WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME: THIRD PLACE AND THE CRAFT BREWERY EXPERIENCE

by

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(Under the Direction of Kyle Woosnam)

ABSTRACT

The craft beer industry has grown in the last thirty years. One reason for this growth can be attributed to the consumers being drawn toward beer that is locally produced. Consumers connect with the local craft beer community and interact with these products via the craft brewery taproom. Craft breweries have the potential to become a "third place" for patrons, that is, a place between work and home where one where one may eventually be accepted into the community as a regular. This study focuses on craft beer professionals in the state of Georgia. Respondents were interviewed the type of experience they intend to provide in their taproom. Responses were analyzed relative to the "Character of Third Places" as originally conceived by Ray Oldenburg (1997, p.20). It is important to understand how craft brewery professionals conceive their taproom experience as craft breweries become more commonplace in communities.

INDEX WORDS: Craft brewery, third place

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is a brewery in the town I live where the taproom manager knows me by my name. Usually when I visit this brewery, he is there as well, at least once a week. At this point in our relationship, he greets me and tells me what beer is fresh on tap without my inquiry. He reminds me of what events are upcoming and directs my attention to the new local artist's work on display around the periphery of the taproom. He does his job well. After ordering my beer, I sit at my usual table and wait for my friends to join. On most days, for just a moment, I look around the taproom and relish in the comfort I draw from living in a time where craft breweries are popular. When I visit other towns with breweries, I can feel like a local, even if it is my first time there. It is the first thing I look for when visiting someplace new. For me, as time passes, craft breweries have become more than just places to drink or learn about beer. They are the places where I meet strangers and make friends. Breweries are where I learn about the community. When I visit a brewery, I feel as though I am integrated into the local community. They have taken on a major role in my life. I have a home. I have work. The craft brewery, though, is my third place.

The idea of the third place originated with the work of Ray Oldenburg (1989, 1997), in his classic text titled, *The Great Good Place.* Oldenburg describes third places as "public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work" (Oldenburg, 1997, p. 16). Lamenting the deterioration of American public life, Oldenburg (1989, 1997) writes third places are those which "nourish the

kinds of relationships and the diversity of human contact that are the essence of the city. Deprived of these settings, people remain lonely within their crowds" (p.xxviii). To the author, the character of third places not only depends on their physical existence but also the quality of social interaction at play within and around them. Oldenburg (1989, 1997) suggests there is an "eternal sameness" to third places giving them all common characteristics (p.20). He writes all third places share the characteristics of: neutral ground, social leveling, conversation as prevalent, accessibility and accommodation, regulars, low profile, playful mood, and a home away from home (Oldenburg, 1997, pp.22-41). Through this lens, Oldenburg (1989, 1997) shows us how the "beer joint in which the middle-American takes no pride can be as much a third place as the proud Viennese coffeehouse" (p.20).

This study explores the application of the term *third place* to craft breweries in the state of Georgia. Kline and Bulla (2017) write, within the context of craft beer tourism, to some craft beer enthusiasts, "the craft brewery has become their 'third place'(Oldenburg, 1997), regardless of whether it is in their hometown or a new place found while traveling" (p. 4). The type of experiences that Oldenburg and Kline and Bulla posit occur in third places points to the heart of what Mosher (2017) writes is "the community of beer… an easy community, where people in a certain space have decided to put aside differences and suspicions and consciously work at being convivial" (p. 2). This study seeks to serve the growing craft brewery (CB) industry by expanding the knowledge of how CB professionals create spaces where, as Oldenburg writes, "the stranger feels at home – nay, *is* at home" (1997, p.xxviii). Overall, third place literature is sparce, spanning from exploration of physical design characteristics (Mehata and Bosson, 2010) to the social supportive role of third places (Rosenbaum, 2006) to evidence that those who establish a third place feel more connected to their community (Waxman, 2006). Much of what

has been written about third places is either design based or examining third places through the eyes of those who patronize them. This study adds to existing literature in two ways. The first is by simply examining craft breweries as third places for applicability of the term. Second is by examining third places through the eyes of the professionals who curate these spaces.

The craft beverage industry has grown globally (Matthews & Patton, 2016). In the United States, craft breweries provided nearly USD 80 billion to the economy and allowed for over 550,000 jobs in 2018 (Watson, 2018). The number of U.S. craft breweries in the has increased from 1,566 to 8,386 since the year 2000 (Watson, 2020). In 2019, craft beer production was valued at USD 29.3 billion, more than a quarter of the entire USD 116 billion U.S. beer market. The reasons for industry growth are manifold, however, it can largely be attributed to a neolocal trend in craft beer consumption, that is, consumer preference turning from large, commercially produced beers to beers that are produced by locally owned, independent breweries (Carol & Swaminathan, 2000; Flack, 1997; Reid, 2014; Watson, 2019). Alongside these realities, craft beer tourism has emerged as a standalone industry as well as its own body of scholarship.

With its roots in wine tourism, craft beer (also CB) tourism can be defined "as visitation to breweries, beer festivals and beer shows for which beer tasting and experiencing the attributes of beer regions are the prime motivating factors for visitors" (Plummer, et al., 2005, p. 449). CB tourism can be incidental in nature, part of a local tour, planned vacation, a formal vacation tour, or a combination of these (Wright, 2019). In addition to seeking locally produced beer for consumption, a number of craft beer tourism studies have explored linkages between craft beer and place attachment (Flack, 1997; Murray & Kline, 2015; Plummer et al., 2005; Schnell, 2013; Schnell & Reese, 2003). Research surrounding CB tourism has broadened in recent years, varying from identifying consumer motivations, brand loyalty, and how breweries develop local

identities (Baginski & Bell, 2011; Bradley, et al., 2016; Carvalho, et al., 2018; Eberts, 2014; Flack, 1997; Francioni & Byrd, 2016; Grafe, et al., 2018; Holtkamp, et al., 2016; Kraftchick, et al., 2014; Matthews & Patton, 2016; Murray & Kline, 2015; Plummer, et al., 2005; Schnell & Reese, 2003; Schnell & Reese, 2014; Slocum, 2016; Taylor & DiPietro, 2017; Taylor & DiPietro, 2019; Taylor, et al., 2020). This growing body of literature has continually done well at exploring the role that the taproom experience has on brewery-goers and how these experiences shape their values, attitudes, and actions. However, little scholarship exists regarding the industry professionals who provide the craft brewery experience on a daily basis. Sozen & O'Neill (2018) studied the motivations for CB professionals entering the sector as entrepreneurs, however, the study was not positioned to understand the realities of CB professionals creating spaces that become epicenters of community. The current study seeks to fill this gap through exploring the intended experiences that CB professionals with to provide to their communities relative to the character of third places according to Oldenburg (1989, 1997). Through doing so, this study adds to existing craft brewery tourism literature by gaining a deeper understanding of the role breweries play in communities through the eyes of industry professionals.

This study was inspired partially in response to Slocum, Cavaliere, and Kline's (2018) call to better understand "the genuine essences of a craftsperson" for "a truer spirit of place to emerge" (p.221). This means looking beyond the role of a craft brewery professional as simply an expert in the production of a craft product. To this study, this means seeking to understand the experiences of professionals in crafting spaces that allow for genuine human connection. The taproom is ultimately a place to sell craft beer products. However, it is important to think of the taproom as more than simply a retail space limited to a transactional process, but a place where CB professionals provide a venue to experience craft beer and to become enmeshed within the

local community. Understanding the realities of how these spaces are conceived may "serve to elucidate notions of future trends and obstacles faced by craft beverage destinations" (Slocum, Cavaliere, and Kline, 2018, p.221). Furthermore, by exploring how craft breweries resemble third places, this study addresses Waxman's call to "investigate more fully Oldenburg's (1997) criteria for third places to see how well they hold up in different situations," and to consider what other varieties of third places "are becoming an integral part of life in the twenty-first century" (2006, p.31).

