine)	Yes	1 year
Sean	Male/White	30-39	IT manager	Master (Engineering)	Yes	5 years
Tyler	Male/White	30-39	Engineer	Bachelor (Engineering)	Yes	1 year

* *Based on informants' self-report of becoming interested in craft beer aesthetics.*

Our informants' jobs, career fields, social trajectories, and years of formal education in non-elite schools indicate that they belong to the middle three quintiles that Holt (1998) excluded from his analysis and suggested as an opportunity for future research. None of our informants matches the profile of Holt's sample of high cultural capital (HCC) Americans. Most informants in the top quintile of his sample had well-educated fathers (70% with graduate degrees) who worked in knowledge-driven fields; moreover, most (70%) of his informants had completed graduate education and almost half had degrees from elite institutions (40%). At the same time, our informants do not match Holt's sample of low cultural capital (LCC) Americans either: most

informants in his bottom quintile had completed only high school. Our sample matches our theoretical goal of investigating the operation of cultural competence within a social stratum. This sample is also in line with Featherstone's (2007, 69) call for the "...need to investigate the aestheticization of everyday life in specific locations in time and space... the process of its formation...the specific locations and degree of generality."

Analytical Procedures

After each fieldwork event, the first author performed open coding and idiographic analyses on emerging interpretations; he then iteratively compared these analyses to refine the coding system (Charmaz 1995; Emerson et al. 1995/2011). Data collection stopped after reaching theoretical saturation (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Throughout this process, the second author (female) pushed the first author toward a balance between intimacy and distance from the context (Arnould et al. 2006). This bi-gender collaboration also enhanced our analytical sensitivity in conceptualizing masculinity as a cultural schema that shapes consumers' strategy of action, although gender is not the area of our core contribution (Bristor and Fischer 1993).

Our interpretation benefits from two triangulations. First, we compared the participant-observation and interview datasets to find disjunctures in informants' perspectives (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Second, the first author attended two beer festivals to interact with casual drinkers of craft beer about their overall involvement with craft beer and their strategies for choosing beers to drink at the festival. The material collected from this group allowed for triangulation across sources (Lincoln and Guba 1985) that crystallized taste engineering as a specific type of engagement with the aesthetics of a practice.

We now turn to theorizing this engagement. We begin by analyzing the homology between the taste regime of craft beer and aficionados' habitus. We then discuss aficionados' strategy of action, the deployment of their habitus to develop cultural competence in the craft beer domain.

THE RESONANCE BETWEEN TASTE REGIME AND CONSUMER HABITUS

Despite their growing market presence in the U.S., most craft breweries avoid mass advertising for financial and ideological reasons: they are relatively small firms with a business philosophy rooted in countercultural movements. So, two routes typically initiate aficionados' trajectories in the practice of craft beer drinking (Warde 2005). In one, aficionados become interested in craft beer as part of a deliberate preference for locally produced food (Teil and Hennion 2004). Ryan (20-29, Ph.D. student) explains: "You never know what is in a Budweiser. So, when I learned about this lively scene of craft beer, I decided to try one of the local beers." In the second and more prevalent route, fortuitous experiences trigger aficionados' involvement, as Parker (30-39, high school teacher) describes:

I was with a friend and we went to the local brewery... [It] had won a national prize. Back then, I drank a bunch of terrible stuff. I couldn't drink it at all, now—Bud Light, Coors...

When I tried the beer that had won the national prize, I was like, "Damn! These other breweries [mass producers] made me waste all these years drinking cheap, bad beer (laugh)!"

And it kind of *opened up* [emphasis added] and developed from there.

The blend of serendipity, social relations, and "fits-like-a-glove" aesthetic response indicates the resonance between consumer habitus and certain cultural forms (Allen 2002; Arsel and Thompson 2011; Bourdieu 1990). Craft beer aficionados do not set out to enlarge themselves

through sensory-pleasing experiences in the elite domains of cognac or fine arts, nor do they become interested in feminine domains such as household (Belk and Wallendorf 1994; Levy 1986/1999; Rybczynski 1986). Instead, they become involved with a gentrified version of a practice that has strong ideological ties with masculinity: beer drinking (Barr 1999). Aficionados do not select this domain to pursue cultural competence randomly; rather, they are culturally primed to pursue a project they feel equipped to carry out, one that resonates with their habitus (Henry 2005; Swidler 1986).

But the sweeping use of habitus to explain people's engagement with consumption forms leaves unexplained visible disjunctures in their sets of aesthetic preferences (Lahire 2003). Aficionados do not spread the quest for aesthetic refinement across all aspects of their lives. They refine their sensibilities and understandings of beer and, to a lesser degree, may become appreciative of other gustatory experiences such as food. Yet, they continue wearing ordinary brands of jeans and faded T-shirts, watching popular TV shows, and filling their developer-planned suburban tract houses with mass-produced furniture.

The taste regime construct adds theoretical precision to explain aesthetic disjunctures across social practices. A taste regime is "a discursively constructed normative system that orchestrates the aesthetics of practice in a culture of consumption" (Arsel and Bean 2013, 900). Taste regimes channel consumers' generic dispositions into certain practices by diffusing a compelling system of ends, uses, and emotions (Arsel and Bean 2013; Schatzki 1996). However, the various taste regimes operating in a consumer culture are not equally compelling for a given social group. A regime that resonates well with a social group's habitus can therefore cause relative disjuncture in their preference sets by disproportionately attracting their socially shaped capacities to the aesthetics of only certain practices.

We find that the taste regime that orchestrates the aesthetics of craft beer drinking does so through the three practices detailed by Arsel and Bean (2013): problematization, ritualization, and instrumentalization. The craft beer taste regime problematizes large breweries' overuse of corn and rice, a mass-production technique that removes flavor from beer to create the least objectionable alcoholic beverage. Problematization is reflected in an excerpt from a poem-like advertisement the Brewers Association created to promote craft beer: "We hail the bold brewers who have built paradise / saving beer from dilution by corn and rice." Like other institutional discourses, this advertisement shapes the teleoaffectivity of craft beer drinking by disapproving of mass-produced American lagers and venerating craft breweries, which yield a range of full-flavored beers thanks to bold craftsmanship.

This taste regime ritualizes craft beer drinking by diffusing rules for storing, serving, and drinking beer, as well as glassware types, serving temperatures, and food pairings that fully reveal different beer styles' flavors. The regime also recommends that consumers assess beer by analyzing aroma, appearance, flavor, mouthfeel, and overall impression, in sequence. Further, it shapes the teleoaffectivity of the practice by preaching quality over quantity and intellectualized over facile pleasure, thus linking objects, doings, and meanings in a normative system that instrumentalizes individuals as cultivated consumers (Arsel and Bean 2013; Ferguson 2006).

The craft beer taste regime resonates with the middle-class habitus of our male informants in multiple ways, thus leading them to formulate a gripping goal of cultural competence in this domain. First, this regime promotes a practice in which the rarest pleasures are reasonably affordable: a bottle of an internationally award-winning beer costs about \$15, comparable to a conventional bottle of grocery store wine. This affordability adds a democratic layer to craft beer drinking, thus assuaging the moral ambiguity that investments in cultural refinement present to

U.S. middle-class males (Bushman 1992; Lamont 1992). Second, this regime reinforces notions of restrained consumption of alcohol, a substance that continues to hold a morally ambiguous status in middle-class America, despite being socially pervasive (Barr 1999; Gusfield 1987). Third, this regime instigates consumers to analytically explore corporeality through consumption. This instigation has a multi-faceted significance. It coheres with the pursuit of self-betterment through the marketplace, a middle-class project that is accentuated among well-educated people involved in professions that reward a rationalized quest for knowledge (Bourdieu 1984; Brooks 2000; Levy 1966/1999). Further, this instigation coheres with the American masculine notion of building character through the search for novel experiences (Kimmel 1995). In the 19th century, men found these experiences in the unknown Western frontier; in a contemporary re-enactment of this myth, aficionados collude with craft breweries to expand the aesthetic frontiers of the U.S. market. This expansion relies on the re-valorization of craftsmanship, a mode of production culturally associated with masculinity due to its relative self-reliance (Kimmel 1995; Sennett 2008).

The resonance between the craft beer taste regime and the habitus of these middle-class males incites their disproportional engagement with the practice of craft beer drinking. Instead of simply enjoying beer by drinking it, aficionados formulate the goal of mastering it:

I am like a pit bull with a bone. I want to absorb tons of information... because what I really want is to be in a position where I am well versed, knowing, getting the experience under your belt. (Daniel, 40-49, entrepreneur)

This appetite for niche sensory experiences marks aficionados' involvement with the aesthetics of a practice. However, this appetite is not merely a reaction to an imaginary mainstream taste, as with British clubbers studied by Thornton (1996). In the U.S., the hegemony

of American lagers structurally deprived middle-class male consumers of elaborate aesthetic experiences with a common practice in their lifestyles: beer drinking. Recall Parker's mention that he was "opened up." Aficionados consider their first experiences with craft beer as a sensory epiphany, as if the mass production logic, represented by hegemonic American lagers, had anesthetized their gustation (Belasco 1989/2007; Falk 1994). This mainstream-driven deprivation has created an appetite among this faction of middle-class males for sensory experiences that Daniel's self-description as a "pit bull with a bone" so vividly captures.

Craft beer aficionados' relation to cultural competence differs from buying premium products to use in status games (Leibenstein 1950; Veblen 1899). Whereas snobs will not drink anything less than what they consider the best, aficionados seek diversity of experience during this stage of their trajectories (Lehrer 2009). The proliferation of beer styles is their glory, since it offers new occasions for aficionados to "expand the palate" (Richard, 50-59, engineer). This learning focus explains why these individuals shun the term "beer snob" in favor of "beer geek":

Beer snob means you judge people by their tastes, and this is not what I do. A snob will look at you and say, 'I'd never drink what you're drinking.' That's why I say I'm a beer geek. It's about being knowledgeable, knowing what you're doing. (Austin, 20-29, software developer)

Aficionados live in a world of signs (Baudrillard 1981) and inevitably express social distinction through craft beer, but their focus is on living in the world of the senses (Howes 2005; Ingold 2000). Education in the world of the senses was repressed in their socialization as U.S. middle-class men (Lamont 1992), an endowment they want to revise by expanding their cultural competences as beer consumers. It is in this world of the senses that we now plunge to articulate the systematic approach to the pursuit of cultural competence in a social domain.

TASTE ENGINEERING

Taste engineering refers to the systematic pursuit of cultural competence through the combination of institutionally provided resources and one's socially conditioned capacities. The institutionally provided resources are the objects, meanings, and doing orchestrated by a taste regime, while the socially conditioned capacities are the axiological and epistemological dispositions shaped by one's habitus.

Consumers engaging in taste engineering do not perceive connoisseurship as an attribute of social elites who justify their tastes simply through embodied perceptions of quality (Bourdieu 1984). Indeed, many master brewers and high-ranking beer judges began their trajectories just like the aficionados we study. Taste engineering is a strategy of action to move *towards* connoisseurship, defined as the fine-grained, discriminative faculty to judge and express taste according to the aesthetic principles of a social domain (Gronow 2004; Holt 1998; Latour and Latour 2010). Through the lens of practice theory, connoisseurship is the mastery of particular understandings, rules, and engagements implicated in a practice, a goal that requires the cultivation of the sensorium and the use of a specific linguistic register (Lehrer 2009).

Our theorizing relies on practice theory's distinction between dispersed and integrative practices (Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 1996; Warde 2005). Dispersed practices consist of generic performances that cut across social domains, such as comparing and reading. Integrative practices are those that enlist various dispersed practices in a particular social domain, such as household decoration and craft beer drinking. Taste engineering is a learning-oriented strategy of action consisting of three intertwined, dispersed practices: institutional benchmarking,

autodidactics, and cooperative scaffolding. These three dispersed practices respectively foreground the role of institutional discourses, individual creativity, and social relations. Through these three dispersed practices, both bodily and linguistic competences co-evolve into mastery of an integrative practice (Schatzki 1996). We next elaborate each of these three practices in turn.

Institutional Benchmarking

As aficionados set out to develop cultural competence in craft beer, they soon become acquainted with institutional materials through websites and books. These materials diffuse a matrix of sensations, descriptors, and “body techniques” to taste beer (Mauss 1935/1968). Institutional benchmarking consists of using these culturally mediated body techniques to evaluate a consumption object, and then comparing personal evaluations against institutional materials to gauge one’s cultural competence. These personal evaluations of commercial craft beers are often written on notepads and digital files, as James (20-29, engineer) explains:

I like to taste a beer and then blindly take notes on my reactions. I do that for *most* beers. Only then do I look at some website to see what other people said... The website of the Homebrewers Association [a division of the Brewers Association] has a section where certified judges, guys at the top of the judge hierarchy, write on some beers. It’s cool when you are picking up on the same things [tasting the same flavors] as those guys.

Using written language is both a way of stabilizing knowledge and making sensations intelligible (Lehrer 2009; Schatzki 1996). It also creates a sense of progress in a practice trajectory, as James clarifies, “When I try a beer I’ve tried before, I sometimes go back to my old notes to see what I wrote. My beer vocabulary was quite poor back then.”

These written evaluations are the groundwork for the dispersed practice of institutional benchmarking, which often involves the commercial prototypes that market authorities recommend for particular beer styles. For example, if aficionados are exploring English brown ales, they buy a commercial craft beer (e.g., Newcastle) that the BJCP recognizes as a good exemplar for that style and, after tasting it, compare their perceptions against BJCP's descriptions. This comparison is analogous to what medical students do to learn gross anatomy (Becker 1961). As novices in a field, medical students dissect corpses that present prototypical characteristics of the human body, because these corpses allow students to compare their understandings with textbook descriptions. Aficionados follow a similar approach: they taste beer that prototypically represents institutional descriptors of a particular style so they can confidently assess their competences. Richard (50-59, IT manager) details this practice:

I'll open it [the beer], pour it, and hit the five categories: the aroma, I check first. After I look at the aroma, I'll look at the appearance: what color is it, what type of head does it have... After that, I do the taste: what flavors do I pick up, the mouthfeel. And then I do overall impression... And a lot of that has to do with having something to compare it to... I then check what Beer Advocate or the BJCP says...to see if that's maybe close to what I tasted, and I just didn't have the right language for it, 'Hmm, yeah, that is kind of raisin-y, I guess.'

Drinking activates multiple senses at once (Lupton 1996). In institutional benchmarking, aficionados use an institutionally patterned procedure (the sequenced tasting) to break down this intersensoriality, forcing their attention to shift among their senses (Desjarlais and Throop 2011). Specific body motions support this shift. As they uncap the beer, they twist their heads to listen for sounds indicating over-carbonation. To visually analyze beer, aficionados raise the bottle

against the room's light and some use flashlights to check for residue at the bottle bottom. To evaluate aroma, they swirl their glasses and smell the beer through long inhales or short sniffs, sometimes with closed eyes. To evaluate taste, they sip small amounts and usually swallow it (rather than spitting it) because only the taste buds located in the throat can detect some types of bitterness (Lawless and Hildegarde 1998). Institutional benchmarking thus begins with the distant senses of hearing and sight, and then enlists the close senses of touch, olfaction, and gustation (Howes 2005). In this practice, aficionados use their senses methodically, one at a time, to reflectively absorb the body of beer into their own bodies.

By comparing their tasting notes against those of an institution, aficionados begin to learn the institutionally patterned matrix of sensations and descriptors that links body techniques, perceptions, and sayings in craft beer drinking. As they develop cultural competence,

they become less attached to cultural authorities' discourses. They disagree with some of the institutional evaluations, come up with new descriptors for beer flavors they detect, and take pleasure in sharing with friends the "hidden gems" (Jack, 60-69, retired) they find during their vacations, when they often visit local, less known breweries. Hence, the ritualized tasting procedure and the institutionally provided taste descriptors are not merely constraining rules, but resources that aficionados use to foster aesthetic reflectivity and new possibilities of social action (Schatzki 1996; Sewell Jr. 1992). At first, institutional discourses provide a map for exploring the world of the senses, but aficionados aim to "learn the country, not [just] the map" (Ingold 2000, 415). As such, the cultural location of taste engineering as a consumption mode differs from bandwagon effects, by which people simply consume what others are consuming to fit in, without bothering to learn product intricacies (Leibenstein 1950). Further, as a mode of

engagement with the aesthetic world, taste engineering eschews the generic evaluations (e.g., “excellent” or “disgusting”) that characterize taste elites’ aesthetic evaluations (Bourdieu 1984).

Although institutional benchmarking is pedagogically important for aficionados, it does not fully close the gap between their goals and their current cultural capacities (Swidler 2003). Previously, Richard prefigured the pedagogical limit of this practice in saying, “that is kind of raisin-y, *I guess* [emphasis added].’ He is uncertain whether the subtle flavor he tastes is raisin-y, or that a raisin-y flavor is present in the beer at all. Connections between the corporeal and discursive dimensions of a practice are elusive at this stage of his development. Austin sums up this elusiveness, “You just don’t know some of the things they [institutional discourses] say, especially when you are new to craft beer. Like esters, what do they mean by that?”

Institutional discourses typically provide insufficient material for individuals to become competent in the nexus of doings and sayings that form a practice. This difficulty is less noticeable in practices such as household decoration or collecting, which rely on visual images and materials that provide a clear indication of what to do or have (Belk et al. 1991; Falk 1994). This difficulty is also less pronounced in practices such as sports talk, which rely on factual knowledge that fans memorize over time (Holt 1995). However, this difficulty is a crucial element in more subjective practices that rely on olfaction and gustation. For most people, these two senses are underdeveloped in the vision-centric Western world. Further, they cannot rely on devices to adjust for perceptual deficiencies in these two senses, in contrast to the role of prescription eyeglasses and hearing aids (Lawless and Hildegard 1998; Stoller 1989). So, to continue their path towards cultural competence in subjective practices, individuals need more pedagogical resources than what market institutions provide. The next two sections focus on two other dispersed practices that complement institutional benchmarking in aficionados’ strategy of

action. These two practices foreground the axiological and epistemological dispositions that characterize the engineering mindset (Lévi-Strauss 1962).

Autodidactics

Craft beer's taste regime structures cultural competence as one's capacity to evaluate beer aroma, appearance, flavor, mouthfeel, and overall quality and to determine whether that beer matches the expected characteristics of its style. *However, market institutions loosely define the path for individuals to pursue this goal. In this space, aficionados devise socially inflected practices to develop their sensory and linguistic skills. We call these self-teaching practices autodidactics and organize them into systematic sampling and folk experimentation.*

Systematic Sampling. Systematic sampling consists of methodically engaging in sensory experiences that contribute toward the larger goal of developing cultural competence in a social domain. This methodical engagement breaks down the larger goal into achievable chunks of competence, thereby reducing the complexity of the project and creating interim gratifications.

Daniel (40-49, entrepreneur) introduces elements of systematic sampling as he discusses barley wine, which is a beer style, despite its name:

I *hate* barley wine, but I want to be better able to understand why I don't like barley wine personally... I want to reinforce that a couple of times before I can really say 'yes, I can taste something, I am going to call that a barley wine, and I don't like it because *this* and *that*.' So, now I go buy something specific instead of saying 'we were just looking for a beer.'

Although aficionados drink old favorites in a non-evaluative mode of appreciation, this does not help them improve their cultural competence. Thus, they often turn sensory experiences into pedagogical acts.

Daniel does not even like barley wine, a thick ale with intense malt flavors and the sharp taste of molasses. Nonetheless, he insistently tastes several beers of this style until he can verbalize what aspects of it he does not enjoy. Aficionados' strategy of action does not draw on the facile consumption that culturally characterizes the working class' relation to food and beverages; instead, it relies on a middle-class cognitive schema of sacrifice for delayed gratifications, as it involves decoupling immediate bodily pleasures from enduring sensory-intellectual achievements (Holt 1998; Levy 1966/1999). Importantly, systematic sampling of disfavored beer styles is not an institutionally prescribed practice in this domain. Rather, it is a practice aligned with aficionados' class-inflected dispositions to eschew animalistic consumption and, instead, train their bodies for cultivated consumption (Levy 1986/1999).

Systematic sampling typically occurs at aficionados' homes, having at most some kinfolk as an audience. This privacy indicates that aficionados do not simply aim to use the price premium of craft beer to publicly signal their dissociation from the mainstream (Leibenstein 1950). While craft beer drinking cannot escape the semiotic logic of capitalism, overreliance on this logic to analyze consumer behavior obscures the significance of the "empire of the senses" (Howes 2005; Warde 2014). Richard's reflections highlight this point:

That's why it's a journey, you know—I didn't know what IPAs [a hoppy beer style] were, and I know a lot about IPA's now. And I'm not obsessed with them as much as I was when I first started drinking and making them, because I know a lot about them... generally, when I go places, I don't order IPAs anymore. But for like a year *solid*, all I did was to order and make IPAs. I was obsessed over IPAs.

Aficionados often use describe their cultural projects as a "journey," reflecting the sense of career that the middle-class often reports when describing practices they find compelling (Stebbins 2007). Like Richard, they also often use "obsession" to describe their search for particular sensory experiences, similar to collectors' reports that they "hunt" specific objects to

enhance their sets (Belk et al. 1991). Figuratively, the matrix of sensations, descriptors, and body techniques associated with a practice is an uncharted territory standing between individuals' goals and their current cultural repertoire. Systematic sampling allows them to learn chunks of this matrix in a computable way, breaking down the complexity of their large projects while making each assimilated style a corporeal accomplishment.

The purposeful and systematic character of taste engineering reveals a prototypically masculine form of emotionality that aficionados employ when engaging with the aesthetics of this practice (Belk et al. 1991; Henry 2005; Holt and Thompson 2004). Aficionados expand the frontiers of their cultural capacities progressively, sometimes even challenging their own bodily reactions. Consider the beer style called sour, whose first trial typically “pulls the cheeks, dries the mouth, and leaves a nasty aftertaste” (first author’s personal journal). After introducing sour beers to the researcher, aficionado James admits, while chuckling at the researcher’s facial expression, “It’s an acquired taste.” Aficionados’ pleasures sometimes are just one step away from most people’s revulsion, because the unpleasantness of some aesthetic experiences is often superseded by their pedagogical value (Falk 1994).

Assimilating a style means properly binding its corporeal and discursive dimensions. Language marks the development of competence by making this binding intelligible to others (Kozinets 2002; Schatzki 1996). Note how Parker’s (30-39, high school teacher) language becomes more precise over time, as he gives a chronological tour of his beer tasting notes:

Here [opens notepad], the first beer evaluations are pretty bare. For this Heffeweizen [wheat-based beer style], I wrote for taste ‘deliciously balanced and bready. Very, very tasty.’ Now, let me see something in the middle [flips over pages]. Here. For the taste of this Pale Ale [beer style] I wrote, ‘sweet and malt upfront that quickly gives to the hop bitterness.

Can't place the flavor of the hops, possible spiciness?' It then became more elaborate [flipping over pages]. For this IPA, I wrote taste is 'massively bitter from start to finish; very bitter citrus rind; some earthy, mild pine in there, too; alcohol slightly present, but not hot; and very minimal malt contribution toward the middle. It finishes dry and bitter. It lingers.'

As Durkheim (1915) notes, bodily sensations are a primary source of meaning, but are ephemeral; they require representations to be retrievable. Language is such a representation for aficionados, who gradually change the quantity of descriptors and their character as they open their bodies to novel sensory experiences (Falk 1994; Lehrer 2009). In taste engineering, perceptions move from generic, emotion-laden qualifiers about desirability such as "very, very tasty" to more specific, dispassionate attribute descriptions, such as "earthy, mild pine." The use of more technical language co-constitutes the emotional detachment that allows aficionados to evaluate the qualities of an object independent of their personal preferences (Becker 1961). In contrast to museumgoers and operagoers who use their senses synesthetically in the quest for emotional transcendence (Benzecry 2011; Joy and Sherry 2003), aficionados use their bodies atomistically to dissect their sensory experiences and increase their discursive abilities.

This detachment, based on reasoning and self-containment, is another central feature of the form of emotionality that characterizes taste engineering. This emotionality is at the core of the influential masculine myth of the self-made American (Kimmel 1995), constructed in opposition to the disorderly passions that ideologically mark the emotionality of vulnerable groups (Lupton 1996; Slater 1997). However, despite its anchoring in self-containment, this emotionality also is a means for pleasure in modern bodies, distinctively constituted through discourses that validate hedonism through discipline (Featherstone 1982).

Systematic sampling is a dispersed practice for reflectively and progressively linking body techniques, perceptions, and sayings implicated in an integrative practice. Systematic sampling is complementary to institutional benchmarking, as aficionados typically use institutional discourses to gradually assimilate the aesthetics of a beer style over which they are “obsessed.” We next explain another complementary, equally systematic autodidactic practice that supports the binding of corporeality with discourses, namely folk experimentation.

Folk experimentation. This practice consists of designing basic experiments to construct sensory experiences that will enhance one’s cultural competence. One type of folk experimentation consists of tasting several exemplars of exactly the same beer at a time, while varying only one element such as its production year or package (e.g., bottle vs. can). Another folk experiment consists of tasting commercial exemplars that are very similar, except for a particular flavor. Tom (50-59, entrepreneur) explains, “For example, last week I tasted two pale ales that were supposedly quite similar, except for coriander, which I’m trying to learn.”

Aficionados typically pick up some aspects of the aesthetics of a practice more easily than others. Sometimes, this is traceable to their work experiences. As a chemical engineer, Craig has been exposed to solvents frequently and therefore, his body is particularly sensitive to related flavors. Other times, this relative ease has to do with physiology, since individuals have unique olfactory and gustatory profiles (Lehrer 2009). Aficionados perform folk experimentation to learn aesthetic elements that they cannot assimilate with the relative ease just described. These experiments often happen together with institutional benchmarking, as aficionados taste beers with an eye on their smartphones to consult BJCP’s app on beer style guidelines.

Another type of folk experimentation involves productive consumption (Moisio et al. 2013).

Jordan (30-39, sales associate) explains his use of beer homebrewing to construct experiments:

Jordan: So, there are herbs that go into spices, like wintergreen, spruce... They are very subtle... So, those are very hard flavors to pick up.

Researcher: And how did you learn to identify those subtle flavors?

Jordan: I put a lot more than what [the recipe said] I was supposed to... when I see a batch of beer that has one of these herbs in it, I double it or triple it right off that... And I usually overdo it horribly, and then the next batch I come back and knock it down to where it's a good balance... Because then you can identify it easier, in less amounts down the road.

Aficionados are not Baudelaire's Parisian *flâneurs*, who dabble with various sensory experiences with little regard for the outcomes obtained (Featherstone 2007; Thompson and Arsel 2004). Aficionados know their experiments may not be aesthetically pleasing, yet they alter beer recipes to train their bodies to detect flavors in the future. When we remember a sight we re-see it, and when we remember a sound we rehear it, but this memory mechanism does not exist for olfaction and gustation (Miller 2005). In response to this limitation, some folk experiments deliberately create a mild sensory trauma ("overdo horribly") to forge embodiment of a taste (Kleinman and Kleinman 1994).

Another type of folk experimentation relying on homebrewing manipulates the type instead of the quantity of ingredients. For example, aficionados prepare a basic *wort* (a concoction of hot water, grains, and hops), split it into different containers, and then add different hops to each container. Parker (30-39, high school teacher) clarifies the purpose of his experimentation:

Parker: I still have a hard time getting really specific with some hops, and that's what I'm trying to work on ... One of the reasons I'm doing the single-hop things [the experiment] is

to be able to say like, ‘This hop is supposed to have *this* flavor.’ I don’t think I could do this just by drinking more and more different beers.

Researcher: Which hop flavor are you trying to pick in this experiment?

Parker: I forget how many different categories, but most of them fall into ‘citrus,’ ‘pine,’ ‘earth,’ ‘spiciness,’ for the desirable flavors... I want to know what a ‘spicy’ hop tastes like... This is a very interesting notion to me when it comes to hops.

Parker does not mention producing aesthetically pleasing beer as the goal of his experiment; his goal is to produce educational beer. As he brewed this experimental batch in his shady backyard, on a table he had five measuring tools to control several aspects of his brewing: a stopwatch, a thermometer, a hydrometer, a PH meter, and a centesimal digital scale. While later that day, Parker claimed idiosyncrasy by stating, “I’m a control freak,” he enacts a common pattern of action among aficionados. But what is the point of using all this materiality to exert such a Taylorian control over one’s own practice?

Control over productive consumption does more than enabling aficionados to reproduce beer recipes. This control enables them to confidently link the body techniques of a practice to its perceptions and sayings (Kleinman and Kleinman 1994). Parker does not believe that tasting commercial craft beer will help him assimilate a subtle flavor. To overcome this obstacle, aficionados construct basic experiments in which they manipulate only the quantity or quality of a single variable (e.g., hops) to rule out alternative explanations for the connection between a particular ingredient (the discursive independent variable) and a perception (the corporeal dependent variable) that is mediated by body techniques. Analogously, homebrewing does for craft beer aficionados what practical experience with painting does for painting critics: it sharpens their senses by clarifying the effect of various methods and materials on final products

(Guichard 2012). Crafters develop heightened sensory competence in their domains by physically handling raw materials (Ingold 2000; Sennett 2008). Likewise, aficionados further their sensory competence by touching, boiling, smelling, and tasting beer ingredients. Daniel reinforces this point: "...the first time you dump hops into a boiling pot and that smell comes at you, you know what hops smell like from that point on." Folk experiments involve a practical engagement with abstract knowledge. This engagement helps aficionados later retrieve this knowledge in their performances (Cohen 1989).

Like institutional benchmarking, autodidactics is a dispersed practice that relies on class-inflected capacities and dispositions. These practices rely on the middle-class privilege of devoting culturally valued resources such as money and time to unpaid, gratifying activities (Belk 1995; Gelber 1999). They also involve the middle-class schema of making small sacrifices, such as making and tasting horrible beer, for the delayed gratification of cultural competence (Stebbins 2007). In addition to class, gender and professional positions play a significant role in shaping institutional benchmarking and autodidactics. These dispersed practices draw on an emotional detachment that is typically associated with masculinity and reinforced in occupational spaces that socialize their members into systematic thinking (Acker 1990; Henry 2005; Holt and Thompson 2004; Ross-Smith and Kornberger 2004). This schema differs from that predominantly found in middle-class professions that rely on a nurturing way of thinking, such as nursing or psychological counseling. Finally, these practices often revolve around masculine elements such as manual labor, precise measurements, and machinery (Bourdieu 2001). By adding these middle-class layers of masculinity to taste engineering, aficionados symbolically counterbalance the aspects of their projects that are culturally associated with femininity, such as drinking in small sips and using fine-grained terms to

articulate aesthetic opinions (Lupton 1996). They thus further assuage the moral and gender ambiguities that cultural refinement represents in their middle-class milieu (Lamont 1992).

To delineate the boundaries of our theorizing, we searched for negative cases in our data (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Giovanni (20-29, graduate student) describes himself as an anarchist who strives for relative self-sufficiency from large corporations. In enacting this ideology, he prefers craft- to mass-produced beer and homebrews some of the beer he consumes. Giovanni thus performs some of the practices found in taste engineering, but assigns different meanings to them. This negative case delineates that our analysis refers to a particular axiological and epistemological disposition to interact with the aesthetics of a practice. This disposition does not seek only mental, disembodied pleasures that are at the genesis of contemporary consumer culture (Campbell 1987), nor does it seek only the mindless, bodily pleasures that epitomize this culture (Fiske 1989/2010). Individuals engaged in taste engineering construct pleasure by connecting mental and bodily experiences, the two sides of corporeality (Falk 1994). They enact a “calculated hedonism” (Featherstone 2007; Turner 1984) as they enlarge their sensorium *and* intellect by both tasting *and* learning to taste novel sensory experiences.

Having explored the interplay between institutional resources and socially conditioned capacities in the constitution of consumer cultural competence, we now turn to the missing element in our research framework: the role of sociality in a social practice (Schatzki 1996).

Cooperative Scaffolding

For those whose habitus does not inherit a sense of aesthetic authority from their upbringing, developing cultural competence often involves a sense of uncertainty (Üstüner and Holt 2010;

Warde 2008). This section explicates how the dispersed practice of cooperative scaffolding reduces this uncertainty. In learning theory, scaffolding refers to the gradual expansion of competences that occurs as learners interact with qualified interlocutors (Lightbown and Spada 2006; Vygotsky 1978). We employ this concept to study the intersubjective development of linguistic and corporeal competences in a social practice.