This study takes place in the state of Georgia. This location is unique because as of September 2017, Georgia was the last of the United States to lift the prohibition of on-site consumption at craft breweries (Watson, 2019; Cohran, 2019; Eason, 2018; Shenin, 2017). Since this legislative shift, the state of Georgia has seen major growth in the craft beer industry. While CB professionals are still working to ease regulations through the legislature, brewers have seized this opportunity to find creative ways to increase profitability through their on-site taproom. Many Georgia breweries are using their taproom spaces as gathering places for community events, offering taproom only beers, and partnering with local tourism and community organizations to serve their communities outside of beer production (Explore Georgia, 2019). For example, in this study, one brewery site visited hosts a "School of Rock" event where youth bands from the community showcase the songs they have learned over the previous semester. Another brewery site hosts a weekly farmer's market where local farms and artisans can sell their products. Additionally, one brewery site has developed a trail system on the property surrounding their production facility that is open to walkers and mountain bikers, also hosting an annual "Haunted Forest" event that is family friendly. These examples of craft

breweries extending beyond simply serving beer to becoming places of community gathering is what mirrors those qualities of a third place, a place where "there must be a fondness for other people that extends beyond the confines of one's social kind" (Oldenburg, 1997, p. 85).

These examples highlight the reality that while a craft brewery's primary role is the production and sale of beer, they may share qualities with those third places which Oldenburg (1989, 1997) lauds: the German-American Lager Beer Gardens, Main Street, The English Pub, The French Café, The American Tavern, and Classic Coffeehouses. This study seeks to understand the experiences of craft brewery professionals in the way they approach using their brewery to serve gathering places for their communities beyond the scope of craft beer production. The interpretation of these experiences can help us understand the role craft breweries may play as third places as well as tourism destinations.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

Minimal research has been done to understand craft breweries as third places. Furthermore, the experiences of those who create these spaces has largely not received in-depth examination. On the surface, craft brewery taprooms can easily be thought of as third places when considering Oldenburg's definition of "public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work" (Oldenburg, 1997, p. 16). In fact, craft breweries have maintained anecdotal acclaim as such (Ross, et al., 2009; Paulsen and Tuller, 2017; Pullman, et. Al, 2015; Reinaker, 2009). However, research has not adequately explored CBs specifically within the context of third place. Similar to Soukoup's (2006) reasoning for reviewing computer-mediated communication contexts, the idea of third place is often linked to craft breweries, "but in these discussions rarely

do authors critically evaluate the appropriateness of this term" (2006, p. 422). This study seeks to understand how craft breweries can be viewed as third places by seeking to understand the intended experience CB professionals wish to create regardless of their familiarity with Oldenburg's work.

In this interpretive qualitative study, craft brewery professionals in the state of Georgia were interviewed regarding the type of experience they provide for patrons at their brewery in addition to their perceived role within their respective community. This study approaches the research topic in two broad ways. First, this study analyzes responses using Oldenburg's (1989, 1997) original conception of the "character of third places" to understand how the CB professional's intended experience is like that of a third place (p. 20). Second, additional emergent themes and subthemes related to these original characteristics were explored and highlighted. These foci revealed how craft breweries are similar to third places in addition to specific ways craft breweries may be considered third places within their own context. It also gave us an understanding of the perceived value of breweries by craft brewery professionals to their community. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

1. In what ways do craft brewery professionals intend to provide experiences that are similar to a third place experience?
2. In what ways do craft brewery professionals intend to provide experiences that fall outside the original character of a third place experience?
3. How do answers to the first two questions inform our understanding of craft breweries as third places?

Study Significance

The findings from this study produced practical applications for CB professionals. Overall, this study provided a deeper, richer understanding of the role craft breweries play in their communities through the eyes of the professionals who operate them. Additionally, by sharing the study's findings with the participants they may better understand how their peers create spaces that allow taproom patrons to have a possible third place experience. Lastly, this study can add to the existing body of literature related to craft breweries.

As mentioned above, the current body of work related to the growth of the craft beer industry and third places largely focus on the consumer experience. Through an exploration of the perspectives of craft beer professionals and their work toward creating a third place experience, this study can address a number of next steps in the craft beer tourism research agenda as called for by Slocum, Cavaliere, and Kline (2018). Specifically, it helped to uncover additional understanding of the intentionality of developing links between craft breweries and local culture (2018, p. 219). This understanding is important to highlight how industry professionals are integrating into the current moment within their communities. Specifically, this study demonstrates how CB professionals provide spaces that do not simply provide a place to have a beer, but a place that meets needs related to the social and physical wellbeing of their communities. Although respondents were not always explicit to say this, the excitement that came through in them sharing their stories communicated that they knew the role of their brewery took on a higher purpose than a place to enjoy a craft product. Additionally, this study discovered more about the political matters related to craft beer production. With Georgia's recent legislative shift allowing on-site consumption, it is important to explore the experiences of the professionals navigating this reality to provide a craft brewery experience (2018, p.221). This

greatly shifted the look and feel from an on-site craft brewery experience from more of a tourist attraction to a traditional customer service model. The way that CB professionals provided an experience drastically changed, providing them the space and resources to be able to develop the role that their brewery plays in their communities. Lastly, this study addressed matters of authenticity in craft beer production. Hayward and Battle (2018), suggest authentic beer communities emerge when the intended experience by local and tourists align (2018, as cited in Slocum, et al., p. 189). This study added to the conversation as it positions the taproom as a third place, a space where tourist experiences are not always separate from local experiences.

Definition of Terms

1. *Craft Brewery*: According to the Brewers Association, a craft brewery must be both small and independent. In order for a brewery to be small, they must have an annual production of less than six million barrels (about 186 million gallons). In order for a brewery to be considered small, it may not have more than 25% ownership by an alcohol industry member that itself is not a craft brewery (Brewers Association, 2019).

2. *Microbrewery*: A brewery that produces less than 15,000 barrels of beer per year and sells 75% or more of its beer off-site. Microbreweries sell to the public by one or more of the following ways: a traditional three-tier system (brewer to wholesaler to retailer to consumer); a two-tier system (brewer acting as wholesaler to retailer to consumer); and directly to the consumer through carry-outs and/or on-site taproom or restaurant sales (Brewers Association, 2019).

3. *Brewpub*: A restaurant-brewery that sells 25% or more of its beer on-site and operates significant food services. The beer is brewed primarily for sale in the restaurant and bar and is often dispensed directly from the brewery's storage tanks. Where allowed by law, brewpubs often sell beer to-go and/or distribute to off-site accounts (Brewers Association, 2019). In Georgia, brewpubs must maintain status primarily as an "eating establishment," meaning that 50% of annual revenue comes from food sales (Georgia Department of Revenue, 2019).

4. *Taproom*: The taproom is a space where a brewery sells to consumers via on-site or carry out sales. In a Taproom Brewery setting, the taproom is almost always adjacent to the production space.

5. *Craft Beer Tourism*: "Visitation to breweries, beer festivals and beer shows for which beer tasting and experiencing the attributes of beer regions are the prime motivating factors for visitors" (Plummer, et al., 2005, p. 449).

6. *Neolocalism*: "The feeling of belongingness to a unique local community, along with the rejection of global, national, or even regional popular culture and modernization" (Graefe, Mowen, and Grafe, 2018, as cited in Slocum, et al., pp. 30-31).

7. *Third Place*: Public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work (Oldenburg, 1997, p. 16).

8. *Third place experience*: an experience which one has a high level of attachment or feeling of acceptance that someone expects to recreate at a variety of locations within one type of space.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the background literature related to this study. The review is scalar in nature, beginning with a broad discussion of craft beer industry growth in the United States. Next, a history of the craft beer industry within the state of Georgia will be reviewed. Literature surrounding the craft beer tourism and taproom experience is reviewed. Lastly, at the finest scale, an overview of the conceptual framework for this study through a review of literature related to craft breweries and third places is provided.

Craft Beer Industry Growth in the U.S.

In the United States, the Brewers Association is the organization which monitors and promotes growth within the craft beer market. The organization categorizes craft breweries into different market segments in order to monitor this growth. The Brewers Association defines those segments which provide taproom experiences as microbreweries, brewpubs, taproom breweries, and regional breweries. A microbrewery "produces less than 15,000 barrels of beer per year and sells 75 percent or more of its beer off-site" (Watson, 2020). In slight contrast, a brewpub is defined as a brewery that sells at least 25 percent of its production volume on-site and provides "significant food services" (Watson, 2020). Brewpubs can sell to-go and distribute in states where laws allow. Taproom breweries operate in the same capacity as a brewpub without providing food services. Lastly, a regional brewery operates at a production volume of 15,000 to 6 million barrels annually (Watson, 2020). It is also important to understand the

method of distribution a given microbrewery employs. It can be a three-tier system, where the brewer sells product to a wholesaler. The wholesaler then sells the product to a retailer who then sells the product to the consumer. It could also be a two-tier system where the brewer sells directly to a retailer who then sells to the consumer. Finally, a microbrewery may also sell direct to the consumer to-go or via on-site consumption in a taproom or restaurant setting.