Aficionados (including those who do not join clubs) interact with qualified interlocutors in the craft beer domain in many ways. They invite other aficionados for tasting sessions at their homes and join Internet forums to exchange tasting notes on beers they are exploring. They also attend craft brewery tours and craft beer festivals to learn about beer aesthetics from master brewers. Compared to institutional benchmarking, these interactions provide more customized lessons so aficionados can further advance in their projects. In these interactions, aficionados seek and assimilate inputs that are meaningful without being too distant from their current competences (Vygotsky 1978).

Consumer research has conceptualized cultural competence within consumption-based groups primarily as a basis for conflict and status competition (Kates 2002; Schau et al. 2009; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Thomas et al. 2013). Consistent with this view, this stream has followed social theory's tendency to consider learning as an individual process (Wenger 1998). However, practices open up several types of sociality, with conflict and status competition being only two of them (Schatzki 1996). We extend consumer research by theorizing cooperation as a key type of sociality for creating and circulating cultural competences within consumption-based groups. In this form of sociality, it is more important to know how to give and receive help than to know everything (Wenger 1998).

We analyze cooperative sociality through the lens of communities of practice, which highlights the social nature of learning as people pursue shared enterprises. To keep the sense of informants' social position and use thick, naturalistic data in our theorizing, this section relies on our extensive *in situ* data collection in the community of practice formed by a typical American craft beer club. We analyze interactions between peers with similar competence levels as well as between peers with uneven levels, showing how these interactions mediate institutional discourses and help structure a practice commonality (Schatzki 1996).

The following participant-observation passage captures a common type of interaction between aficionados with similar competence levels:

During the happy hour session, I approached one of the tables where some beers were. I asked Craig and Tyler, 'Who brewed these beers?' Tyler replied, 'The guy who is uncapping. He did dry hopping with different types, six in total I think. So, the grains and yeast are the same.' I grabbed a glass from the table and poured about 4 oz. of the beer that Tyler and Craig were drinking. The label on the bottle read 'Centennial,' a popular hop variety in the U.S. After sipping and sniffing this beer, Tyler said, 'Butterscotch? A little caramelly?' Craig answered, 'Yep, I get the sweetness.' They both finished the glass. After finishing the beer made with centennial hops, Tyler and Craig tried a beer made with Chinook, another hop variety. Now Craig risked the first impression, 'Mint?' Tyler hesitated, 'Maybe. I get some spiciness, but I'm not sure if it's mint. I get some woodiness.'

This seemingly banal passage illustrates a communication pattern in this community of practice. Aficionados keep their bodies sideways to each other and do not make sustained eye contact, as if sitting at the bar in a tavern. Further, they do not express sensory perceptions assertively by stating, "This is butterscotch." Instead, they voice these perceptions tentatively by

asking, “Butterscotch?” This non-confrontational pattern of interaction is a way of requesting information and inviting peer feedback within the community of practice. Through these interactions, aficionados express and adjust each other’s sensory experiences, forming taste as they express it and expressing taste as they form it (Teil and Hennion 2004). They turn subjectivity into intersubjectivity, socially constructing the meaning of sensory experiences.

The previous passage also includes a member who brought his folk experiment’s results to the club setting. By visibly showing his commitment to the group, he both gains prestige among peers *and* helps other members develop the cultural discernment that confers prestige to anyone in this social world. The governing sociality in this community of practice differs from the zero-sum logic of Bourdieuan status games, in which people retain skills as a rarified cultural capital as a way of improving their positions in a social field (Lamont 1992; Sallaz and Zavisca 2007). At least at this stage in people’s practice trajectories, sharing significant learning is a driving force for mutual engagement, even though it co-exists with individual goals (Wenger 1998). Cultural competence is inevitably exclusionary as individuals choose to spend more time with friends who enjoy similar cultural forms. However, aficionados will gladly educate someone interested in craft beer, rather than holding on to their knowledge out of fear of diluting its social currency. Of course, this cooperativeness may change if craft beer becomes a target of market myths (Arsel and Thompson 2011), but what our context foregrounds (Arnould et al. 2006) is the co-existence of status differentials with overt cooperation. It is this form of sociality that structures taste performances in this social space.

The next passage deepens our understanding of this form of sociality. Derek (30-39, accountant) and John (30-39, economist) are jointly studying for a beer judge exam using BJCP’s score sheet. They write evaluations on this sheet for beer appearance, aroma, flavor,

mouthfeel, and overall impression, and assign scores for each attribute that, when summed, range from 0 to 50. Each score reflects their judgment as to how well the beer represents a beer style:

Derek and John were evaluating a Kölsch [a German beer style with pale color and medium-light body]. Derek and John spent about four minutes writing their evaluations and scores for an exemplar of this style. After discussing the specifics of aroma, appearance, flavor, and mouthfeel, John asked Derek, ‘How much did you get on this one?’ Derek said, ‘28.’ John smiled, ‘Mine is 28, too! Right on!’ John and Derek raised their hands for a ‘high five.’

John and Derek are not celebrating a converging preference for the beer. As long as a beer does not taste like mass-produced lagers and is “well executed” (James, 20-29, engineer), the aesthetic superiority of particular beers or beer styles is a negligible theme in this community of practice. Rather, these aficionados are celebrating intersubjectivity in an institutionally patterned, yet highly subjective domain. Western culture recognizes sensory experiences as idiosyncratic in adages such as the Latin “de gustibus non est disputandum,” the English “there’s no accounting for taste,” the French “chacun à son goût,” and the Portuguese “gosto não se discute” (Ferguson 2006). However, aficionados strive for converging sensory experience assessments, since this convergence intelligibly marks their progress in the mastery of a practice (Schatzki 1996).

The previous two excerpts show interactions between peers with similar competence levels, but members of consumption-based groups often present heterogeneous competences (Thomas et al. 2013). Input from more experienced actors is a relevant resource in the quest for connoisseurship. At the club’s session, an expert member brings commercial examples for other members to sample and usually moderates a group discussion, as this fieldnote describes:

This tasting session was about barrel-aged beer... The expert member opened the second bottle and poured about 2 oz. of beer into everyone's glasses. He then continued, 'This is a barrel-aged beer. It has some grapefruit, but the barrel doesn't come to your face right away. What are you [the audience] smelling?' Sean voiced his perception, 'I get some coconut-ness,' followed by Steve, 'Some fruit-ness?' The expert member added, 'There is also some chocolate-ness, and some wood, too'... At my table, Bill commented, 'Now that they said chocolate, it's all I can taste. The taste is in my head now.'

This community of practice connects aficionados with more knowledgeable others, capable interlocutors who help learners enhance their cultural competences (Vygotsky 1978). These interlocutors often state their perceptions in a way that is slightly more assertive than the tentative utterances among peers at the same competence levels, providing other aficionados with a key element to expand learning: understandable inputs (Shrum and Glisan 2010). Through these interactions, aficionados at different stages of their trajectories scaffold each other's sensory repertoires, building shared histories of learning and reducing the gap between their current cultural capacities and institutionally patterned goals (Lightbown and Spada 2006). This scaffolding expanded Bill's ability to detect chocolate, for example.

In the previous passage, Bill senses a flavor only after a peer voices it. This intersubjective process also occurred in another club meeting, when Brice (30-39, software developer) coached John about an amber beer they evaluated using BJCP's score sheet:

Brice: This is a great beer, but under the guidelines, phenol flavor shouldn't be there. I put 'the low score is only due to the category guidelines'...

John: Now that you put that thought in my head and I tasted it, it makes sense. So, I'll drop mine down to 27 or 28.

Researcher: Just for my understanding, which thought is that you didn't have before, John?

John: I thought it was close to what I expect from an American amber...but, yeah, now that Brice put this thought, I can't get it out of my head. I do taste phenols, like clove flavors.

Understandable inputs from qualified peers allow individuals to locate and close knowledge gaps (Shrum and Glisan 2010; Wenger 1998). By referring to members of this community of practice as peers, we are not asserting that status differentials do not exist in this setting; but these differentials are not sufficiently meaningful for aficionados to lie about their perceptions to keep or enhance status. Our fieldnotes contain many occasions in which aficionados admit they cannot detect the flavors and aromas that others do, and they often make fun of this, as Derek once told John, "You're out of your mind. There's no pineapple here (laughs)!" Rather than false sensory induction, we view the process that leads aficionados to pinpoint flavors through peers' utterances as social priming. This priming induces sensory scaffolding by bringing certain experiences into the primed person's perceptual field (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012).

Through coaching, more experienced aficionados inevitably ascertain their cultural authority (Holt 1995). But looking at these interactions through the Bourdieuan lens of symbolic profit obscures the cooperative dynamics that are focal in social interactions in this world. Brice is a certified beer judge who volunteered his time to coach a less experienced club member on a Sunday morning. In the type of sociality that structures this social world, high-status members do not avoid interaction with novices to keep a sense of coolness through aloofness (Brownlie et al. 2007); rather, they enjoy socializing and coaching other members. In an aesthetics-based community of practice, experienced aficionados derive pleasure from communicating what they have assimilated physically and intellectually during their practice trajectories (Falk 1994).

The previous two interactions show how aficionados link body techniques and perceptions to sayings through sensory scaffolding: the learner knew the meaning of a term, but his body could not detect it without getting primed through peer interaction. The reverse case is linguistic scaffolding, when individuals experience the “tip-of-the-tongue” (or nose) phenomenon: they detect a stimulus, yet cannot vocalize it because the link between the discursive and the corporeal is weak or absent. Our fieldnotes contain many cases in which club members taste a beer and grope for the right word, asking each other, “What’s this thing in the aftertaste?” But a more texturized passage comes from the first author’s personal journal:

Derek and John were studying for a beer certification. To evaluate a sample, they ran through the entire procedure: smelling, looking, swirling, tasting, and writing. I did the same thing, but said I’d hold back my opinion so as not to interfere with their studies. After swirling, I sniffed the beer. The smell was not strange, but I couldn’t find the specific word to express it. I smelled it again, but to no avail... Then, a word came to me: bacon. I smelled it again and thought, ‘It definitely smells like bacon!’ But I had never heard this word in beer descriptions. Derek and John resumed their talk... John said, ‘I gave 35 to it. It was not bad.’ Derek answered, ‘I don’t think it’s malty enough. It’s basically smoky. It has a lot of smoked malt in it.’ I then realized: what I had smelled was not bacon, but an element of smoked bacon. The right term was smokiness...Some weeks later, a club member offered me homemade beer. After smelling it, I quickly reacted, ‘Is this a little smoky?’ He agreed, ‘Yes, my friends who made it used some wood chips during the process. So, it’s a little smoky.’

In linguistic scaffolding, learners begin with a sensory perception at a pre-reflexive stage: the body senses something, but lacks the appropriate linguistic referent (Lightbown and Spada 2006; Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012). The passage shows how peers provide each other with the missing

vocabulary to encode ambiguous bodily sensations and overcome their linguistic deficiencies, thus turning the pre-reflexive into reflexive (Becker 1953).

The cooperative dimension of the constitution of cultural competence is undertheorized in consumer culture research. Holt (1995, 12) observes some peer mentorship at baseball games, but interprets seasoned fans' utterances primarily as building social distinction in that setting. Sirsi et al. (1996) and Celsi et al. (1993) note expert members diffuse belief systems to novices, but they do not theorize the processual connections between discourses and corporeality. Other works show that experienced members recruit new ones (Schau et al. 2009; Sirsi et al. 1996), derive status from knowledge differentials (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), and use their credibility to accommodate tensions caused by group members' different skill levels (Thomas et al. 2013). Nonetheless, this research stream has not accounted for cooperative, systematic sociality as a mechanism for creating and circulating cultural competence within consumption-based groups. We find peer cooperation thrives when actors see themselves as competing against their prior competence levels rather than as competing against each other (McClelland 1961). In such cases, actors derive more value from comparing their level of mastery against their past one than from contrasting their level of mastery to that of others (Shove et al. 2007). Cooperative scaffolding then becomes an important resource for developing cultural competence.

DISCUSSION

Implications and Contributions

Contemporary consumer culture thrives on the notion of personal transformation (Featherstone 2007; Slater 1997). Accordingly, consumer research has analyzed transformation of consumers' outer bodies, objects, and spaces (Arsel and Bean 2013; Featherstone 1982; Sandikci and Ger 2010; Schouten 1991; Thompson and Hirschman 1995). It has also analyzed transformation in consumers' acquisition patterns as well as belief and knowledge systems (Askegaard et al. 2005; Celsi et al. 1993; Sirsi et al. 1996; Thompson and Troester 2002). Missing in this literature is a socially grounded model that accounts for the processes that transform a person's corporeality (Desjarlais and Throop 2011; Warde 2014). We propose such model in figure 1.

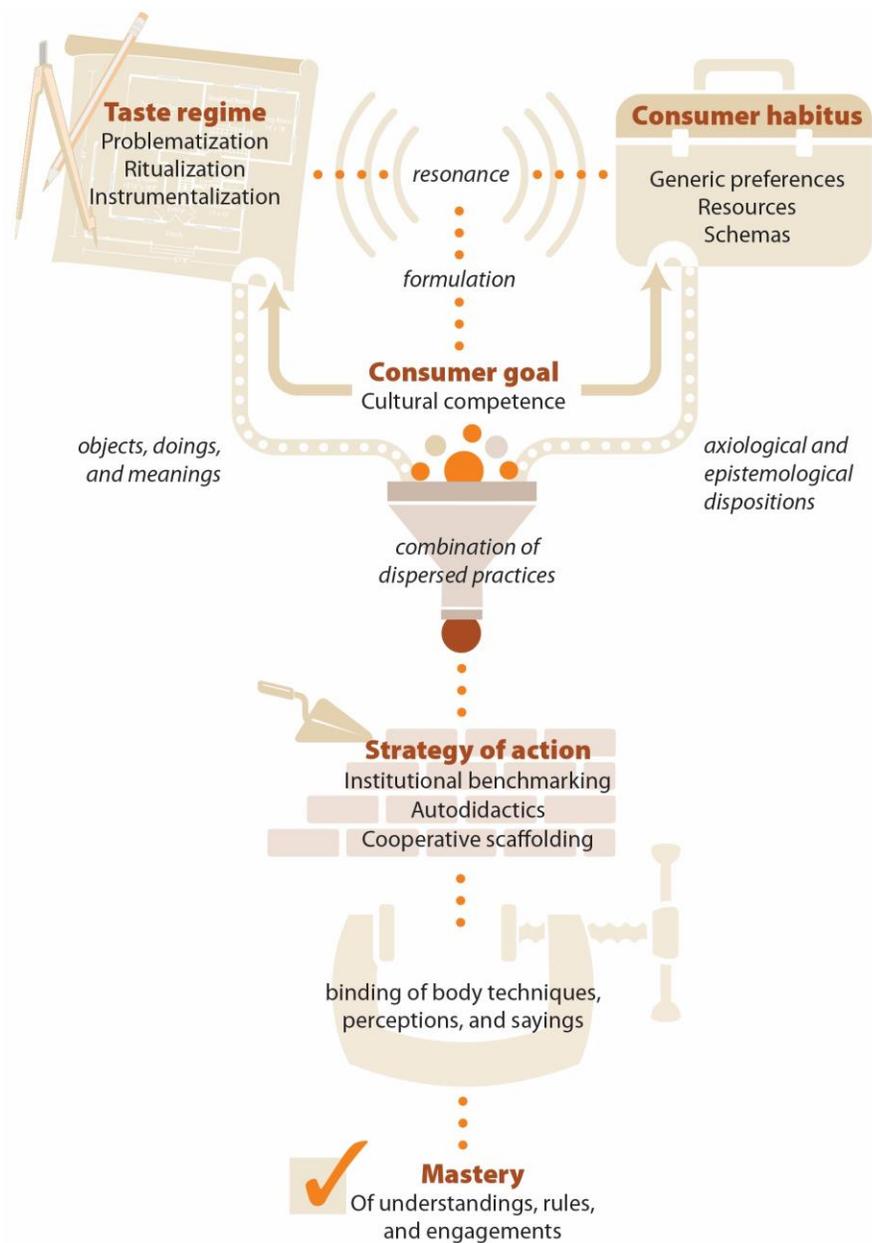


Fig. 6–Taste Engineering: An Extended Consumer Model of Cultural Competence

Constitution

The process modeled precedes the focus of the vast literature that theorizes how people deploy their cultural competences after developing them (Arsel and Thompson 2011; Holt 1998; Kates 2002; McQuarrie et al. 2013; Sirsi et al. 1996; Thornton 1996). Rather than focus on

deployment, the model focuses on a central goal in practice theory and a gap in consumer research: how people develop structures of knowledge to interpret the world (Reckwitz 2002). In particular, the extended model accounts for the fact that “sensations are experienced phenomenologically, interpreted culturally, and responded to socially” (Nichter 2008, 166).

Reading from top to bottom, the model represents how the resonance between a taste regime and one’s habitus leads consumers to formulate a goal of cultural competence in an integrative practice that they find compelling. To pursue this goal, these consumers draw on institutionally provided objects, meanings, and doings and their own socially conditioned toolkits of axiological and epistemological dispositions (Swidler 1986). The combined result of these resources and capacities is a set of class-inflected practices that come together into a learning-oriented strategy of action. In the context studied, the strategy of action consists of three complementary, dispersed practices. Through *institutional benchmarking*, consumers become acquainted with sensory and linguistic standards of competence that they use as a reference point to assess their own competences. Through *autodidactics*, they break down this set of standards into achievable chunks and create ways to embody sensory information they find challenging to assimilate and verbalize. Through *cooperative scaffolding*, they express, calibrate, and expand their competences by interacting with qualified peers. Through this process, consumers bind together the body techniques, perceptions, and sayings of an integrative practice to become culturally competent in it. By theorizing the constitution of cultural competence through the market-mediated binding of body techniques, perceptions, and sayings, the model extends the scant works on the constitution of this competence through the binding of objects, doings, and meanings (Arsel and Bean 2013; Shove et al. 2007).

We argue that the model and the set of learning practices that we identify apply to a significant range of markets. This range is conceptualized by Bourdieu's (1990b) categorization of spheres of taste into the legitimate, legitimizable, and arbitrary. In the sphere of legitimate taste (e.g., fine arts), widely accredited institutions such as universities and academies authenticate superior taste forms and culturally competent individuals. In the other two spheres of taste, the path towards legitimacy is loosely structured, depending on a wide array of actors such as critics, consumers, and clubs. This is the case with home decoration and photography.

We assert that taste engineering operates primarily in the legitimizable and arbitrary spheres, in which the path toward cultural competence relies on individuals' capacities to devise effective strategies of action. In addition to home decoration and photography, these two spheres include many recent cases of aestheticization of U.S. food and beverages. Craft beer has experienced a revival, the coffee industry has reversed declining sales by developing a burgeoning premium market, and sales of super-premium craft bourbons rose by 97.5% from 2009 to 2014 (Holt and Cameron 2010; Risen 2014). One can add to these changes the proliferation of premium olive oil stores and European-like chocolatiers and bakeries, and the steadily growing interest of Americans in fine wines and cheeses (Lehrer 2009).

In addition to theorizing the institutional and non-institutional mediations implicated in a core phenomenon in contemporary consumer culture, we extend consumer research by foregrounding cooperation as a mechanism for creating and disseminating cultural competence in social domains. Research on consumption collectivities has theorized between-consumer cooperation in situations that are unrelated to cultural competence development, such as brand community owners of Saab cars who provide each other with roadside assistance (Muñiz Jr. and O'Guinn 2001). Our work extends researchers' understanding of consumption collectivities by

detailing how cooperative social interaction contributes to individuals' gradual expansion of discursive-corporeal capacities.

The prevalence of cooperation in developing these capacities in our empirical context is structurally grounded in three important ways. First, craft beer's taste regime valorizes a mode of production (craftsmanship) rather than particular taste forms (beer styles). Second, cultural competence involves the enduring ability to evaluate a wide set of cultural forms rather than developing command of just a few fleeting forms, as is characteristic in many other social domains (Thornton 1996). Third, the demographics of U.S. craft beer aficionados indicate they are quite homogeneous currently (male, middle-class, white, and heterosexual). Distinct taste forms do not play the role of marking social positions within the craft beer domain at present (Bourdieu 1984; Hebdige 1979/2012). We assert that these structural elements reduce these actors' use of taste as a social weapon. For those developing cultural competence in craft beer consumption, actors derive more prestige by using their skills to increase the commonality of the practice than by using their skills to exclude those who are less competent: their focus is on sharing a repertoire of understandings, rules, and engagements governing action with others.

Our research deepens theorizing on how culture shapes action (Swidler 1986; 2003). In particular, we show how socially located individuals reappropriate and alter their capacities across social domains in order to pursue consumption-related goals. In particular, taste engineering enlists masculine cognitive schemas such as a rationalized quest for novel experiences and detached emotionality, which are reinforced by these men's participation in professional fields that reward methodical thinking (Acker 1990; Bristor and Fischer 1993; Kimmel 1995). Taste engineering also enlists middle-class schemas such as self-improvement, sense of career, and rejection of the grotesque (Bourdieu 1984; Levy 1966/1999; Stebbins 2007).

Taste engineering thus consists of a consumption-focused strategy of action that is shaped by the dispositions these men acquire in the interlinked domains of work, gender, and social class. By grounding the constitution of cultural competence in social structure, we extend consumer research that studies the development of consumer competence without focusing on the impact of social conditioning (Celsi et al. 1993; Holt 1995). We find that social structure conditions not only how individuals consume (Holt 1997), but also how they learn to consume.

Limitations and Extensions

Taste engineering relies on capacities that are unevenly distributed in social space. This strategy of action is more likely to occur among the well-educated faction of the middle class socialized into cognitive schemas such as systematicity and detached emotionality. However, our model's emphasis on capacities theoretically allows for study of the strategies of action used by other social strata to develop cultural competence. Investigating these strategies to expand cultural competences is a consequential future research direction inasmuch as social mobility and inclusion involve the expansion of consumption competences (Bourdieu 1984).

Like our work, previous studies have noted the prevalence of males in social domains that use the term connoisseurship to designate cultural competence (Belk 1995; Lupton 1996). Yet, untrained women outperform untrained men in wine taste tests, after controlling for demographic variables (Lehrer 2009). Future research may examine the exclusionary power of ways of learning in addition to the exclusionary power of knowing. Perhaps the path toward competence has a social significance that is distinct from that of competence itself.

Finally, future research can study how language becomes institutionalized in a social domain. As aficionados become culturally competent, they feel confident to occasionally depart from cultural authorities' discourses by using new descriptors such as "bubblegum" and "cat food" for sensory experiences. At first, such neologisms involve localized meaning negotiation, as interlocutors may not know what a new term signifies. However, some terms later become widely shared among aficionados. Investigating the path from intersubjective agreement to an institutionalized discourse seems promising.

CONCLUSION

The knowledge and altered enjoyment associated with taste engineering involve self-constraint and tenacity. These capacities suggest that individuals engaged in taste engineering participate in an instantiation of disciplining of the body (Elias 2000; Foucault 1977/1995). However, this instantiation has an explicit focus on the inner body that contrasts with other instances of disciplinization that are more salient in contemporary consumer culture. For example, it contrasts with disciplinization projects that focus on enhancing body appearance (Featherstone 1982; Thompson and Hirschman 1995) and on acquiring decorative objects to express taste (Arsel and Bean 2013). Compared to these projects, taste engineering is mostly virtue from within. Rather than developing their bodies and living spaces as elements to be read, aficionados engaged in taste engineering aim to develop the senses as instruments for a more informed reading of cultural objects that constitute an important part of their lifestyle. These individuals do not see their disciplined bodies as constrained by market forces; instead, they see their bodies as possessing a competence that sets them free from the mass market forces that,

they believe, have oppressed their sensory development. They see the constitution of this competence as a project of sensory enlightenment, in which they combine body (sensory) and reason (enlightenment) to engage with market-mediated sensuousness.

Taste engineering refers to the reflective process of making connections between corporeality and institutionally provided discourses in order to constitute cultural competence in a social domain. Inquiries on this connection have been scarce in consumer research. On the one hand, the sociocultural literature has understudied the institutional and non-institutional mediations that transform people's relation with a practice, usually overlooking the stages people traverse to reach a level of mastery that alters their enjoyment. On the other one, the psychological literature has widely studied consumer expertise, but as an independent variable that affects preference and memory (Shapiro and Spence 2002; West et al. 1996). Our research looks at expertise as an outcome, placing corporeality and the often-neglected world of the senses at the center of the study of consumer cultural competence.

III. A STUDY OF MIDDLE-CLASS WOMEN'S LEISURE-BASED RESISTANCE TO GENDERED TIMES AND SPACES

Man for the field and woman for the hearth

Man for the sword and for the needle she

Man with the head and woman with the heart...

All else confusion.

(Excerpt from *The Princess*, Alfred Tennyson 1847)

The structuring of times and spaces chiefly produces subjectivities and reproduces social positions (Foucault 1977/1995; Giddens 1984; Zerubavel 1981). This structuring became intensively gendered for the Western world's middle class at the conjunction of capitalism and patriarchy; this conjunction tied middle-class masculinity with public spaces, geographical mobility, and production time, while linking middle-class femininity to private spaces, geographical fixity, and consumption time (Bourdieu 2001; Costa 2000; Kimmel 1995; Slater 1997). The legacy of this structuring still operates, for example, in the gendered, unequal allocation of time to housework between heterosexual couples, and in the anxiety that many women experience in public and semi-public places because of the predominance of masculine norms (Bianchi et al. 2000; Hill 2000; Hochschild 1989; Quinn 2002; Thompson 1996). Resistance to the disciplinary power of the temporal-spatial structuring of gender is the focus of this paper. In particular, this essay looks into middle-class women's resistance to this dimension of gender normativity during their leisure time, both in the domestic and public spheres.

In line with social theory canons (Foucault 1978; Goffman 1963), most consumer research takes resistance as an inevitable reaction to institutional oppression, hence focusing on its articulation. Prior research has found that individuals seek to destabilize ideologies, market forms, and material provisions that constrain their identities and practices (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Holt 2002; Izberk-Bilgin 2012; Kozinets 2001; Sandikci and Ger 2010; Thompson and Arsel 2004). Prior research has also found that some women use consumption and leisure to resist ideals of female beauty, sexuality, and physicality (Martin et al. 2006; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013; Schau and Buchanan-Oliver 2012; Thompson and Üstüner 2015a). Additionally, consumer research has revealed how individuals escape institutional oppression by seeking respite in temporary encampments (Belk and Costa 1998; Kozinets 2002). Nonetheless, nodes of institutional oppression do not always generate resistance, and when they do, resistance occurs in different degrees and shapes that can range from individual, cognitive re-significations of commercial messages to collective, temporary effervescences (Fiske 1989/2010; Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Kozinets 2002). This essay contributes to consumer research a depiction of how pragmatic, mundane axes of resistance are formed and sustained. It does so by studying how some middle-class women construct a temporal-spatial axis of resistance to shape the institutionally patterned times and spaces that structure their daily lives.

By studying middle-class women's leisure-based resistance to the temporal-spatial cosmology of patriarchy, this essay also contributes to consumer research's conceptualizations of gender. As Fischer and Gopaldas note (2012, 403), these conceptualizations have emphasized the reproduction of social identities: "It would behoove a new generation of intersectionality-oriented research to focus not only on how social identity structures are reproduced but also how they are transformed by marketers and consumers." Their general note applies to the modal

depiction of middle-class women's domesticity, a realm where these women help perpetuate gender roles by enacting the ethics of care (Bianchi et al. 2000; Fischer and Arnold 1990; Hochschild 1989; Lowrey and Otnes 1994; Moisisio et al. 2004; Thompson 1996; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). Although vital for the conceptualization of gender, the singular focus on reproduction obscures how middle-class domesticity and femininity are sites of cultural change. Thus, instead of theorizing domesticity as a space for the reenactment of deep-seated gender myths, this research theorizes domesticity as a locus in which middle-class women interpret and contest feminine myths. Tying this contribution with the first one on resistance, this study shows that a key medium for this political project is leisure, an activity that relies on a sense of temporal-spatial entitlement that is structurally foreclosed to many middle-class women, due to their socialization into other-oriented scripts (Fraser 2002; Radway 1984; Wearing 1998).

These two contributions rely on three years of ethnography of women involved in a leisure form that has recently been the object of heated debate in contemporary feminist media: knitting. Since the 1990s, a diffuse network of social actors has encouraged women to engage with knitting and other fiber crafts as a feminist pursuit, despite, and because of, their stigmatization as dull and outmoded (Adamson 2010; Groeneveld 2010; Pentney 2008; Wills 2007). Women from diverse age groups have (re-)taken up the needles as a hobby, as attested by features in high-circulation magazines such as *Parade* (Rochman 2013) and *The Economist* (2006), and the appearance of books related to fiber crafts in the *New York Times*' best-seller list (Garner 2004; Penn 2007; Wills 2007). About 60 million women are estimated to perform some type of fiber craft in the U.S. (Miller 2014). The changes in knitters' profile and relationship with their craft led scholars to state that contemporary knitting is no longer grandma knitting (Fields 2014; Groeneveld 2010).

Methodologically, the politicization of knitting is productive; it creates unsettled times that make social actors' meanings and practices more accessible (Swidler 1986). Of course, many women continue to engage in this craft without seeing it as political; sometimes, a needle is just a needle, as Freud could have said. However, the segment of women studied here represents the growing number of contemporary women who volitionally and critically engage with feminized leisure forms that involve material production, such as canning, jamming, baking, jewelry making, quilting, sewing, crocheting, spinning, and beading, to name a few (Bryan-Wilson et al. 2010; Matchar 2011; Wills 2007). The segment studied is comprised of non-radical, well-educated, middle-class women like Sarah, a 28-year-old high-school teacher, master's degree in astrophysics, recently married to a mathematician, no children, who enjoys hiking and cooking. Or women like Mary, a 55-year-old nurse, married to a college professor, mother of two college-age children, who enjoys music concerts, baking, and reading.

To set the stage for the study, the essay first reviews the related literature, semiotically framing its focus and historicizing middle-class women's relationship with time and space. It follows with a description of the methodological procedures. Subsequently, it analyzes the leisure-based tactics some middle-class women use to defy the temporal-spatial cosmology of patriarchy. I end by discussing the broader implications of this work for consumer research on gender and resistance.

SEMIOTIC FRAMING OF THE PHENOMENON OF STUDY

Experiences of time, space, gender, and resistance are relationally constructed (Kozinets 2008; Lorber 1993; Mead 1949; Rybczynski 1986). A tool suited to the study of relational

experiences is the semiotic square, which provides a visual map of a phenomenal field as well as its gaps, tensions, and dynamics (Floch and Pinson 1990; Greimas 1987). I employ the semiotic square in figure 1 to locate and analyze *resistant femininity*, the politicized relationship between femininity, time, and space that emerges as non-radical, middle-class women translate the abstract discourses of contemporary feminism into concrete tactics of resistance (de Certeau 1984).

Contemporary feminism is a diffuse social-cultural movement that valorizes plural routes to gender equality (Heywood and Drake 1997; Walker 1992/2006; Wolf 1993). Despite this pluralism, the voices of this feminism converge in their attempts to re-signify elements of femininity that have been historically devalued. Whereas previous feminist waves focused on increasing women's participation in public activities (e.g., voting and paid employment) and sovereignty over their bodies (e.g., abortion rights), contemporary feminism focuses on the realm of culture, arguing the derogation of femininity chiefly sustains gender hierarchies (McRobbie 1991/2000; Scott 2005; Shoemaker 1997). Through TV celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey and Martha Stewart as well as magazines such as BUST (Baumgardner and Richards 2000; Wills 2007), contemporary feminism calls on women to assertively engage with feminized cultural forms for their own pleasure. In addition, these calls encourage women to transform these cultural forms into a space for cultural politics: the activity of recognizing, making explicit, and fighting the oppressive power of institutionalized schemas and hierarchies (Heywood and Drake 1997; Wolf 1993; Young 1990/2011).

This form of cultural politics fills a gap in the semiotic square, and hence extant research knowledge on middle-class femininity. This gap occurs when we look into the relationship between three institutionalized myths that are bound up with U.S. middle-class women: the angel

in the house, the fashion victim, and the radical feminist (Coontz 2000; Scott 2005; Young 2005). As explained next, the workings of these myths to naturalize particular relationships between women, time, and space are well-recognized in the literature. In contrast, resistance to this mythologized relationship, and the role played by leisure, are underexplored.