The United States currently has an all-time record high number of craft breweries in the nation. With 8,386 craft breweries as of 2019, craft beer production was valued at USD 29.3 billion, more than a quarter of the entire USD 116 billion U.S. beer market (Brewers Association, 2019). The number of craft breweries grew in the United States steadily throughout the 1980s and 1990s, after homebrewing was legalized via the Cranston Act, during the Jimmy Carter administration (Cohran, 2019). Industry growth during the last few decades has been most prolific in California, Oregon, Washington, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Such growth has been attributed to California being ground-zero for the post-prohibition craft beer industry, as Anchor Brewing in San Francisco, was the first brewery to open in the United States after the ratification of the 21st amendment, repealing prohibition. In the Midwest, large populations of German immigrants laid the groundwork for a bustling beer production industry post-prohibition with Miller Brewing Company and Pabst Brewing Company having their history in the region (Reid, McLaughlin, & Moore, 2014). Industry growth has culminated in recent years with over a thousand new breweries opening in the United States for two years in a row according to Bart Watson, Chief Economist of the Brewers Association (2019). This is, in part, is because the craft beer industry has become a bastion of brewers who "value authenticity, being connected to a particular community, and their product, but they also understand the joy of a finely favored drink and the larger social context in which to enjoy it" (Kline & Bulla, as cited in Kline,

Slocum, & Cavaliere, 2017, p. 4). A cornerstone of this craft beer identity is what Kline and Bulla write, referencing Matthews & Patton (2017), that "brewers are able to 'hyperdifferentiate' between corporate brands" (2017, p. 2). For example, at one field visit, I saw a wood-carved sign in a restroom of a craft brewery touting that, "This establishment proudly DOES NOT SERVE Anheuser-Busch beer."

On-site sale of beer is an essential element of the taproom experience explored in this study. Industry growth has been attributed to an increase in at-the-brewery sales, particularly among microbrewery and brewpub segments (Watson, 2019). In addition to overall industry growth, California saw growth specifically in local production. In Maryland, smaller brands grew the most (Watson, 2019). Overall, the craft beer industry growth is most prolific when driven when smaller brands create more innovative local products for on-site sale rather than larger brands expanding their regional distribution (2019). This makes the state of Georgia an interesting place to focus, given it is the most recent state to allow for on-site consumption and sales (Fuhrmeister, 2017; Sheinin, 2017).

Craft Beer in Georgia

The state of Georgia has an interesting history with beer. With the first breweries in the Atlanta area opening in the mid-1800s, the industry boomed after the Civil War (Cohran, 2019; Smith & Boyle, 2013). This hay-day came to a halt with the ratification of the 18th amendment of the U.S. Constitution, prohibiting the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol in the United States. The modern, glamorous view of the prohibition era was not present in Georgia. Smith and Boyle write that the federal prohibition of alcohol "would hold up an unkind mirror to Atlanta's social problems" (2013, p. 35). Religious temperance, pressure politics, and European immigrant

racism fueled the push to outlaw alcohol indefinitely. Though prohibition ultimately prevailed, brewers and distributors did work together in an unprecedented way to try to protect the right to drink alcohol (Smith & Boyle, 2013). The post-prohibition era saw little support for breweries in Georgia, though Anheuser-Busch survived. Lester Maddox, a gubernatorial candidate for Georgia in the late 1960s, won the ticket on an economic development platform. Contrary to his own outspoken stance against alcohol, Maddox ushered in a new era of Georgia beer with the establishment of a Pabst Blue Ribbon production facility in the city of Perry. Interestingly, this facility was an early sign of beer tourism in the state, situated on hundreds of acres with the intent to be an attraction for stopover tourists on the way to and from Florida beaches (Cohran, 2019). That said, craft beer was still decades away with plenty of legal challenges to be mitigated.

A milestone in Georgia's craft beer history came when President Jimmy Carter, a Georgia native, oversaw passage of the Cranston Act of 1977, lifting a prohibition-era nationwide ban on homebrewing (Cohran, 2019; Smith & Boyle, 2013). Homebrewing, as the name suggests, is the production of beer within private households. It is often how many craft beer professionals enter into the industry (Olson, Murphy, & Ro, 2014; Sozen & O'Neill, 2018; Cohran, 2019). Regardless of this milestone at the federal level, Carter's own home state of Georgia did not legalize homebrewing until 1995 (Cohran, 2019). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, industry growth remained stagnant in the state of Georgia, as only four large commercial breweries operated in the state post-prohibition until 1992 (Cohran, 2019).

The number of breweries in the state has grown from 21 to 111 since 2011 (Watson, 2020). Additionally, Georgia's beer production volume ranks 15th in the country at 514,414 barrels (just under 22 million gallons) of beer in 2018 (Watson, 2019). Georgia has a mandated

three-tier distribution system in the state where breweries must use distributors in order to place their product in bars, restaurants, and retail spaces (Eason, 2018). Breweries may not self-distribute. This system has allowed craft beer to have significant economic impact in the state, ranking 16th nationally at USD 1.84 billion in 2018 (Watson, 2018). That said, the reality of the three-tier system is bittersweet for Georgia brewers. On one hand, the three-tier system allows brewers to enter statewide and regional sales markets with relative ease. On the other, it still hamstrings brewers through limits on self-distribution, on-site sales, and production volume (Cohran, 2019; Dennis, 2019). This has provided an interesting opportunity for breweries in Georgia. It is desirable for breweries to sell direct to consumers when possible, as tiered systems may create hurdles for smaller brands to get their products to consumers (Tamayo, 2009). At present, every state in the United States allows for on-site consumption via a taproom setting (Brewers Association, 2019). That said, Baginski and Bell assert that craft beer has been historically underrepresented in the Southern United States due to the "legal, moral and religious" factors which affect the distribution of craft beer in the region (2011). In Flack's (1997) study of craft microbreweries, he notes a "microbrewery desert" across the American south. In the state of Georgia, a three-tier system has historically been in place. Until 2017, Georgia breweries were prohibited from selling their beer for on-site taproom consumption. In an effort to still provide a taproom experience, many breweries sold admission to brewery tours and gave limited samples of their beer to tour participants (Georgia Senate Research Office, 2013; Fuhrmeister, 2017).

As of late 2017, the Georgia legislature began allowing on-site consumption and sales in microbrewery taprooms (Cohran 2019; Sheinin, 2017; Fuhrmeister, 2017). Malone and Lusk (2016) found a significant relationship between the number of breweries in a state and laws that

allow for on-site sales (2016). At a glance, this would seem to be the case in the state of Georgia. From 2011 to 2017, the number of breweries in the state of Georgia grew by an average of 8.7 breweries per year. From 2018 to 2019, the year after on-site sales and consumption was legalized, 29 breweries opened in the state with a total of 111 currently operating (Watson, 2019). The majority of the breweries in the state can be found in the Atlanta metropolitan area (Figure 1). That said, many rural communities in the state are garnering attention and spurning growth in the industry. For example, Creature Comforts brewing company in the college town of Athens, Georgia area recently announced a second taproom and production space in the Los Angeles area after being featured in the Marvel's 2019 feature film "The Avengers: Endgame" (Creature Comforts, 2020; Wells, 2019). Additionally, Wild Leap brewing company in LaGrange, a southwest Georgia rural town of about 30,000 people was named the best new brewery in the United States by USA Today in 2019 (Berman, Higgins, Monterosso, Muldowney, Sharpton, 2020). One element of this study is to explore what role this legislative change in Georgia has had on the provision of the taproom experience and growth of the industry in Georgia from the perspectives of craft brewery professionals in the state.