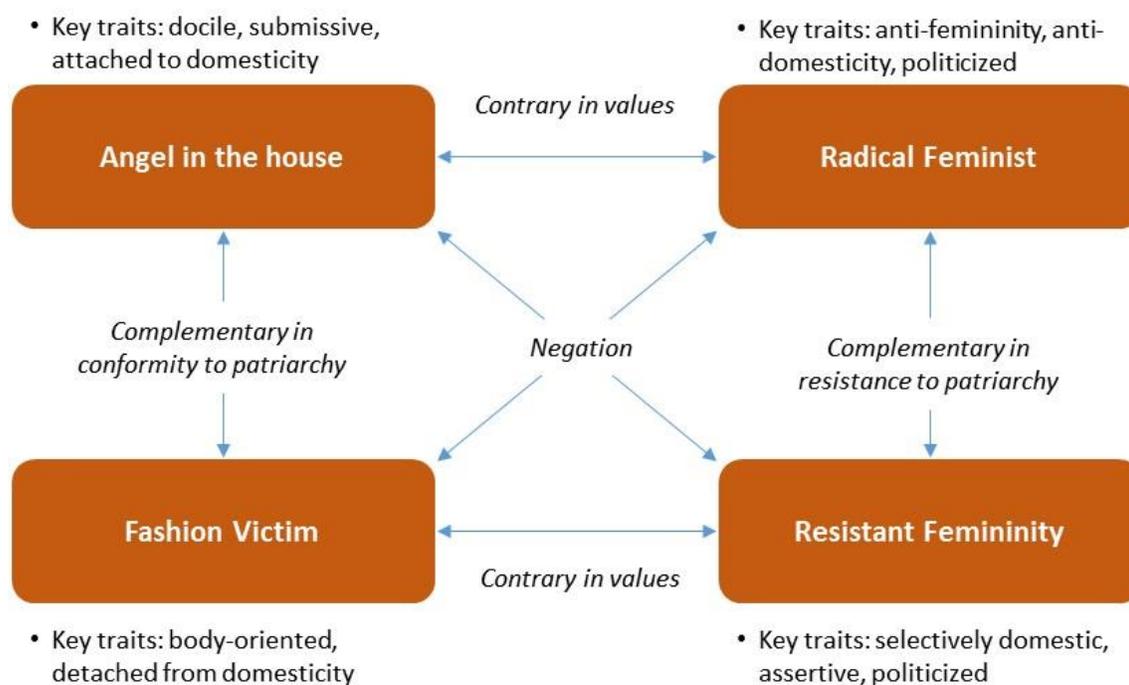


Fig. 1—The semiotic location of resistant femininity

The Angel in the House

This myth naturalizes American middle-class women's allocation of domestic times and spaces to work on behalf of others in docile, nurturing ways (Coontz 2000; Thompson 1996). This myth developed largely in Victorian times, when a rigid division of labor demarcated the middle-class public sphere as the realm of self-interested men and the middle-class domestic

sphere as the realm of altruistic, caring women (Kimmel 1995; Rybczynski 1986). This myth was rejuvenated in the 1950s and 1960s, as the U.S. recovered from the gender dislocations of World War II. The media, a re-masculinized workplace, and renewed family ideals encouraged middle-class women to find fulfilment in unpaid, domestic labor, after they had worked out of the home to support war efforts (Coontz 2000; Friedan 1963). Second wave feminism sought to revert the situation, but in the 1980s, a backlash against this wave reasserted the importance of women's allegedly unique other-orientation and nurturing skills. Backlash discourses argued these skills were vital for reconstituting harmonious homes and counterbalancing neoliberal, cutthroat competition (Faludi 1991).

By casting women as the linchpin of the household, this myth naturalizes the home as their primal space, and their time as a resource oriented towards working and shopping on behalf of others (Bianchi et al. 2000; Bourdieu 2001; Hochschild 1989). The normative strength of this myth continues to reproduce gender roles in both single- and double-income middle-class families, through both mundane and festive activities that involve consumption and work (Bianchi et al. 2000; Fischer and Arnold 1990; Hochschild 1989; Lowrey and Otnes 1994; Moisio et al. 2004; Thompson 1996; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). The popular expression "A woman's place is in the home" distills this myth.

The Fashion Victim

Like the angel in the house, the mythologized figure of the fashion victim is depoliticized, hence its position on the left side of the semiotic square. However, whereas the angel in the house myth portrays middle-class women using their time to shop and work on behalf of others

in the domestic sphere, the fashion victim myth portrays women as detached from domesticity. Enticed by hardly attainable ideals of feminine beauty, the fashion victim seeks self-actualization and social status through the acquisition and display of mainstream fashion and cosmetics (Simmel 1957; Wolf 1991).

The fashion victim myth is a variant of the well-documented institutionalization of the modern consumer as female and vulnerable, in contrast to the institutionalization of the modern producer as male and self-defining (Coleman 2012; Slater 1997). This myth downplays women's ability to engage in activities that involve intellectuality and self-restraint by constituting women's defining pastime as gullible, frivolous shopping at the mall (Slater 1997). The popular quote "A woman's place is in the mall" distills this myth on feminine use of time and space.

The Radical Feminist

Although feminism has had different factions and eras, its radical faction holds a prominent place in the popular imaginary (Mann and Huffman 2005; Scott 2005). This faction is represented by the radical feminist, a mythologized figure who is willing to jeopardize the social order to denounce gender inequality, as the iconic (but fictional) bra-burners supposedly did (Coontz 2000; De Beauvoir 1949/2010; Friedan 1963; Scott 2005). In the 1980s, conservative media magnified this myth, diffusing a notion of feminists as male-haters, family-bashers, and anti-domesticity, thereby undermining mainstream people's identification with the women's movement (Faludi 1991). The symbolic power of this imagery continues to hold sway in the way many women refuse to self-identify as feminists, even though they defend gender equality and

acknowledge the importance of the women's movement (Baumgardner and Richards 2000; Catterall et al. 2000).

The radical feminist myth thus exists in direct opposition to the angel in the house's submissive domesticity. At the same time, the radical feminist demeans market-mediated pleasures of normative femininity, negating the public, consumerist performances of the female fashion victim as a path towards women's social significance and happiness. In the radical feminist myth, time should be used for intellectually noble purposes such as paid work, especially when this work takes place in masculine territory or fields. A softened corollary of this myth is type of femininity that valorizes women's professional accomplishments, while demeaning any interest in domesticity.

Resistant Femininity

The three myths above demonstrate that gender features a normative dimension of time and space. The angel in the house reinforces women's attachment to domestic times and spaces; the fashion victim forges an attachment to consumerist times and spaces; and the radical feminist prescribes women's drastic detachment from the normative times and spaces of domesticity and consumerism.

The temporal-spatial gendering of social life oppresses middle-class women because it comes with a symbolic hierarchy: society tends to economically and symbolically value masculine times and spaces more than feminine ones (Radway 1984). This oppression is an assertion of institutional power: the internalized, shared rules and mechanisms that identify categories of social actors, their appropriate activities or relationships, and their social significances (Barley

and Tolbert 1997; Foucault 1982). In this view, institutions organize social action through socially constructed templates and micro-disciplinary mechanisms that individuals internalize and maintain by re-enacting accepted ways of life (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Foucault 1977/1995; Giddens 1984). As a conceptual counterpart to this type of institutional power, resistance is a struggle against the forms of power that pervade everyday life by constituting individuals as subjects. Such resistance ranges from mental resignification to active confrontation, and occurs at the extreme points of the circuits through which power circulates, such as ongoing social relations, marketplace activities, and urban design (de Certeau 1984; Foucault 1982; Izberk-Bilgin 2012).

This essay employs this conceptualization of institutional power and resistance to detail the construction of middle-class women's non-violent, yet confrontational leisure-based tactics to challenge the temporal-spatial cosmology of patriarchy. The analysis, rather than focusing on the functioning of a particular enclave of resistance, encompasses women's participation in the domestic and public spheres, thereby addressing a research call often made by gender and cultural theorists (Fiske 1989/2010; McRobbie 1991/2000). Thompson and Üstüner (2015) recently began to answer this call in consumer research. By studying women participating in roller derbies, they reveal how women's subjectivities change through their participation in marketplace performances that counter their gender habitus. They also find that by softening their performances, these women harmoniously gain their families' support for their unorthodox leisure. In contradistinction, this essay focuses on knitting, a cultural form that historically coheres with, rather than transforms, feminine habitus (Parker 2010). Further, unlike Thompson and Üstüner's work, this essay reveals that women engaged in resistant femininity often deploy their leisure to confront household members, challenging gendered norms regarding times and

spaces they find oppressive. The next section explains how I studied women involved in this form of active resistance, which goes beyond mere manipulation of meaning and mental evasion of prescribed roles, being nearer the point of activism and agentic edgework (Fiske 1989/2010; Izberk-Bilgin 2012; Thompson and Üstüner 2015b).

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Data Collection

Data collection relies on the three ethnographic pillars: experiencing, enquiring, and examining (Wolcott 1999). Through these pillars, data collection documented both the discursive and behavioral dimensions of the phenomenon of interest (Giddens 1984).

Experiencing. I conducted 24 months of intensive and 12 months of sporadic participant-observation at a locally-owned knitting store. Because retail stores are market spaces where discourses and behaviors intersect in visible ways (Dowling 1993), this dataset allowed me to document in a naturalistic setting the sayings and doings that occur at the crossroads of feminized leisure and contemporary feminism.

The focal store opened in the 2000s in a metropolitan area in the southwestern U.S., as fiber crafts re-gained popularity. The store is located near the campus of a major state university and a revitalized downtown, operating at the heart of a middle- and upper-middle-class residential area populated by young families, professionally active couples, and retirees. The focal store attracts a clientele in diverse lifecycle stages. Moreover, although the commercial focus of the store is

knitting, this shop explicitly supports other fiber crafts, hosting crochet, spinning, and beading groups that meet regularly. It also offers spaces for customers to forge social ties, such as communal tables and a room without merchandise where customers can hang out while they craft. Each day but especially towards the weekend, regular and occasional customers sit in these spaces with their projects to socialize with store personnel and other customers, receive advice on their fiber craft projects, and occasionally share food and beverages. The research site constitutes a third place (Oldenburg 1989) for many of these customers.

As I conducted these visits, I assumed the overt role of buddy-researcher (Snow et al. 1986) to address ethical issues of confidentiality, credibility, and note-taking flexibility (Emerson et al. 1995/2011; Singleton and Straits 2010). I learned to knit to legitimize my interest in fiber crafts among informants and reduce the intrusiveness that a non-crafter observer would create in the setting. This strategy facilitated the development of rapport with many informants. I visited the retailer roughly 60 times on different days and times to build variation in the sample. Most visits lasted at least 1.5 hours. On these visits, I knitted and interacted with other customers about diverse topics, such as travelling, family, community, and education. Sometimes, these interactions became informal interviews, which lasted up to 30 minutes. Reflecting my rapport with informants, I also participated in private events at their homes, such as baby showers, Thanksgiving dinners, and farewell parties.

To broaden my understanding and check the generalizability of my interpretation beyond this geographically bound group of informants, I followed previous research that employed an observational method that is similar to but less participative than netnography (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Visconti et al. 2010). The most suitable online communities for netnography congregate people directly involved with the focal

phenomenon, generate high number of postings, and feature various between-member interactions (Kozinets 2002a). *Ravelry.com* meets these criteria. Founded in 2007, the website provides fiber crafters with a lively discussion forum that includes personal and technical topics, and it offers online tools for project and stash management as well as crafter-to-crafter material exchanges. *Ravelry.com* (accessed on 05/01/2015) now counts about 5 million members, with about 5,000 of them logged in daily.

To deal with the instantaneous overload of information that typifies netnography, I focused on messages related to the research goals (Kozinets 2002a). First, I analyzed threads concerned with the challenges and pleasures of fiber crafts, rather than its technical aspects. Second, I entered key words related to feminism and femininity. The search led me to analyze the posts of groups such as “This is what a feminist knits like”—a direct reference to the contemporary feminism slogan “This is what a feminist looks like.” Though *ravelry.com* is an international community, I focused on messages posted by fiber crafters likely to be located in the U.S. to keep the contextuality of the data; I prioritized posts in English that include reference to American regions, craft stores, craft clubs, celebrities, or events.

Enquiring. I conducted 18 long interviews (McCracken 1988) to better document knitters’ lives beyond craft-related settings. In the first set of 8 interviews, I leveraged the participant-observation to identify and recruit for interviews some regular customers who construct their craft as a contemporary fusion of femininity and feminism. To add interpretive depth (Glaser and Strauss 1967), I constructed a second set of 10 interviews with female knitters who shop mostly at other craft shops. These informants were recruited through a fiber craft circle that meets at a multi-purpose space located in downtown and through my own social network. Towards the end

of the data collection, I recruited female knitters with small children at home to explore their cultural politics at a life stage characterized by biological and cultural imperatives on women (Marotta 2002; Miller 1998). As Table 1 indicates, the final set of interviewees represents a wide range of ages, life stages, and middle-class occupations. The set also represents well the type of informant I encountered throughout the participant-observation and the general population of crafters in the U.S. (Sonnenberg 2000).

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Family status	Education/major	Main Occupation
Beth	60-69	White	Widow, dating, no children	Bachelor/Russian	Fraud investigator*
Carol	50-59	White	Married, no children	Bachelor/French	Paralegal*
Claire	40-49	White	Married, no children	Bachelor/Arts Education	Academic advisor
Clara	30-39	Hispanic	Engaged, no children	Master/Women's studies	Ph.D. student
Debbie	60-69	White	Married, 2 children	Master/History	High school teacher*
Emma	30-39	White	Married, 3 children	Bachelor/Engineering	Academic advisor
Georgia	60-69	White	Divorced, 3 children, 3 grandchildren	Bachelor/Mathematics	Entrepreneur
Julia	50-59	White	Married, no children	Master/Nursing Pediatrics	Entrepreneur
Katie	60-69	Black	Married, 1 child	Bachelor/Psychology	Social worker*
Kendra	60-69	White	Married, 3 children, 3 grandchildren	Bachelor/Mathematics	Software developer
Laura	20-29	White	Married, 1 child	Bachelor/Psychology	Psychological counselor
Mary	50-59	White	Married, 2 children	Bachelor/Nursing	Nurse
Mandy	40-49	White	Married, 2 children	Master/Linguistic	Public relations
Sarah	20-29	White	Married, no children	Master/Astrophysics	High school teacher
Sophie	40-49	White	Married, 1 child	Master/Linguistics	Probation officer

Supriti	30-39	Indian	Married, no children	Master/Biomedicine	Ph.D. student
Teresa	70-79	Hispanic	Married, 2 children, 2 grandchildren	Bachelor/French	Office worker*
Veronica	40-49	White	Divorced, 3 children	Some college	Retail store manager

* Informants are currently retired, but are usually involved in multiple volunteer assignments.

Most interviews occurred at the informants' homes; I could thus take notes on their domestic spaces and better infer their social positions. Interview questions probed into informants' personal trajectories, household routines, and consumption patterns, seeking to access their actions rather than abstractions (Charmaz 1995; Malinowski 1922/2007). These interactions lasted from 1.5 to 3.5 hours and were transcribed verbatim.

Examining. As other works have done (Giesler 2012; Sandikci and Ger 2010), I constructed a dataset of visual and textual materials to better document the phenomenon of interest. To ensure the significance of these materials, I focused on those mentioned by informants in the participant-observation, netnographic, and interview datasets.

The archive consists of images and news stories on fiber crafts that circulated in local, regional, and national newspapers. It also includes posts and pictures from popular blogs among fiber crafters such as the *Yarn Harlot* (<http://www.yarnharlot.ca/>), a website whose name plays with an insulting feminine label and figures among the most visited in the blogosphere (Wills 2007). Moreover, it comprises notes on numerous publications related to fiber crafts, including those listed on the *New York Time's* best-selling books list (e.g., *The Friday Night Knitting Club* by Kate Jacobs and *Stitch 'N Bitch* by Debbie Stoller).

The archive also includes extensive materials on two initiatives that were prominent in the fieldwork; informants lauded these initiatives and recommended them as “interesting for your research.” One is *Stitch ‘N Pitch*, a program supported by Major and Minor League Baseball teams and the National NeedleArts Association. In this program, fiber crafters buy discount tickets to work on their projects while they watch a baseball game, often filling entire sections in the stadium (The National Needlearts Association 2010). To complement this part of the document analysis, I travelled to a city that hosted one of these events in 2014. I attended the game and knitted for a little while, spending most of the time circulating and interacting with fiber crafters in the main sections designated for *Stitch ‘N Pitch*.

The other initiative is *Yarn Graffiti*, a form of street art in which individuals install fiber crafts on street fixtures and public landscape elements (Moore and Prain 2009). Also called yarn bombing and yarn storm, the initiative has generated lively conversations among fiber crafters and vivid pictures that circulate in several media outlets and online. I complemented this part of the document analysis by photographing instances of *Yarn Graffiti* in two different U.S. cities and asking an informant to share her pictures of another instance in a third city. The ensemble of these materials extended my understanding of how middle-class women have employed leisure to challenge the temporal-spatial cosmology of patriarchy.

Analysis

After each experiencing and enquiring event, I performed open coding and wrote an idiographic analysis on emerging interpretations; I then iteratively compared these analyses to refine the coding system (Charmaz 1995; Emerson et al. 1995/2011). As I conducted the

documenting, I looked for elements that confirmed, refuted, and expanded emergent interpretations. Through this process, I reviewed the literature on femininity, leisure, and cultural resistance, iteratively grouping the codes into themes until theoretical saturation was reached.

I then performed a member check: I wrote an extended analytical report and shared it with an informant who holds a graduate degree in social science. She thought the report represented well her and her friends' experiences as middle-class knitters, noting that women sometimes feel guilty as they perform leisure, as with female romance readers (Radway 1984). This remark was further developed in my subsequent writing. Throughout this process, the dissertation chair (female) provided analytical distance, helping me balance between intimacy and distance from the context (Arnould et al. 2006). This bi-gender perspective also increased my analytical sensitivity to institutionalized, gendered patterns of behavior in domestic and public spaces (Bristor and Fischer 1993).

As a further check on boundary conditions to the analysis, I interviewed four middle-class males engaged in hobby crafts: two fiber crafters, one woodworker, and one jewelry maker. As with previous research on male crafters (Moisio et al. 2013), these informants construct the meaning of their hobbies mainly by comparing these activities to their work lives. Male fiber crafters, in particular, construct this craft as a form of gender tourism into femininity that counterbalances their competitive performances in the realm of work (Moore 1988). By contrast, female fiber crafters often draw comparisons between their knitting and their involvement with housework and the notion of shopping as women's favorite pastime in contemporary consumer culture. The triangulation across gender helped me crystallize the distinctive elements of middle-class women's construction of feminized leisure as a political space. Despite this careful analysis, my sample's social class and ethnic homogeneity limits the generalizability of the

results. However, it allows me to focus on resistance to gender oppression. If the sample included a high proportion of women from subordinate ethnicities and social classes, the analysis would be confounded with other axes of oppression (Risman 2004).

FINDINGS

This section shows how non-radical, middle-class women translate the abstract discourses of contemporary feminism into concrete tactics of resistance, thus constructing an axis of resistance to gendered times and spaces. This translation involves the politicization of subjects and objects. I first describe the politicization of the object, specifying the changes in knitting that equip these women to engage with it as a medium for cultural politics. I then specify how these women employ this leisure hobby to actively resist mythologized times and spaces of femininity, both in the domestic and public spheres. This section also gradually introduces concepts of resistance to diffuse forms of power to better frame the analysis and the following discussion.

Contemporary Feminism and Knitting

“...with needle or hook, woman sadly weaves the very nothingness of her days.”

(de Beauvoir 1949/2010, 634)

Like other feminized cultural forms, knitting has a history of marginalization, even among women at the forefront of feminist struggles such as Simone de Beauvoir. However, in the last

three decades, three mechanisms have re-signified the relationships of many middle-class women with this craft.

The first mechanism is ideological. Drawing from the Arts and Crafts Movement, feminist magazines such as *BUST* and knitting books have infused claims of empowerment into this leisure form, with some of these books selling well enough to make the *New York Times*' best-seller list (Garner 2004; Groeneveld 2010; Pentney 2008; Wills 2007). One author of such books is Stephanie Pearl-McPhee, who humorously discusses knitters' experiences while calling them to take pride in their skills and the time invested in their crafts: "Buy the best [yarn] you can afford. The stuff you make is your legacy, and your time is really worth it" (Pearl-McPhee 2006, 50). Another knitting celebrity is Debbie Stoller, a Ph.D. in Psychology of Women from Yale University. Her *Stitch 'N Bitch* book series, whose name plays with an insulting feminine label, interweaves craft patterns with feminist calls: "By loudly reclaiming old-fashioned skills, women are rebelling against a culture that seems to reward only the sleek, the mass-produced, the male" (Stoller 2003, 10). In these discourses, women get instructions for fiber craft patterns alongside instructions for patterning their subjectivities. I conceptualize these discourses as *incitements*, mechanisms that expand the circulation of pre-existing social practices and identities by re-signifying some of their components (Foucault 1978; Schatzki 1996).

The second re-signifying mechanism is social. Although fiber craft circles have long existed, they have typically met in predictable, contained spaces such as homes, church halls, and craft fairs, often producing items for charity (Wills 2007). In contrast, contemporary feminism discourses have encouraged women to craft together in semipublic and public spaces such as coffee shops, yarn stores, and parks. This publicity makes their feminine work visible and social, unlike other conventionally feminine tasks such as doing laundry, ironing, or cooking. *Stitch 'N*

Bitch's website (<http://stitchnbitch.org/>, accessed on 05/01/2015) counts more than 10,000 registered fiber craft circles that meet in such places. In parallel to face-to-face groups, the website *ravelry.com* has a major presence in the growing fiber craft market, with an increasing number of users since its launch in 2007. I conceptualize these offline and online groups as *locales of resistance*, social formations of like-minded people that stabilize and invigorate each other's engagement in resistant projects (Barley and Tolbert 1997; Becker 1963).

The third re-signifying mechanism is material. Fiber crafts have experienced the aestheticization that affected multiple markets in industrialized societies (Featherstone 2007). Contemporary crafters can readily indulge in a wide range of luxurious fibers, colors, and patterns that were rare in the 1980s. Incited by contemporary feminism discourses, they use this elaborated aesthetic to negate the backward, dull connotation of their hobby, changing its process and final products into a sensuous and artistic activity (Fields 2014; Sandikci and Ger 2010). However, the aestheticization of knitting is instrumental rather than central to knitters' resistance. Individuals engaged in projects of resistance often develop a set of coherent signs and objects to show off a dissident group identity, thus forming a total lifestyle (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979/2012; Thornton 1996). This is particularly true for working-class resistance. In contrast, middle-class resistance such as that depicted in this essay often takes on diffuse signs (Clarke et al. 1976). Accordingly, signaling group membership is usually subtle for women engaged in resistant femininity; their axis of resistance is dislocated from stylistic to pragmatic issues. Rather than expressing their disaffiliation to focal institutions primarily through visual shock, their axis of resistance is primarily time and space.

In parallel to these mechanisms of resignification, knitting continues to be tactile, practical, soothing, and gift-oriented. But these three mechanisms have added a politicized layer to the way

knitters think of their craft, as illustrated by Michelle's (50-59, high school teacher) direct reference to them during a conversation at the knitting store:

I think knitting is devalued because it's mainly practiced by women. And I think, whether people are conscious of it or not, they tend not to value the work that women do... This is something the Yarn Harlot blog discusses once in a while, when she tells stories of what she has heard from other people on knitting. So I think, again, knitting is seen as just this mindless way for a little old lady to pass the time, as opposed to something creative and connected to tradition... Let's say—what is something about making that typically draws men? Like homebrewing. I don't think people discount the value of homebrewing as much as they discount knitting. But it's the same as knitting... You spend more on the materials, and more of your time if you're a brewer than you would just to go out and buy beer from a store... [Anyway] I feel like the knitting community is really alive... Ravelry has all this youth and exuberance and creativity, and people trying new things.

Drawing on these ideological, social, and material re-significations, middle-class women deploy their leisure to challenge the temporal-spatial cosmology of patriarchy that helps reproduce their subjectivities and gender positions. Such is the topic of the remaining analysis. I begin with their resistance tactics in the private sphere of the home and then move to the public one. These tactics are conceptualized as heterotopias and heterochronias (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986; Johnson 2006). Heterotopias are places that juxtapose seemingly incompatible elements to contest the institutional order. Heterotopias often include heterochronias, slices of time that challenge the temporal-spatial cosmology of institutions.

Resisting Gendered Norms of Time and Space in the Domestic Sphere

The other day when I went home, no dinner was for me.

I asked my wife the reasons; she answered 'One, two, three'

(Excerpt from *The Husband's Complaint*, M. T. Morrall 1852)

At a first glance, it is tempting to view women's engagement with knitting as a perpetuation of the angel in the house myth. After all, these women often craft at home, using their time to make non-monetized items for decoration and clothing for husbands, children, and grandchildren. However, feminized leisure has historically maintained a dual face of submission and subversion, as indicated by the Victorian poem that opened this section (Adamson 2010; Parker 2010). My fieldwork provides abundant evidence that, as a contemporary enactment of this duality, these women construct their crafts as a medium to challenge institutionalized distributions of time and space that they regard as overbearing in the domestic sphere.

To focus on space distribution, consider Katie (60-69, social worker), whose husband devotes a room to his golf gear and gun collection:

When we were moving, I told him I wanted a room for my crafts, too, my knitting nook. So, we redesigned the upper floor to have that. It's my space. Sometimes, I don't even do any craft there. I may go there just to dream on my next project, fondle yarn, or read something, a book, a magazine... When I'm there, they [husband and son] forget about me for a while.

Whereas middle-class women are culturally entitled to the home, it is in order to serve others, not to conduct their own autonomous activities. These women use their involvement with a leisure activity to assert their need for an autonomous space within the home. When concrete reconfigurations of space such as redesigning the house are impractical, knitters adopt other

materials, as Laura (20-29, psychologist) exemplifies, “I love being a mother, but I sometimes need something more intellectually challenging to do, and something that I can get done. I then put earplugs while I knit in the living room to have a time for myself... It says, ‘I’m in my bubble now. Look for daddy.’ ”

Although such material-based boundaries seem to engender small gains, they defy the deep-seated construction of the middle-class home as a place where men rest and women work (Kimmel 1995). This construction inspired Virginia Wolf (1957/1995) to claim that a woman needs a room of her own to pursue her own creative interests at home. This gendered construction regarding who can relax at home is still evident in the piece of furniture called a “lazy boy,” which does not have a feminine counterpart. By juxtaposing the seemingly incompatible elements of femininity, home, and leisure, these women forge a domestic *heteropia* that counters the institutional order by normalizing their temporary unavailability to meet the needs of other household members.

The emplacement of heteropias within the domestic sphere sometimes causes overt conflicts with husbands. But these men typically acquiesce to women’s cultural entitlement to domestic spaces: they do not feel they are losing a resource since it was never theirs in the first place (Kimmel 1995). When asked about putting a spinning wheel in the living room, Mandy (40-49, public relations) simply said, “I just plopped it there one day to work with natural light. I didn’t even ask him [husband]. Maybe I should [laughs]. He didn’t say anything.”

By contrast, routinized time redistribution typically comes more forcefully. Consider Sophie (40-49, parole officer), who uses her involvement with feminized leisure to impose a weekly time as a way of increasing her husband’s participation in housework and childcare:

I told him [husband], “I take care of you, I take care of Emily [their six-year-old daughter], I take care of the house, but no one takes care of me [both hands on her chest].” So, once a week when I come here [the craft circle meeting], it’s this “Ahhh.” And I really relax [she closes her eyes and sighs with a smile]. He feeds her, he helps her with homework, and he realizes what I do on a day-to-day basis. I’m like. “It’s not easy, right?” Because if you do everything all the time, then he doesn’t realize how hard it is and you become resentful...I told my husband, “I don’t want to become resentful. I understand your hours, but I need to have a breather once a week.” He traveled three weeks in a row in August. When he got home, I was very stressed, because I hadn’t come here [craft circle meeting]. He said, “I know that it’s very tiring. I’m sorry you didn’t get to go to your craft group” So, now he realizes. And it’s good for my husband to bond with her [Emily]. He understood the need for the breather, but at first I would come home and there would be dishes in the sink. I was mad at him! I’d spend an hour cleaning. So we have talked about that, like “I expect you to clean. If I go out, then start the dishwasher and make sure the house looks the way I left it. It’s a respect thing.” So, now he’s okay with that.

Couples often underestimate the skill and effort involved in each other’s responsibilities; this underestimation is compounded for childcare and housework, which are unpaid, Sisyphean tasks that often are invisible to other family members (Hochschild 1989). Similar to radical feminists, knitters politicize this underestimation. Nonetheless, unlike radical feminists, women engaged in resistant femininity cherish some cornerstones of normative female domesticity, such as the role of primary caretaker. As Sophie illustrate, these women do not want to relinquish women’s prescribed domestic responsibilities altogether, but rather destabilize the oppressive power of institutionalized schemas and hierarchies. They use their leisure activity as a tactic to increase

their partners' participation in housework and childcare, finding that this tactic enhances these partners' appraisal of the skills involved in domestic duties. This use of leisure constitutes a *heterochronia*, through which these women temporarily break free from an institutionalized script of temporal-spatial allocation. These breaks are like short, repetitive strikes that render elements of female domesticity that they cherish more visible and appreciated.

Resistant femininity constructs leisure as a site of negotiation for power dynamics among family members. Women engaged in resistant femininity go beyond making do with the resources at hand; they claim entitlement to additional spatial and temporal resources to partially redress the oppression caused by middle-class women's taken-for-granted responsibility for the emotional and material work at home (Alcoff 1988; Young 1990/2011). Many knitters report having domestic partners who support their leisure activity, but this support typically has to be gained and reiterated. They do so by, first, tactically disrupting routines prescribed by patriarchy-induced myths, as Sophie did by questioning her responsibility for all housework and childcare. Then, they reverse the process and try to routinize the tactical disruption, by for example imposing a weekly time for husbands to take over domestic tasks and thereby appreciate the effort implicated in housework. Through a dual process of destabilization and reiteration of deviance, these women tactically revise (rather than overthrow) an institutionalized, gendered distribution of temporal-spatial resources in the domestic sphere. While these revisions are marginal, they often form the cornerstone of much cultural change (Barley and Tolbert 1997; Butler 1990).

Whereas changes towards gender equality in the workplace mostly involve formalized policies and calculable economic implications, changes in the domestic sphere require revisions of tacit norms that make it an elusive site for gender equality (Hochschild 1989; Risman 2004).

Meanwhile, knitters turn their needles into small swords; they use the tools provided by the institutional order in their own interest, constructing feminized leisure as an undermining tactic in certain structural relations (de Certeau 1984; Giddens 1984). Their tactics to reconfigure the institutionalized, gendered distribution of space and time within the household differ from those of female romance readers. Such readers mentally evade their oppression by vicariously experiencing the lives of heroines, but hide their books from their kin and find non-disruptive times to read, thereby sustaining the angel in the house myth (Radway 1984). Resistant femininity's outright confrontation also differs from the accommodating tactics of middle-class working mothers, who wake up early to have some quiet time without upsetting household routines, thus re-enacting the cult of domesticity that sustains the angel in the house myth (Thompson 1996). Finally, resistant femininity's tactics differ from those of English homemakers, who buy themselves treats (which they often hide) to compensate for the sacrifice of buying food for all family members—another instantiation of the angel in the house myth (Miller 1998).

Resistant femininity's tactics to revise the institutionalized use of domestic times and spaces include the next generation. Emma (30-39, academic advisor) is a working mother of three school-age children who knits regularly at home and in knitting circles. When she explains how she finds time for her leisure, she reasons:

It's good for kids to know that their mom has a life of her own, you know? Seeing women doing this teaches them something important... Same thing with house cleaning. I don't try to keep my home perfect. Look at the floor. It has toys and other things, some yarn. I mean, it's not dirty, but many women would consider this unacceptably messy. It tells them [children]

that they also need to help if they want to keep things in order. I won't be the one doing that all the time...