Georgia's history as latecomers to the craft beer industry has put the state behind the rest of the nation, yet the craft beer industry has continued to grow. Many scholars feel industry growth supports the theory of resource partitioning, where few large-scale producers capitalize on market homogeneity and specialist producers emerge to serve niche consumer tastes (Baginski & Bell, 2011; Beer Guys Radio, 2019; Carroll and Swaminathan, 2009). Recent scholarship has found that these niche consumer tastes are trending toward craft beer products that are locally sourced and produced (Eberts, 2014; Flack, 1997; Graefe, et al., 2018; Holtkamp,

et al., 2016; Matthews and Patton, 2016; Reid el al., 2014; Schnell and Reese, 2003; Taylor and DiPietro, 2017; Taylor and Dipietro, 2019).

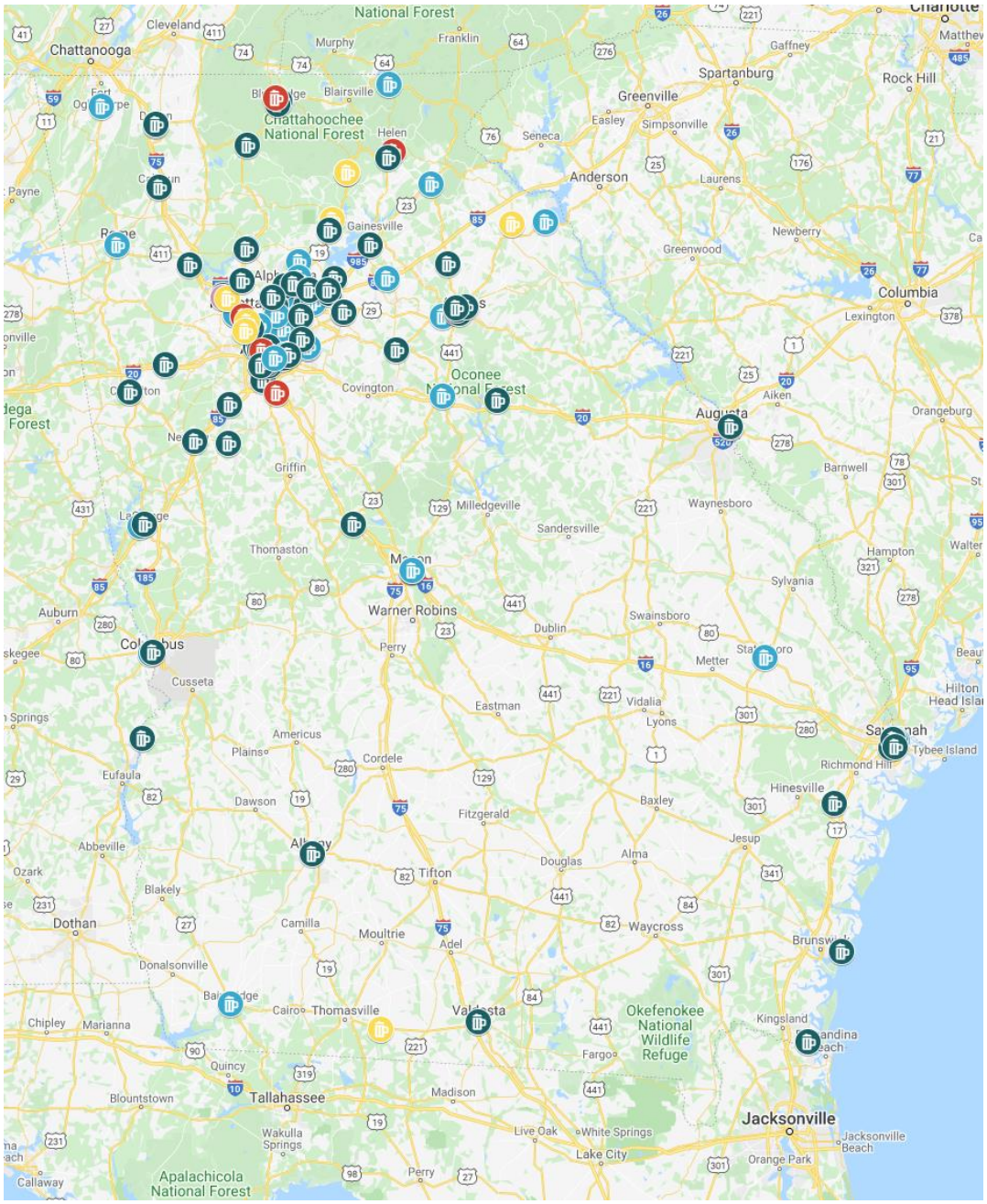

Figure 1: Map of Craft Brewery Locations in Georgia (Beer Guys Radio, 2020)

Craft Beer Tourism

Craft beer tourism is a recently emerging topic in food and beverage tourism studies, with roots in wine tourism (Plummer et al., 2005). Beer tourism can be defined as travel that is motivated by experiencing a new brewery setting, try new beers, understand more of the beer-making process, or attend a craft beer festival (Plummer et al., 2005). Francioni and Byrd (2016) echo Plummer et al. (2005) with their definition of beer tourism but take it further to suggest a role within a growing world of "niche tourism" (2016, p. 2). Schnell and Reese (2003) again use the definition of beer tourism by Plummer et al. (2005) but expand on the role of the brewery in the community by providing the opportunity to redefine and reaffirm local identities. Engaging with "the local" has become a hallmark of today's consumer (Paulauskaite, et al.,2017). The Millennial generation has redefined tourist motivation toward not only experiencing a locality but becoming enmeshed within local communities while traveling (Kline & Bulla, 2017; Reid, et al., 2014; Paulauskaite, et al., 2017; Sofronov, 2018). While there are similarities, craft beer tourism can be differentiated from its siblings, distilled products and wine tourism, in that craft breweries are more abundant than wineries and distilleries. Additionally, they tend to be found in towns and cities around larger groups of people who find residence nearby. The recent rise in food and beverage tourism in general is attributed to a penchant for consumers to seek locally produced goods.

Neolocalism was first defined as a "deliberate seeking out of regional lore and local attachment by residents (new and old) as a delayed reaction to the destruction in modern America of traditional bonds to community and family" (Shortridge, 1996; p.10). In terms of the craft beer industry, Graefe, Mowen, and Graefe (2018) augment this definition to consider "the feeling of belongingness to a unique local community, along with the rejection of global,

national, or even regional popular culture and modernization" (2018, as cited in Slocum, et al., pp. 30-31). Paulauskaite, et al. (2017), notes a neolocal trend in tourism overall, discussing the transformation of the "tourist to traveler," where tourism motivations have shifted toward "demanding authentic, experientially-oriented opportunities involving more meaningful interactions with locals" (p.2). Part of this the transformation of the tourist is the desire to have experiences that resemble those of the individuals living in that place, that is, to feel like, and interact with, locals (2017). Sofronov (2018) anticipates this trend to continue as the Millennial generation continues to age, increase wealth, and travel for leisure. Neolocalism has been cited as paramount in the growth of the craft beer industry (Carvalho, Minim, Nascimento, Ferreira, Minim, 2018; Eberts, 2014; Flack, 1997; Graefe, et al., 2018; Holtkamp, et al., 2016; Matthews and Patton, 2016; Reid el al., 2014; Schnell & Reese, 2003; Taylor & DiPietro, 2017; Taylor & Dipietro, 2019; Taylor, et al., 2020).

Craft beer tourism research is often positioned to better understand the ways in which patrons to breweries are experiencing local beer markets (Francioni & Byrd, 2016; Kraftchick, et al., 2014; Murray & Kline, 2015; Plummer et al., 2005; Slocum, 2016; Taylor, DiPietro, So, Hudson, & Taylor, 2020). That said, a major highlight of craft beer tourism research is the role partnerships play between stakeholder groups with the intent to develop a comprehensive craft beer destination. This work mainly focuses on understanding the effectiveness of ale trails, a way to make the region more accessible to people who want to visit areas with multiple breweries during their visit (Schnell & Reese, 2016, p. 175). In a study of rural Virginia, Slocum found that the presence of beer trails could bolster partnerships between breweries and other tourism operators in the region (2016). Through leveraging the collaborative nature of creating a place-based craft beer market, Slocum (2016) found overwhelming support from non-alcohol related-

tourism sectors for the establishment of a craft beer trail. Additionally, Howlett (2016) notes that trails often emerge as part of partnerships between breweries and municipal tourism authorities (2016). The cities of Bend and Portland, Oregon have done this with the creation of beer "passports" (2016). Visitors to each participating brewery get a stamp, much like a visa in a traditional passport. By accruing a certain number of stamps, tourists can redeem their passport for various prizes: pint glasses, t-shirts, etc. Interestingly, Plummer et al. concluded that the Waterloo-Wellington beer trail resulted in greater partnership between breweries along the trail and greater promotion of the beer opportunities of the region (2005). Such work highlights how intentional strategic planning between stakeholder groups in a given tourist destination may help facilitate social capital needed to establish a successful tourism market (Soulard, Knollenberg, Boley, Perdue, and McGehee, 2018). At present, Georgia does have a craft brewer's guild which has focused mainly on lobbying for change related to on-site consumption. Additionally, the state also has a destination marketing organization, aptly named Explore Georgia. Their website does showcase a number of craft breweries in the state. However, there does not currently seem to be comprehensive representation of the entire brewery industry from a tourism perspective from either one of these entities. Furthermore, no ale trail currently exists in the state.