These women use feminized leisure to avoid being reduced to the role of maids and mothers: they use this cultural form as a tool of cultural pedagogy, teaching their children that mothers have their own individuality and needs. This politicized way of passing on gender roles contrasts with the intergenerational transmission of domesticity within other families, such as those invested in the American Girl ethos; such families employ consumption to romanticize and reinforce women's traditionally domestic roles to the next generation of women (Sherry Jr et al. 2009). Conversely, resistant femininity employs leisure to resist temporal-spatial structures that perpetuate women's often taken-for-granted orientation to serving others (Chodorow 1978; Gilligan 1977; Thompson 1996).

As women resist the temporal-spatial normativity of gender, locales of resistance formed through their interest in feminized leisure provide them with moral and rhetorical tools (Becker 1963), as the following conversation among a group of fiber crafters who meet at the focal store demonstrates:

In today's visit, six women were knitting by the window, around the colonial-style table that has fiber crafts magazines and needles of different sizes on it. A young crafter (20-29) told other customers, "This [knitting pattern] is so lovely, but my husband suggested I shouldn't start new projects until I'm done with my other ones. He thinks I've got too many projects [smile]." Adele (60-69) quickly interjected, "You should say what I told my husband once. He asked, 'Are you crazy?! Why did you buy more yarn for a fourth sweater? Why don't you finish the other three first?' I looked right into his eyes and told him, 'Actually, those projects are the reason why I *don't* go crazy, and the yarn is beautiful.' " After a group laugh,

Michelle (50-59) added more solemnly, “I was reading the other day that the number of golfers in the U.S. is almost equivalent to the number of fiber crafters, but golf has all these pro stores and competitions and so on. And knitting doesn’t. There’s no knitting race. And I bet that the money golfers put into their hobbies is a lot more than what we do most of the time.”

As is characteristic of heteropias, these groups both represent and question existing normative frameworks (Johnson 2006): these women joke about feminized topics such as age spots while helping members deal with their internalized sense that femininity is less valuable than masculinity. In this passage, when the young knitter slipped into this internalized sense by uncritically considering her husband’s disciplinary suggestion, group members quickly drew a comparison between knitting and golf to equip her to uphold her own interests. Further, these groups help women reconsider the totality of their socially constructed other-orientation (Chodorow 1978; Gilligan 1977). Because hobbies are mostly seen as self-centered, they may generate guilt (Radway 1984; Stebbins 2007). These circles serve as locales of resistance, helping women stand up to myths that inhibit them from having some “me time,” a category of time symbolically marked as dangerous and structurally made scarce for women (Fraser 2002; Gelber 1999).

Second wave feminism problematized women’s isolation in domestic spaces, defending their voluntary association in consciousness-raising groups to turn the personal into the political (Ryan 1990). In resistant femininity, women also associate in groups that construct the desire to gather as empowering rather than pathological. However, unlike second wave’s consciousness-raising groups and its mythologized radical faction, these contemporary groups embrace femininity. They reconstruct, out of the home, a space marked by unpurposive chatting, emotional support,

and feminized leisure. Like third places, they offer relaxation, entertainment, and companionship (Oldenburg 1989), but unlike stereotypically male third places such as taverns, these groups fuse fun and gender politics.

Patriarchy devalues women's capacities that it helps produce, such as intimate chatting and interest in feminized cultural forms (Bourdieu 2001). Through heteropias and heterochronias, resistant femininity redeploys these capacities to resist myths that constrain their femininities to an other-oriented relationship with time and space. Women engaged in resistant femininity want to deinstitutionalize particular gender myths, but not the entire institution of femininity, as they perceive radical feminist aiming to do:

Women should be paid; if you're doing the same work, I don't care who you are, you should be getting the same pay as everybody else. You shouldn't have this white, Protestant male getting more than this person just because they're females, or black, or gay, or whatever. So at first I agreed with the movement, but then they reached this point where some of the feminists were almost radical and saying, 'Well, you shouldn't knit.' Or, 'You should throw away your [spinning] wheels, or your knitting needles,' and all this stuff. So, I was, 'Wait a minute, just because it's a feminine or somewhat feminine thing to do, why should I do that if it's something that I enjoy?' ... they were telling women, 'You should dress a certain way. You shouldn't do *this*, and you shouldn't do *that*.' And I was like, 'No, that's not right.' (Julia, 50-59, entrepreneur)

These women enjoy cooking for their families, decorating their houses, nurturing their children and grandchildren, and giving gifts. When they get together, they exchange food recipes, celebrate the birth of new family members, and help each other cope with diseases and deceases. And they knit. Whereas the imagery of radical feminism includes the dismissal of feminized

pleasures and cultural forms of normative femininity, women engaged in resistant femininity combine these elements to construct a space and time for personal and political empowerment. At home, they use leisure to create personal spaces and times apart from the normative myths of domesticity, a tactic aimed to reduce their involvement with domestic duties and increase household members' valuation of female domesticity.

The next section elaborates on the articulation of resistant femininity beyond the home. It analyzes how these women leverage the incitements provided by contemporary feminism, the aestheticization of knitting, and their locales of resistance to defy gendered myths of time and space in the public sphere through feminized leisure. The concepts of heteropia and heterochronia remain pertinent to this analysis.

Resisting Gendered Norms of Time and Space in the Public Sphere

The term public sphere refers to the “structured setting where cultural and ideological contest or negotiation among a variety of publics takes place” (Eley 1994), 308). Within patriarchy, this setting has never been equally public in matters of gender (Fraser 1990; McRobbie 1991/2000). Whereas middle-class women have reigned in the domestic sphere, they had to take action to open routes to participation in public life. In the 19th century, they joined organizations to do charity, moralize politics, and regulate prostitution (Ryan 1990; Staggenborg 1998). They also eagerly patronized department stores, semipublic spaces where they could go without a male companion while keeping middle-class respectability (Fiske 1989/2000; Ryan 1990). In the 20th century, they greatly expanded their participation in the labor force, media, and politics (Ryan

1990; Scott 2005). This section considers women's continuing efforts to enlarge the circulation of femininity in the public sphere.

In this sphere, women engaged in resistant femininity forge heteropias and heterochronias by conspicuously emplacing femininity in unexpected times and spaces. They often do so individually. On *ravelry.com*, fiber crafters use the thread "What is the oddest place" to brag about the unusual spaces where they have engaged in their feminized leisure activity, such as at NASCAR races, restaurants, traffic lights while driving, justice courts, car mechanic shops, hikes, and music concerts. In parallel to individual tactics, they sometimes organize collective ones that offer a theoretically productive entry point into their public resistance to the temporal-spatial cosmology of patriarchy.

Two collective tactics that are at the forefront of knitters' emplacement of femininity in unexpected times and spaces are the initiatives called *Stitch 'N Pitch* and *yarn graffiti*. Participating in *Stitch 'N Pitch* involves attending a major or minor league professional baseball game, a masculinized event many feminists would consider the quintessence of patriarchy. However, inscribing an icon of femininity (knitting) into a chief expression of masculine culture (sports) invites a more thorough examination. Like many regular spectators, knitters consume baseball playfully and socially, but their display of femininity creates a counter-discourse (Fraser 1990) that was unnoticed twenty years ago in the consumption of this sport (Holt 1995), when contemporary forms of resistant feminism was less prevalent among middle-class women.



Photo 1: a trio of knitters at a *Stitch 'N Pitch* game

In the 19th-century, one route for women's participation in public life was by accompanying their husbands to public ceremonies. Like most contemporary women in industrialized countries, knitters no longer need husbands to participate in most of public life, as the female trio in photo 1 exemplifies. However, contemporary fiber crafters draw on their 19th-century counterparts' tactics in another way. In male-dominated ceremonies such as military marches, Victorian women used to hold and wave embroidered handkerchiefs to visually amplify their reduced participation in the public sphere (Ryan 1990). In a contemporary instantiation of this dynamic, knitters participate in *Stitch 'N Pitch* to enlarge the reduced presence of explicit expressions of femininity in highly mediatized sports events, a time-honored space for men to perform masculinity as players and spectators (Holt and Thompson 2004; Kozinets et al. 2004; Lorber 1993).

At *Stitch 'N Pitch* events, these women display the feminized sense of soft touch as they work on a pliable, feminized medium, all while using the masculinized sense of gazing to watch a masculine game (Korsmeyer 2004; Young 1988/2005). They thereby indicate their interest in

this masculine sport, while repudiating myths that confine icons of feminine culture to domestic spaces. Further, knitting is a materially productive leisure form that connotes women's work and sexual reserve due to its association with domestic production and older ages (Parker 2010). By knitting while watching the game, these women bring to a public space a form of femininity that eschews the fashion victim's prescription of frivolous consumerism and bodily sexiness. Women engaged in resistant femininity display a partial detachment from what they regard as women's mainstream route to participating in the public sphere. In their everyday lives, these women go to malls to buy professional attire or the high heels they need to attend formal events such as weddings. However, in their everyday lives, unpainted, short nails prevail over manicured, long ones, and they typically wear flat shoes and clothing without visible brands. Yet, they wear colorful knitted socks that diverge from their otherwise somewhat plain clothing and put on outdated shawls that they made years ago: they consider these pieces valuable representations of women's ability to engage in leisure, in particular leisure that counters myths of female consumerism, such as the fashion victim.

At these baseball games, knitters craft, participate in traditions such as singing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," sip alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, and chat with friends. By multi-tasking during the game, these women create a heterochronia that suggests the somewhat boring nature of some masculine sports. They also spoof the competitiveness of sports by conspicuously inscribing into the game a seemingly innocent, peaceful symbol of feminine culture. Rather than confronting gender myths head-on, as they do in the domestic sphere where they hold cultural entitlement, in the public sphere they resort to subtle weapons that eschew retaliations (de Certeau 1984). They buy tickets and support the teams, while creating a heteropia that obliquely feminizes a traditionally masculine cultural form and constructs a repetitive, slight defiance to

gender identities and social conventions within patriarchy's geographic bounds (Butler 1988; 2009; Hebdige 1979/2012). As they attend these games, their bodies represent prototypically feminine deportment (Parker 2010; Young 1980): their arms close to their chests, their heads often downcast, and their legs with reduced mobility, dividing a constrained space with their craft bags. Nevertheless, their femininity takes a new temporal-spatial territory.

These women's conspicuous heteropias and heterochronias make it clear they want their resistance to the temporal-spatial dimension of gender to be read and discovered, a goal that *yarn graffiti* also epitomizes. The initiative started in 2005, when a Texan knitter covered the door handle of her boutique with a custom-made cozy. Ever since, yarn graffiti has gained international visibility, with artists and amateur crafters now producing large-scale cozies to cover public symbols, including those that embody masculine power and authority such as Wall Street's bull (Wollan 2011). Photos 2 and 3 illustrate the initiative, showing lampposts and trees as well as a public statue covered with colorful knitted yarn.



Photo 2: Street fixtures bombed with yarn
(U.S. Midwest)



Photo 3: Statue bombed with knitted scarf
(U.S. Southwest)

On *ravelry.com*, these women have created many threads to organize yarn graffiti in American cities, always in places that publicly feature their resistance. However, they usually leave their graffiti unidentified or tagged as the collective deed of a craft circle, to reveal the collective rather than individualist ideology of this type of street art (Visconti et al. 2010). Rather than using street art to enhance their individual identities, they appropriate visible public spaces as a way of dissociating their resistance from single actors (Barley and Tolbert 1997). At the same time, they refuse grounding their deeds exclusively in gender politics. They echo the typical ambivalence that middle-class women express about radical feminism; they fear that rigid

political commitments will constrain their relationship with feminized pleasure. In separate interviews, Veronica (40-49, retail store manager), who sends handknit pieces to yarn graffiti projects that have taken place out of her town, and Mandy (40-49, public relations), who keeps a yarn graffiti book in her craft nook, summarize the meaning non-radical activists find by seeing and participating in this tactic to feminize austere public spaces:

Veronica: It's just fun. One day, there's nothing there, and on the other one, people see these colorful handknit things [chuckles]. I don't think it upsets people. And I guess it makes people see the craft in a different way.

Mandy: I just feel it adds color and makes people smile... It's a type of warming that is not global warming [chuckles]. Our society is pretty depressing sometimes, with so much misery and violence in the world. So I feel that yarn bombing brings people together, and [spreads] a little happiness around.

Throughout feminism history, activists have held that the privatization of women's issues reduces their political power; as such, much of feminist agenda involves turning oppressive issues viewed as private, such as domestic violence, into a matter of state legislation (Eley 1994; Ryan 1990). Yarn graffiti involves the same move from private to public, but in a temporal-spatial rather than legislative axis.

Yarn graffiti is often performed at dawn or night, adding a layer of stealthiness to this resistance tactic. Moreover, as a graffiti form, yarn graffiti installations connote a form of anarchy. Nonetheless, yarn graffiti contrasts with more socially salient types of graffiti, such as spray paint tagging. Yarn graffiti takes substantial amounts of time to create; it does not damage public spaces because the installations are impermanent; and it does not spread aggressive messages that could disengage passersby or spark dwellers' scorn (Visconti et al. 2010). Instead,

these installations juxtapose the warmth of yarn with the coldness of street fixtures, adding conspicuous, transitory layers of homeyness and femininity to the public sphere (McCracken 1989/2005). If patriarchal cultural schemas associate masculinity with building (Young 1997), these women proclaim their association with preserving. As street artists, they campaign against the austerity of public spaces (Visconti et al. 2010), but in remarkably feminine tones, as if asking, “What if the world were more feminine?” They transcend symbols of femininity confined to domesticity by inserting them into the polity, evoking the transformative potential of women’s culture on public spaces (Bradford and Sherry Jr. 2015). Their graffiti gently, noticeably caresses the public, while expanding the circulation of a resistance constituted between femininity and feminism, between grace and assertiveness.

Consistent with the reconciliation of femininity and feminism that resistant femininity constructs, yarn graffiti retains the link between fiber crafts and women. But it liberates the productive use of women’s time and space from the utilitarianism that the realm of craft connotes and the other-orientation that domesticity signifies, and links it to the criticality and the political and economic freedom that the realm of art expresses (Becker 1982). In a literary analogy, these women construct public heteropias to transform icons of femininity from a formulaic text into political poetry. Through a seemingly inconsequential cultural form, they publicly articulate a feminist desire: to celebrate women’s culture as valuable, creative, and exciting, all while eschewing the heavy anchors of submissiveness, consumerism, and the negation of women’s past.

DISCUSSION

This essay addresses the workings of contemporary feminism on middle-class women's market-mediated, active resistance to patriarchy via leisure. In doing so, this essay joins a growing body of consumer research that studies the agentic role of women who pursue market-mediated, complex political projects that rarely produce straightforward results (Martin et al. 2006; Sandikci and Ger 2010; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013; Thompson and Üstüner 2015a). In particular, the essay documents the construction and expression of a form of middle-class femininity that relies on tactical opposition to multiple myths of time and space. I call this form resistant femininity, and show how it employs feminized leisure as a medium for this opposition in the domestic and public spheres. The study of this politicized relationship between femininity, time, and space allows for two theoretical contributions to consumer research. Though interlinked, these contributions are discussed separately to highlight their key elements.

Contribution to Consumer Research's Theories of Middle-Class Femininity

Consumer research has well theorized consumption and leisure that happens in domestic spaces as mechanisms for the reproduction of U.S. middle-class gender roles. Reflecting the normative strength of the cult of domesticity and their embodied ethics of care, middle-class women continue to take responsibility for most gift buying, family rituals, food provision, and childcare (Fischer and Arnold 1990; Lowrey and Otnes 1994; Miller 1998; Moisio et al. 2004; Thompson 1996; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). In parallel, middle-class men construct their domestically oriented leisure mostly as a source of stability, as they enlist masculine ideals such as rebellion and craftsmanship to rescue their senses of masculinity upset by their jobs (Gelber 1999; Holt and Thompson 2004; Moisio et al. 2013).