Working in tandem with craft beer tourism research, brand loyalty data has proven to be valuable to the industry as it relates to creating return customers. This began mainly with attempting to more fully understand who craft beer drinkers are (Murray & O'Neill, 2012). Murray and Kline (2015) first studied what factors led to brand loyalty to a given craft beer brand through researching breweries in rural North Carolina. The authors structured their study based on factors established within the literature driving consumer loyalty. The first of these factors was "access…in terms of accessibility to the brewery, and the knowledge gained from it"

(Murray and Kline, 2015). Additionally, they analyzed “connection to the local community” as a factor, driven by the idea of neolocal tendencies of consumers as established by Shortridge (Murray and Kline, 2015). They found that “Connection with the local community”, “satisfaction”, and “Desire for unique consumer products” most influenced the likelihood of brand loyalty. Taylor and DiPietro (2017) further segmented the craft beer consumer market and reinforced that the Millennial generation is primarily driving market growth. Interestingly, they found customers with both high and low involvement in craft beer are willing to pay more for beer at a craft brewery taproom (Taylor and DiPietro, 2017). This study may contribute to this idea in that it calls to question what elements of a taproom experience create the conditions for this willingness to pay. Taylor (2018) further segments craft beer consumers into desire for unique customer products, perceptions of similarity between customers and, of particular interest to this study, high and low motivation toward authentic experiences.

Authenticity in food and beverage tourism is the idea that the product is produced and consumed by local residents to the place and often viewed as a measure of product quality (Chhabra, Healy, Sills, 2003; Minihan, 2014; Taylor, 2018). The perception of authenticity brings tourists closer to the community and culture from which the products comes (Plummer, et al., 2005; Murray & Kline, 2015). In craft beer tourism, authenticity has such a profound effect on brewery patron decision making in that tourists prioritize a connection with the host community over satisfaction with the product itself (Murray & Kline, 2015). This is of particular interest to this study in that it allows the craft brewery to be positioned as less of a tourist attraction but as a gateway for visitors to access and integrate with that community or region. This idea is less conjecture and more explicit with the idea of third places (Oldenburg, 1989, 1997). CB Tourism research has sparked continued inquiry into the role that the presence of a

craft beer market in a town has on a community's development. The role of social capital has also been documented in craft beer tourism literature (Arroyo, Knollenberg, & Barbieri, 2020; Slocum, 2018). Most recently, Arroyo, Knollenberg, & Barbieri (2020) explored the process which forms of capital, through the processes of creativity and meaning, go from inputs of capital to outputs of financial and political capital. This is particularly interesting to this study in that the development of a third place, or not, can be seen as happening in tandem with these more formal processes of transforming natural, human, and build capital to cultural and social capital. In a few cases in this study, we see where certain breweries may have developed their resources into political and financial capital in that they are leveraging their resources for not only their own business' gain but for outward looking efforts to enhance the well-being of those in their community. This directly relates to the "personal benefits" and the "greater good" that Oldenburg holds as the intention of third places altogether (1997, p.43, p.66).

In the current body of craft beer tourism research, exploration of CBs relative to third places is scarce. That said, the craft brewery taproom experience has significant work surrounding exploration of the physical and social dimensions that drive experience quality, repeat visitation (Graefe, Mowen, & Graefe, 2018; Murray & Kline, 2015; Reinaker, 2009; Taylor Jr., 2018; Taylor & DiPietro, 2017; Taylor & DiPietro, 2019; Taylor & DiPietro, 2020). Graefe, et al. explored craft brewery patrons' tendency to display neolocal behavior and participate in environmental causes. Interestingly, 79% of respondents indicated that they do seek out craft breweries when traveling for work or vacation (2018). This supports the idea that craft breweries might be sought after as a place that can provide a relative "sameness" to the brewery in their own town regardless of the perceived quality of product (Oldenburg, p. 20). This ubiquity of experience at a craft brewery resembles Oldenburg's description of the German value

of "*Gemütlichkeit*", or warm and friendly inclusion, a quality "for those who measured their enjoyment by the pleasure on others 'faces" (p. 95). These gardens were spaces where you could expect a relatively similar experience whether in New York City or Milwaukee. It is the extension of this inclusive reality that makes craft breweries interesting to explore as third places. Furthermore, exploration of what possible elements of a third place experience exist through the eyes of those who provide these spaces. The next section summarizes existing scholarship on third places and craft breweries to focus in on the specific area of inquiry for this study.

The Brewery as a Third Place

Oldenburg (1989, 1997) coined the term "third place" with his seminal work more than 30 years ago. He writes that all people have (1) a home and (2) a workplace with a need for a third place. Similar to Shortridge (1996), Oldenburg laments the waning public social life of American communities and advocates for spaces that provide the opportunity for informal social interaction which he deems necessary for a healthy society. He lauds the role of third places through his musings on classic coffee houses, American taverns, French cafés, English pubs, Main Streets, and German-American beer gardens (Oldenburg, 1989, 1997). Oldenburg posits third places have common characteristics. These characteristics are neutral ground, social leveling, opportunity for conversation, a place for regulars, low profile, playful mood, and a home away from home (Oldenburg, 1997, pp.22-41). People can inhabit third places through physical and social means. There has been literature that unpacks the role of virtual third places like online gaming and social media networks (Ducheneaut, et al., Soukup, 2006; Steinkuehler and Williams, 2017), however, there has not been any direct study of craft breweries as third

places. Mehata and Bosson (2010) found that among the differences in design characteristics from other businesses, third places are usually recognizable as they have a high level of visual permeability to the street (2010). In a design study of coffee shops, Waxman (2006) found that in addition to certain design characteristics, regular patrons felt that having a third place allowed them to feel more attached to their community. Rosenbaum (2006), exploring social dimensions, found that third places can meet the need of providing social support for consumers.

An integral element of the craft brewery experience is hosting visitors at an onsite taproom. Taprooms are areas, usually attached to the production space, that allow visitors to try a variety of beers that a given brewery makes. The reasons that people visit brewery taprooms are manifold. In Kraftchick, Byrd, Canziani, and Gladwell (2014) however, it is interesting that of the factors identified as driving taproom visitation, "beer consumption" fell last to "socializing", "enjoyment", and *"the craft brewery experience"* (Kraftchick, Byrd, Canziani, and Gladwell , 2014; emphasis added). Furthermore, it is clear that some CB professionals seek to provide an experience beyond that of simply drinking beer. In Paulsen and Tuller's (2017) exploration of authenticity in a craft beer neighborhood, respondents articulated the motivation to provide an experience that encourages social interaction and conversation. The idea that beer consumption does not always hold priority over the social experience for both consumer and supplier push this study to further understand how the craft brewery experience is provided and in what ways that experience mirrors that of third places.

Since Oldenburg's original thesis, craft breweries have maintained anecdotal acknowledgement as third places (Ross, Sterling, & Daniels, 2009; Paulsen and Tuller, 2017; Pullman, Greene, Liebmann, Ho, & Pedisich, 2015; Reinaker, 2007). Pullman, Greene, Liebmann, Ho, and Pedisich (2015) describe the motivations of Hopworks Urban Brewery in

Portland, Oregon to be "the sought-after 'third place'" in that the brewery provides space that is accessible for families with children (2015). Additionally, Paulsen and Tuller (2017) interviewed a craft beer professional in the Jacksonville, Florida King Street area who articulated a motivation for their brewery to be a third place (Paulsen & Tuller, as cited in Chapman, Lellock, and Lippard, 2017). In the spirit of Oldenburg, Reinaker (2009) argues that the brewery and pub are a "solution for the types of institutions needed to move an economic and social agenda forward" (2007, p. 1). Lastly, in a survey of craft breweries in the Madison, Wisconsin area, Daniels also highlights breweries as third places due to their appeal to a wide variety of people in addition to programming, that allows "Mug Club" members to consume beer on-site with their personal glassware.

In order to operationalize the concept of third place, it must be defined in order to fit the scope of this study. In Oldenburg's writings, he creates rich descriptions of a variety of third places while not giving us a hard and fast definition. To this study's benefit, this leaves third places to be conceptualized in a variety of ways. Even Oldenburg refers to his own definition of third places, that is, "public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work" as a "generic designation" (Oldenburg, 1997, p. 16). That said, he goes on to describe third places where "the stranger feels at home – nay, *is* at home" (p.xxviii), "inclusively sociable, offering both the basis of community and the celebration of it" (p. 14), a "home away from home" (p. 38), and places "which one may go alone at almost any time of the day or evening with assurances that acquaintances will be there" (p. 32). These descriptions of third places mirror descriptions of craft breweries in research (Paulsen and Tuller, 2017). A place where patrons to a place may

interact and even integrate into the local culture of place. This study seeks to understand the experiences of craft brewery professionals in creating that type of space; one where visitors may drink local beer, yes, but ultimately experience the local community in a setting that is familiar to the extent that one can feel part of a craft beer community no matter what brewery one visits.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter is integral in understanding the research questions positioning within the contextual body of work. First, a review of craft beer industry growth in the United States was provided. Second, additional context of craft brewery industry growth in Georgia was reviewed. Lastly, a review of craft brewery tourism literature was provided, particularly as it relates to work on the taproom experience. This idea of a focus on experience is imperative in applying the concept of third place within this context. By positioning craft breweries as possible third places, this study can begin inquiry of the perception of the role craft brewery play in communities through the eyes of industry professionals. This can add to existing literature of craft beer tourism in that the concept of third place can allow us to explore a deeper meaning of the taproom experience through the eyes of craft brewery professionals.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This chapter will review the methodology used in this study. Research design, research population, respondent selection criteria, and sampling method will be addressed. Furthermore, the site of the study will be discussed. Data collection and analysis proposed. Lastly, considerations of validity integrity and ethics will be discussed.

This study is designed to understand third place experiences in craft breweries through the perspective of craft brewery professionals who curate these spaces. The work positions participants as "craftspeople," in that in addition to the product they produce (i.e., beer), they also have valuable insight into the role craft brewery experiences have for visitors and their communities (Slocum, Kline, and Cavaliere, 2018; p. 221). Given this reality, an interpretive qualitative method was employed in order to understand the lived experiences of craft brewers in relation to the study's focus. In the spirit of Valentine, this study sought to further understand the experiences of CB professionals when shaping their taproom experience for others and how their perception of the idyllic experience is like that of a third place (2005; as cited in Longhurst, 2010, p. 108).

Research Design

This topic was explored by employing a qualitative research method. An integral function of qualitative research is to be able to understand aspects of a topic that are not easily quantifiable (Cresswell, 2013). As with many recreational experiences, the craft brewery

experience can take on a variety of meanings to both patrons and professionals. For this study, the thoughts and experiences of craft brewery professionals to create spaces in which people may have a third place experience is difficult to prescribe exact values. This study seeks to understand how craft brewery professionals create experiences relative to the framework of Oldenburg's third place. This requires that data contain complex responses in order to paint a picture of values, attitudes, and actions of the study participants. Given this, qualitative research methodology was necessary for research success.

Qualitative methods have had success in craft beverage research in the past. Cavaliere and Albano (2018) and Alonso, Sakellarios, and Bressan (2017) used a content analysis approach to discover aspects of sense of place and sustainability in craft distillery marketing and understand development of a craft beer tourism market respectively. Arroyo, Knollenberg, & Barbieri (2020) used interviews to connect with both producers and stakeholders when exploring processes of social capital development. The purpose of such work was to understand how an emerging group of craft distilleries were using aspects of sense of place to develop their overall marketing strategy. Additionally, Paulsen and Tuller (2017) used semi-structured interviews and site observations to understand the perspectives of craft beer professionals in a burgeoning craft beer district in Jacksonville, Florida. The authors were particularly interested in how craft beer professionals leveraged perceptions of authenticity to reinvigorate a deteriorating historic district into a bustling craft beverage and food destination.

Research Population, Selection Criteria and Sampling

The research population for this study was craft brewery professionals within the state of Georgia. The intent was to identify individuals who retain a high level of agency over the vision

for the experience at a given brewery. In smaller breweries, I found that the brewer was also the owner of the brewery. Some breweries employed a "Taproom Manager" who was the best person to interview given their role in managing the primary taproom space. Regardless of the specific person interviewed, it was important to communicate the intent of the study so they can provide appropriate data. In light of this, two criteria became important in sample selection. First, it was important that the person interviewed has had an established history at their brewery and within their local community and the state of Georgia. For these criteria, I sought those individuals who had a hand in the initial opening and establishment of their brewery. Additionally, it was important to solicit interview participants that had a history in the craft brewing industry prior to the legislative shift toward on-site consumption in 2017. Though not entirely necessary, it was also helpful when respondents understood the legislative context of craft beer in Georgia. To this end, I primarily sought to interview craft brewery professionals who had been working in the industry prior to 2017. That said, there were still a number of brewery professionals that have established themselves in the state since 2017 whose perspectives and insights were not disregarded. In order to maintain confidentiality of interview respondents, pseudonyms were used for their names and employer names were not shared. With this in mind, all interview participants are called "craft brewery professionals" regardless of their specific title within their organization.

Similar to Paulsen and Tuller's (2017) study, nonprobability sampling will be employed, specifically "purposive and snowball sampling" (2017, p109; Berg and Lune, 2011) to identify possible participants. Contact information from fifteen breweries was collected prior to this study while visiting field sites from May to August 2019. Five of these fifteen expressed interest in participating in this study and volunteered to put me in communication with other Georgia craft

brewery professionals. Snowball sampling method was integrated into the interviews by asking the participant to offer any recommendations of other craft brewery professionals who may have been willing to participate in this study. In addition to these contacts, the remaining breweries in the state of Georgia were contacted via phone and email regarding my study. 17 breweries were contacted in total. It was expected that not all of the individuals contacted will respond or wish to participate in this study. Of the 17 contacted, 13 agreed to participate. It was important then to be intentional to approach potential interview respondents as a tourism scholar and fellow craft beer enthusiast who is interested in seeing the Georgia craft beer community through their perspectives and experiences. Participants were excited to sit down and talk with another beer enthusiast interested in legitimizing the industry through scholarship. Overall, this study's participants felt it was impressive that one was able to puruse a higher education degree with the topic of craft beer.

All participants were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. That said, no participants chose to remove themselves from the study. In which case, any data they have provided will be destroyed. Anonymity of both the participants and their employer was guaranteed. Potential participants were contacted beginning in November of 2019 and continue interviewing CB professionals until I reached data saturation after 13 total interviews. Data saturation was accomplished when no new information was gathered from interviews of CB professionals (Bowen, 2008; Fusch & Ness, 2015). One of the participant recordings was removed from analysis due to poor recording quality. Data collection was completed in February of 2021.

Table 1: Study Participant Information

Participant	Region	Urban or Rural	Length of Operation
1	North Georgia	Rural	1 year
2	Metro Atlanta	Urban	4 years
3	North Georgia	Urban	1 year
4	Metro Atlanta	Urban	5 years
5	Metro Atlanta	Urban	7 years
6	Metro Atlanta	Urban	3 years
7	South Georgia	Rural	4 years
8	South Georgia	Urban	4 years
9	East Georgia	Urban	6 years
10	Metro Atlanta	Urban	7 years
11	North Georgia	Urban	7 years
12	South Georgia	Rural	4 years
13	Georgia Coast	Rural	1year

Research Location

Georgia craft breweries were of particular interest in this study, as Georgia was the last state to permit on-site consumption and distribution of craft beer via the taproom as of 2017 (Dennis, 2019; Eason, 2018). As of 2020, the state of Georgia has 111 craft breweries (Watson, 2020). Currently, five breweries in the state have two locations. Furthermore, one brewery in the state is not considered independent as it does not meet the criteria by the Brewers Association. As this study was primarily interested in craft breweries, those considered for data collection met the criteria set forth by the Brewers Association of "small and independent" (Watson, 2020).