This essay offers a counterpoint to these prevalent theories by documenting domestically oriented consumption and leisure as a locus for tactical changes (rather than reproduction and stability) in middle-class gender enactments. Rather than emphasizing the enlistment of ideals and embodied norms in the construction of gender, this essay theorizes gender as tactically constructed at the interstices of incompletely internalized disciplines and abstract discourses, which often are incoherent among themselves. With regard to middle-class femininity, the essay offers adds to the ideological map proposed by Thompson (1996) to explain how working middle-class women construct motherhood as jugglers, caring consumers. Caring consumers *merge* ideals of domesticity and career, the latter inflected by second wave feminism, into the notion of superwoman. By contrast, women engaged in resistant femininity reflexively *resist* certain gender ideals. As figure 1 illustrates, they selectively negate ideals of female domesticity by tactically creating temporary unavailability to other household members. They also counter prescriptions that women spend their leisure time engaged in what they regard as frivolous, gullible shopping; instead, they engage in leisure that is materially productive and that, as a labor-intensive craft, opposes mainstream notions of consumerism (Kozinets 2002; Sennett 2008). Simultaneously, they selectively draw on the political spirit of radical feminism, valuing their professional conquests while upholding their attachment to conventionally feminine pleasures and roles.

This upholding is not an affront to the gains of second wave feminism. On the contrary, these women experience their involvement with feminized activities and pleasures as a reward from the second wave. In line with second wave's discourses, resistant femininity does not romanticize domesticity as a sacrosanct space devoid of power dynamics. This recognition (Bourdieu 1984) gives women the impetus to partially disaffiliate from housework and childcare

scripts. Moreover, most of these women belong to the key beneficiary group of second wave feminism: white middle-class women with their own careers. They have benefited from the expanded educational and professional choices brought by the women's movement: they hold degrees and work in a variety of fields, including male-dominated ones such as engineering. Proud of their educational and professional achievements, they feel entitled to engage in common, yet often-stigmatized performances of femininity for their own pleasure. Further, they feel entitled to employ these performances to revise feminine myths of other-orientation in the domestic sphere and of consumerism in the public sphere.

Resistant femininity reflects contemporary feminism discourses; it fuses politics with fun. Typically in theoretical essays, this fusion has been criticized to be a neoliberal ramification that reduces politics to individual issues of aesthetics and choice (Kinser 2004; Mann and Huffman 2005; McRobbie 2008). Through this empirical study, I address Scott's (2000, 36) call for "...more research into the actual response of feminism's constituency – that is, ordinary, non-academic women." In particular, this essay tempers critiques of contemporary feminism in two ways. First, it shows that some forms of contemporary feminism include struggles to pragmatically alter cultural resource configurations that shape women's daily lives, such as times and spaces. Moreover, these struggles can eschew a prominent articulation of contemporary feminism known as girlie feminism, which underscores imaginary empowerment through sexualized clothes, such as high heels and erotic lingerie (Munford 2004; Spencer 2004). Second, this essay shows that contemporary feminism does not preclude the association of women in consciousness-raising groups. On the contrary, women continue to resort to locales of resistance and collective tactics, through which they construct and deploy a sense of sisterhood to perform

resistance. This sense is particularly instrumental for performing resistance in spaces where feminine activities have been historically disavowed.

Theorizing middle-class femininity as intertwined with cultural politics fits the contention that the identity of some non-dominant groups is constituted at a nexus of privilege, oppression, and resistance (Butler 1988; Foucault 1997). This nexus has historically characterized middle-class women's experiences, who enjoy a relatively privileged position in social class hierarchies and subordinated status in gender structures. In the 19th century, when the growth of American cities gathered people whose reputations were unknown to each other, the middle class adopted strict standards of respectability to construct femininity; middle class women had to minimize the risk of being considered "women of the streets" as they increased their participation in public spaces (Ryan 1990). In the contemporary workplace, middle class women have to constantly manage the risk of being considered insufficiently committed to their jobs because of their attachment to family (Roth 2006). At home, these women often feel stifled as they shop and work on behalf of others (Hochschild 1989; Thompson 1996; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991).

Accordingly, this research foregrounds the constitution of contemporary middle-class femininity as a project of tactical affiliation with and disaffiliation from various normative myths of femininity. Resistant femininity does not seek to merge or enlist prevalent ideals and scripts to construct womanhood. Rather, this politicized construction is better conceptualized as based on resistance to these ideals and scripts. However, this politicized construction differs in substance from that of second wave feminism in relying on feminized cultural forms to defy patriarchal cosmology. Women engaged in resistant femininity insert femininity into masculine spheres; second wave feminists focused on inserting women into men's occupational preserves to make such a change (Staggenborg 1998). Further, this project's politicized tactics differ in degree from

those of the second wave. Lacking the grand visions that characterized previous feminism waves, contemporary feminism often focuses on changes in localized social networks and communities (Heywood and Drake 1997). As such, resistant femininity does not aim to overthrow the institutional order in which middle-class women live. Rather, it translates the incitements of contemporary feminism into heterochronias and heteropias to seek alternative institutions rather than revolution. Explicating this process of translation extends consumer research's conceptualization of resistance, as I now discuss.

Contribution to Consumer Research's Theories of Resistance

Foucault's theory of power has animated consumer research in particular and sociocultural research in general. Nevertheless, scholars have noted that Foucault's theory of resistance is underdeveloped, though fully acknowledging its importance (Gordon 1980; Turner 1984; Wearing 1998). In Foucault's theory as well as in others' (Goffman 1963), resistance appears as an inexorable reaction to institutional power:

...once power produces this effect [disciplined bodies], there *inevitably* [emphasis added] emerge the responding claims and affirmations, those of one's own body against power, of health against the economic system, of pleasure against the moral norms of sexuality, marriage, decency. *Suddenly* [emphasis added], what had made power strong becomes used to attack it. (Foucault 1980, 56)

Even if one accepts that resistance exists whenever power is exercised, resistance emerges in diverse forms with different energy levels. Sometimes, it is a mental appropriation of commercial meanings, as with TV watchers (Fiske 1989/2010). Other times, it becomes a

collective, temporary effervescence, as with Burning Man festival participants (Kozinets 2002). To theoretically illuminate this variation, this essay moves away from the ontological view of resistance as inexorable, and instead empirically documents a path through which axes of resistance are formed and sustained.

The path this essay documents relies on the politicization of both the subject and the object. This double politicization emerges from (1) discursive incitements (e.g., contemporary feminism) that help people recognize institutional oppression and re-conceptualize a cultural form (e.g., leisure) as a potential medium of resistance. It also involves (2) locales of resistance (e.g., online and offline knitting circles) that reinvigorate and disseminate tactics of resistance, helping people decide how to respond to minute articulations of institutional power. Moreover, this politicization benefits from (3) market-provided resources that enhance the hedonic attachment between politicized subjects and objects (e.g., the aestheticization of knitting). Hedonism is instrumental in everyday resistance inasmuch as it makes cultural politics more pleasurable and less radical, and allows people to, only occasionally, place politics at the center of their social interactions. Finally, this double politicization comes into being when (4) the politicized object crystallizes institutional oppression by requiring the same resources that are institutionally constrained (e.g., time and space).

These four elements are conducive to the formation of an axis of resistance. People then devise its associated tactics, such as leisure-based heteropias and heterochronias. In this essay, these tactics allow women to claim resources in ways that destabilize myths that naturalize the unequal division of domestic labor and the devaluation of female domesticity; in the public sphere, these women extend these heteropias and heterochronias, emplacing icons of feminine culture into the polity and enlarging the passage for the feminine to the outside (Johnson 2006).

CONCLUSION

The essay explicates a politicized relationship between femininity, time, and space within the middle class. In explicating this politicized relationship, this essay extends scholars' understanding of how axes of resistance are formed and sustained through market-provided resources. It also extends extend understanding of middle-class femininity by foregrounding the political dimension that shapes the tactical construction of this gender position.

The form of agency analyzed goes beyond imaginary, stylistic solutions to institutional oppression that typify many forms of resistance (Clarke et al. 1976; Hebdige 1988/2000). Rather, this form of agency consistently claims pragmatic resources to shape the cosmology of patriarchy, thus translating abstract discourses of social movements into everyday specifics that constitute gender positions (Skeggs 1997). Through this translation, these middle-class women seek to gradually enlarge the circulation and stature of femininity within the institutional order. They do so tactfully, with improvisation, creativity, and reiteration, stitch after stitch, loop after loop. Cast off.

IV. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This dissertation takes the view that markets are plastic systems of exchange formed by coevolving ideologies and practices (Fligstein 2001; Giesler 2012; Humphreys 2010; Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). In particular, it studies ideologies and practices associated with a foundational force of market plasticity: the aestheticization of everyday life (Featherstone 2007).

The two essays explicate how individuals integrate the resources provided by aestheticized markets to construct new possibilities for the expression of masculinity and femininity within contemporary American middle class. In doing so, these essays contrast with consumer research's tendency to explain how individuals employ consumption in ways that primarily reproduce these possibilities (Bourdieu 1984; Holt and Thompson 2004; Moisio et al. 2004; Thompson 1996; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). Both essays underscore the continual significance of aestheticized markets for the construction and expression of social class and gender, while extending consumer researchers' understanding of the phenomenon of aestheticization in three major ways.

Consumer Work to Participate in Aestheticized Markets

The aestheticization of markets and everyday life is a grand narrative in contemporary consumer culture. When scholars invoke this narrative to explain consumer behavior, they typically refer to the facile, playful use of visible signs to realize one's identity in and through the marketplace (Baudrillard 1981; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Venkatesh et al. 2006). The sweeping employment of this grand narrative led Featherstone (2007, 69) to assert the "...need

to investigate the aestheticization of everyday life in specific locations in time and space... the process of its formation...the specific locations and degree of generality.”

Essay 1 rejects the facility of participating in aestheticized markets. It does so by revealing the great deal of *sensory work* that consumers, even from privileged groups, perform to become aesthetically competent in these markets. To refine their bodily senses, craft beer aficionados painstakingly mobilize material, cognitive, and emotional resources. In this process, their bodies are not simply an entity that takes on visible, playfully layered signs. Rather, the body is an entity that laboriously, yet invisibly evolves through the development of the sensorium, which feeds back into cognition particularly through linguistic expression. Essay 1 thus counters the facile, passive position of the body in aestheticization theories in particular and social theory in general (Howes 2005; Ingold 2000; Reckwitz 2002), as it provides an integrative account of mind and bodily processes in consumption experiences.

In turn, essay 2 shows the *political work* involved in the participation of subordinate groups in aestheticized markets. This political work undermines critiques that these markets reduce consumption to issues of individual identity. Middle-class females’ participation in aestheticized knitting often transcends concerns about their individual identities, as evinced by their mobilization in yarn graffiti. For members of this subordinate gender group, aestheticization intertwines with a collective perspective. This perspective provides them with the consciousness and rhetorical tools to claim from dominant groups the time and space that allow them to participate in aestheticized practices. For them, market aestheticization does not entail political *anestheticization*. On the contrary, aestheticization is a means for political tactics.

The Role of Gender in Aestheticized Markets

Accounts of aestheticization tend to focus on issues of social class (Bushman 1992; Ferguson 2006; Levy et al. 1980/1999). In contrast, this dissertation foregrounds the role of gender in how aestheticized markets emerge and function.

The aestheticization of craft beer relies heavily on official examinations and a system of points that rank beer aficionados and judges. This market also regularly features contests that grant prestige to breweries, beer styles, and beer brands. Moreover, consumer clubs combine sociability with a quasi-corporate organization: they have sets of officers and missions that include long-term goals such as “promoting the art, craft, and science of making beer.” Finally, trade associations disseminate discourses that infuse craft beer with notions of nationalism, the value of industry, and entrepreneurship. All of these elements are interlinked by notions of achievement, organizational hierarchies, measurement, and self-reliance, a set of means and ends tied to prevalent notions of masculinity (Bourdieu 2001; Kimmel 1995).

By contrast, the aestheticization of knitting relies on a diffuse network of actors, in which rankings are peripheral. This network includes a large number of clubs that typically have neither formal goals nor sets of officers—although sometimes a group member will coordinate the setup of meetings. Group members simply come together to enjoy being with each other, without a specific agenda. When they formulate goals, these emerge organically, being pragmatic and short-term oriented, such as knitting for a specific charity project. These clubs are more about nurture and companionship than about any kind of mission. Further, institutional discourses in this market foreground creative freedom and sociability rather than achievement. Occasional knitting competitions do exist, such as those that recognize the fastest knitters. But they are a

much less prominent feature of this market than they are in the craft beer market, and they are held with a humorous tongue-in-cheek ambiance.

These sharp differences show that gender is not only a socially constructed trait of consumers that firms bring into relief to create, expand, and maintain aestheticized markets, since particular gender positions tend to share many aesthetic preferences. In addition, gender plays an additional role by co-constituting the institutional logics of these markets—the socially constructed norms, values, and assumptions that define an institutional field and its content (DiMaggio 1988; Greenwood and Meyer 2008; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013). Hence, gender shapes not only the design of products and services offered in aestheticized markets, but also their logics and structures.

Market Aestheticization and Consumerism

Accounts of aestheticization typically charge this phenomenon as leading to increased consumerism (Baudrillard 1981; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Venkatesh et al. 2006). In these accounts, individuals' thirst for novelty blinds them to the work conditions involved in the production of fast, cheap fashion, thus increasing commodity fetishism. Moreover, it is argued that this thirst ends up favoring the large corporations that can produce fast, cheap fashion to satiate this thirst (Schor 1999). However, this dissertation finds somewhat different dynamics in the markets of craft beer and knitting.

In these aestheticized markets, consumers combine consumption with leisurely, material production. As they experience the challenges and joys of material producing, they develop a deep appreciation for the professional producers. This altered appreciation increases consumers'

willingness to pay more as a way of recognizing the labor that creates this aesthetics. In addition, consumers find in these producers rich sources of knowledge for their leisure pursuits. These consumers thus tend to move away from uncritical acquisition and consumption of cheap materials, as they perceive this form of consumption as demeaning to human labor and unable to offer the sensory complexity these consumers enjoy having.

Moreover, the aestheticization of beer and knitting relies on the participation of small businesses, which currently are the market actors usually capable of producing and selling the wide variety of sensory stimuli that consumers seek. Hence, the aestheticization of these markets does not entail increased economic power by large corporations producing fast fashion. On the contrary, it dilutes this power through a larger group of economic actors.

As such, the results of this dissertation indicate that aestheticization, at least for consumers who are deeply involved in aestheticized markets and in leisurely production, can reduce rather than increase two elements of consumerism: commodity fetishism, with its resulting devaluation of labor, and economic concentration by large corporations.

Future Research Opportunities

The two essays of this dissertation feature a particular gender position in the American middle class. Future research could study a gender-mixed market that has experienced the phenomenon of aestheticization in the last decades in the U.S., such as cooking. The sample could focus on people from different gender positions within the same social class who are deeply, recreationally involved in this market (Stebbins 2007). Such research design would allow for the study of how people construct and express different gender positions through similar,

shared, market-provided resources. Such a comparative study can reveal the deepest structures used in the subjective construction of gender.

Another research opportunity lies in studying the concerted participation of institutional actors in instilling new sensibilities in the marketplace. Future research could move away from a purely firm- or consumer-centric view of market development to explore mechanisms that coordinate the performance of multiple market actors (Humphreys 2010; Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). For example, the growth of refined versions of beer in an otherwise-stagnant beer market resembles the Starbucks-led diffusion of premium coffee in the stagnated coffee market. However, the growth of craft beer does not rely on a single, iconic brand, but on the particular ways trade associations, retailers, and breweries have re-presented this entire product category. These institutional actors have problematized the mild taste of popular beer brands such as Budweiser, introduced an expanding range of flavors, and advocated particular evaluative criteria for beer. Further, these institutional actors have asserted the moral superiority of craft beer: they argue that craft beer has restored the cherished American value of consumer choice in the homogenized U.S. beer market, and they contrast the industrial jobs that small breweries have created against the industrial jobs that many U.S. corporations have sent overseas. In parallel, these market institutions have created a sense of imagined community (Anderson 1991) between craft breweries and these American drinkers. They have done so by organizing conferences and festivals where these two sets of actors share their passion and knowledge, thus forging a connection between producers and consumers that is amenable to the creation of ties of trust (Schrank 2013).

Another promising area of study is the process of de-gendering particular aesthetics and markets (Wearing 1998). For example, craft breweries would increase sales by also attracting a

female clientele, and so would knitting stores if they could attract a male clientele. However, attracting a different clientele entails clear risks, as it may disaffiliate current customers.

Mitigating disaffiliation risks may be straightforward for large firms, which can often create specific brands extensions and retail spaces to develop meaningful relationships with consumers from different gender positions. But this possibility may not exist for less resourceful institutions, such as smaller firms. Studying the more effective strategies to mitigate disaffiliation risks seems both theoretically and managerially relevant.

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