At present, the highest density of craft breweries in Georgia are in the Atlanta metropolitan area housing roughly two thirds of all of Georgia breweries. It was important to diversify the geography of breweries considered for interview in order to have a representative sample of Georgia breweries. That said, specific brewery names and locations are not included in the data collection of this study. However, the region was noted, urban or rural designation, in addition to the proximity to the next closest brewery.

Data Collection Method

Participants in this study were not interviewed more than once. The shortest interview lasted just under and hour and the longest lasted just over two and a half hours. Given this reality, semi-structured interviews (SSIs) were used as the primary data collection method. It was essential to capturing the essence of respondent experiences by allowing for open-ended questions that allowed the exploration "of independent thoughts of each individual" (Adams, 2015; p. 494). Furthermore, SSIs "unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important" (Longhurst, 2003, p.1). SSIs are also effective

as a method in order to attain data saturation (Bowen, 2008; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Given these reasons, SSIs were the ideal method of inquiry for this study as it sought to understand the potential role craft brewery's play as third places through the eyes of craft brewery professionals.

Additionally, observational data was collected related to elements of each site found integral to the initiation of a craft brewery experience. These observations were important due to the fact that much of Oldenburg's support for third places hinges upon people being able to access them often and at will. Understanding how an experience is initiated was important for understanding the questions of this research. Additionally, seeking to explore the "eternal sameness" of craft breweries as third places, it was important to highlight any relative similarities in which a craft brewery experience is initiated and progressed (1997, p.20). This sameness speaks directly toward a later implication of this study positing further exploration of a possible third place experience without a specific site imperative. Meaning, one who frequents craft breweries may see the collective of craft breweries as their third place rather than a single brewery in particular. These observational records took place in a notebook. At each site, the day of the week visited and regular weekly business hours were noted. Also, the perceived ease to which the different facilities were oriented toward was recorded, namely the menu, the restroom, and the place which to order a drink. Other infrastructural criteria of interest were if there were smaller beer pours, food and non-alcoholic beverages available at the time of site visitation. There were social indicators of interest as well. The perceived amount of time before being engaged or welcomed by a staff member was recorded. Lastly, if the site was visited during business hours, the general social milieu was noted. It was of particular interest to note the perceived quality of interactions between patrons, between staff and patrons, and between staff members themselves.

In Oldenburg's original work, he describes the "character of third places" as neutral ground, social leveling, conversation as prevalent, a place for regulars, low profile, playful mood, and a home away from home (1997, pp.20-41). These characteristics are then followed by rich descriptions and examples of what these characteristics look like in third places. Additionally, Oldenburg provides a treatise on the personal and community benefits of third places. It is important to this study to allow the time and space for interview participants to explore the subjectivity of the role their brewery plays in their community along with other insights the researcher cannot predict (Barbour & Schostak, 2005). Given the possible broad descriptions of the role third places play, SSIs provided the platform for craft brewery professionals to talk about their spaces with the opportunity to glean a variety of meanings from the interviews. In this study, respondents were given a prompt to share their story, the community in which their located, and why they chose that location. Interview questions followed were designed to allowed respondents to explain the intention behind their taproom organization, if they would change anything, and why. Additionally, they were asked what the general feel of their brewery is on any given day. Further inquiry established if they have developed a group of regulars at their brewery and what their regulars are like. Participants were also asked what non-beer related events they host at their brewery in addition to any other community engagement they participate in. Participants were also asked to share what an ideal experience is at their brewery. Lastly, it became important to this study to inquire how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the provision of the ideal experience in addition to the affect it had on engaging with their local community (Longhurst, 2016; See Appendix A). All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participant. All respondents received information explaining study participation information prior to the interview. Interviews required an in-depth

exploration of human participant experiences, feelings, and attitudes toward the research topic. Given this reality, Institutional Review Board approval for this study was secured prior to the undertaking of this research.

Data Analysis

As indicated in the below timeline, interviews were held from November, 2020 to February of 2021. They were then transcribed using the otter.ai online software. They were then coded using the atlas.ti online transcription software (Stuckey, 2015,). Interview transcripts were then analyzed for overlapping themes between participant responses and Ray Oldenburg's "character of third places" (1997, pp. 20-41). Additionally, emergent themes among respondents that did not overlap with Oldenburg's original characteristics helped expand the scope of third places within the context of a craft brewery. This research can add to existing craft beer research as it relates to understanding how CB professionals create a taproom experience through a nuanced lens. Given that "regulars" and "a home away from home" are hallmarks of third places, this research can add to existing literature related to craft beer brand loyalty (Eberts, 2014; Murray & Kline, 2015; Taylor, 2018).

This study used the qualitative content analysis data method for this study (Schreier, 2012; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Qualitative content analysis (QCA) was an appropriate method for this study as it is "systematic" yet "flexible" in that it leverages a coding framework without disregarding an exploration of meaning and interpretation, both integral elements of qualitative rigor (Schreir, 2012, p.170). This approach was appropriate in that not all study participants will be familiar with the concept of third place or Oldenburg's characteristic descriptions (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). This study employed a qualitative content analysis in that it relied on

Table 2: Character of Third Places

Character of Third Places (per Oldenburg, 1997, p.20-42)	Descriptive quote from Oldenburg (1989, 1997)
Neutral Ground	"people may come and go as they please, in which none are required to play host, and in which all feel at home and comfortable" (1997, p.22)
Social Leveler	"by nature, an inclusive place. It is accessible to the general public and does not set formal criteria of membership and exclusion" (1997, p.24)
Conversation is Prevalent	"the talk there is good; that it is lively, scintillating, colorful, and engaging" (1997, p.26)
Accessible and Accommodating	"the third place accommodates people only when they are released from their responsibilities elsewhere" (p.32). "As important as timing, and closely related to it, is the location of third places" (1997, p.33)
A Place for Regulars	"The third place is just so much space unless the right people are there to make it come alive, and they are the regulars" (1997, p.33)
Profile is Low	"the third place is typically plain" (1997, p.36).
Mood is Playful	"The persistent mood of a third place is a playful one" (1997, p.37)
Home Away from Home	"the third place is more homelike than home" (1997, p.39)

Oldenburg's (1989, 1997) descriptions of the character of third places as a conceptual framework. However, the intent of the study is not to simply learn whether or not craft breweries are third places, rather, to use Oldenburg's (1989,1997) characteristics as a guide to explore the meaning of the craft brewery experience to CB professionals. For example, in addition to describing the characteristics and importance of third places, Oldenburg (1989, 1997) provides rich contextual and historical descriptions of how communities interact with third places in the real world. To that end, this study did not rely on the frequency of the criteria as a measure of importance within the third place concept but to use the third place concept as a lens to understand how craft breweries serve their communities through the eyes of the CB professional.

The QCA method follows key steps as outlined by Schreier (2012). All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Interview recordings were listened to in their entirety "prior to transcription" to allow development of "tentative ideas about categories and relationships" (Maxwell, 2013, p.78). Oldenburg's character of third places was used as a coding frame to organize additional emergent themes (Schreier, 2012; Maxwell, 2013). The segmentation stage of QCA then divided the data into subthemes according to the coding frame (Schreier, 2012). Given that the study topic is rather intangible, data was segmented based on thematic criterion inherent with each of Oldenburg's characteristics (Schreier, 2012). After the first two interviews were complete, the pilot phase was completed (Schreier, 2012). This pilot phase was necessary for "recognizing and modifying any shortcomings in the frame before the main analysis is carried out" (Schreier, 2012, p.178). That said, only additions to the coding frame took place, as removal of any of Oldenburg's (1989, 1997) original characteristics would undermine the integrity of the study's findings overall. After the pilot phase was complete, all data was interpreted through both listening and reading through transcriptions. Additional recurrent

themes that manifest which do not recall Oldenburg (1989, 1997) were noted (Schreier, 2012). Overall, participant selection, interview method, coding, transcription and review was similar to the design used by Paulsen and Tuller (2017).

Validity

This section will briefly review validity threats and strengths of this study. Validity in qualitative research is important to consider what threats to this research exist. Primarily, these threats manifest on the part of the researcher. While it is impossible to eliminate the effect of the researcher, Maxwell (2013) notes that it is not necessarily useful to try and eliminate researcher influence, but to "understand it and to use it productively" (2013, p.91). Maxwell (2013) highlights two threats of particular interest to this study: researcher bias and reactivity.

As disclosed in the later statement of researcher subjectivity, this research topic is a great deal of interest to the researcher. Given that this is a qualitative study, it calls to question the ability to minimize bias as the researcher and the research instrument are the same person (Mays & Pope, 1995). It was important to be aware of researcher bias in order to pay equal attention to all data collected, not only data which supports the feelings or interests of the researcher. In addition to the subjectivity statement, the study data collection phase lasted until data saturation was achieved (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

According to Maxwell (2013), "reactivity is a powerful and inescapable influence" in semi-structured interview settings (pg. 91). Reactivity is where the researcher has a direct effect on the research subject and the research setting. In order to avoid this threat as much as possible, only open-ended questions were asked and respondents were encouraged to unpack their answers using more than short, one-word answers. Additionally, responses that confound the researchers

personal feelings on the research subject are not disregarded (pg. 93). Additionally, feedback from research participants was leveraged in order to maintain the highest quality interview presence (p. 94).

Though there are threats to this study as mentioned above, there are matters of validity that strengthen this study as well. As mentioned below in the subjectivity statement, there is credibility of this study held in the fact that the researcher has a great deal of interest and experience within the craft beer industry. Outside of prolonged engagement with the industry, this study is vigorous in referential adequacy, providing rich contextual descriptions of the places and people involved with this study. Additionally, this study has transferability to future work in that the methods of both site observation and participant interview are well-documented. This also supports dependability of this study, in that it may be taken and reproduced in a variety of other settings that seek to be understood as third places. The research plan is understandable and usable in a variety of settings. Lastly, this research depended on establishing trust with the research participant in order to interview them in the first place, further strengthening the validity of this data.

Timeline and Objectives

This study took place over the academic year of 2020 to 2021. The University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board approval was requested during the Fall of 2020. Data collection began toward the end of the Summer semester of 2020. Collection will continued until no additional thematic discoveries occur, known as data saturation. Data collection was completed in February 2021. Data was analyzed over the Spring semester of 2021 with final

thesis findings to be presented at the end of the Spring semester. Research objectives and timeline can be found below.

Objective 1: Conduct semi-structured interviews with craft brewery professionals at various field sites through the Fall 2020 semester. The deadline for this objective to be completed is December 2020.

Objective 2: Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews will be coded and analyzed for thematic overlap related to third places and the role professionals feel their craft breweries play in their communities. Coding will take place in tandem with the interview schedule as time allows with the deadline for this objective being February 2021.

Objective 3: Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews will be compared to established literature on craft brewery tourism and third places. The deadline for this objective, in addition to full thesis defense is May 2021.

Statement of Researcher Subjectivity

I selected this thesis topic because I have a high level of interest in the role craft breweries are playing in American communities. In 2010, I had just completed my bachelor's degree in Outdoor Recreation from Georgia Southern University. I moved to the Pacific Northwest region of the United States, just as the number of craft breweries were beginning to increase exponentially (Brewers Association, 2020). I worked for an international outdoor leadership program, traveling across the American West leading groups of people into the wilderness. During this time, I noticed how outdoorspeople globally were diving headlong into the growing trend of craft beer. Through this time, I watched craft beer become a more collective identity of beer drinkers rather than a niche revolt against large beer companies. I watched the

identity of early American beers change as well. For example, Pabst Blue Ribbon was no longer championed blue-collar beer of the Midwest, but rather as an unknown, throwback beer enjoyed by “hipster” culture.

I have watched successful craft breweries established themselves in a number of small towns across the United States. I have become a beer enthusiast myself. Over the past ten years, I have visited over 300 craft breweries in six different countries, 34 in the state of Georgia alone. I legitimately feel that craft beer is a mechanism of cultural good in today’s world. They hold deep meaning to me as places where people who may hold vastly differing views on a host of topics can gather for the unifying purpose of enjoying a well-crafted beer. Randy Mosher’s “community of beer” is a very real thing to me (2017, p.1). Craft breweries are my third places. I seek them out whenever I travel. It is where I learn about the people and the community in which I am visiting. It allows me to feel comfortable in uncertain social settings.

My personal feelings about craft breweries is what drew me to this thesis topic but must be highlighted in order to maintain the highest level of integrity possible with this inquiry. I have chosen semi-structured interviews as my method of inquiry to allow space for my respondents to share their experiences through conversation. That said, it will be important for me to take necessary steps to minimize revelation of own feelings of the role of craft breweries and third places when collecting data and allow for my respondents to fill most of the interview time. That said, a positive aspect of my position relative to the research topic is my ability to understand potential nuances of my respondent experiences related to the brewing process, the three-tier distribution system and provision of the taproom experience. Furthermore, I am an avid homebrewer and a part-time employee of a local brewery. Recognizing these realities create, I can leverage this to my benefit as a researcher.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways which craft brewery professionals in the state of Georgia conceive and operate their brewery within their respective communities relative to the character of Third Places as defined by Oldenburg (1989, 1997). This study also established recurrent themes relative to participant responses surrounding their motivations for establishing a craft brewery and the ways in which they see their business interacting with their community in ways that fall outside the scope of context provided by Oldenburg's original work. Semi-structured interviews were then coded to reveal overlapping and emergent themes which follow in this chapter. All of Oldenburg's "character of third places": neutral ground, social leveling, conversation is predominant, a place for regulars, low profile, playful mood, and a home away from home were revealed in this study (1997, pp.20-41). However, the emergent themes outside Oldenburg's original work are of particular interest. Given the timing of the study from March 2020 to February 2021, these themes revealed that self distribution, partnerships, virtual engagement, and social philanthropy are themes that became crucial to maintaining the brewery as a third place in addition to Oldenburg's original characteristics due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study was initially intended to expand the scope of the third place construct within the modern craft brewery industry. This was to be achieved by unpacking the perspectives of what the CB professional brought to the community by simply having a craft brewery in which to gather. Each participant interview revealed varying degrees of association with any one of the

characteristics of third places as it relates to their perceived value of their brewery to their community. Interestingly, what was also revealed were the ways in which the CB professional articulated the reciprocal nature of the relationship. In particular was the highlighted need and appreciation for their community in order to remain in business during the pandemic. This appreciation for community echoed across all study participants regardless of location in the state, breadth of product distribution footprint, or length of time established as a business.

The spirit of Oldenburg's third place hinges upon a community's ability to accommodate spaces which promote social interaction for the benefit of those that visit that space. The findings revealed that the limits on social interaction associated with the COVID-19 pandemic severely limited the ability to promote social interaction and in turn, a third place experience. This is clear in the exploration of Oldenburg's original characteristics. However, there were clear ways in which CB professionals changed the structure of their business to provide alternative experiences that do mirror that of a third place experience. The following chapter will explore responses relative to the original characteristics of third places in addition to emergent themes that were revealed during analysis.

Neutral Ground

Oldenburg describes neutral ground as the first necessary characteristic of a space in order for it to be a third place. By neutral ground he means "places where individuals may come and go as they please, in which none are required to play host, and in which all feel at home and comfortable" (1997, p.22). The importance, he explains, is that third places have a unique ability to let social interactions take place without social or temporal imperatives. He laments the policing of public spaces by "reformers" who "find loitering deplorable" (1997, p.23). The idea

is that one can find and access the space with ease. Furthermore, no one person is encouraged to stay longer than they want, nor encouraged to leave after a certain amount of time reflecting the ability to arrive and depart at will. On the topic of neutral ground, Ducheneaut, et al.'s (2007) study on the sociability of virtual gaming spaces writes "the success of a third place is predicated in part on its traffic patterns" (p. 142). For this study, site observation and participant interviews revealed that two common themes that promote the free flow of movement were initial access and perceived agency.

Initial access is the moment of the craft brewery experience when a patron arrives at a brewery site and orients themselves toward their coming brewery experience. This is distinct from the later discussed characteristic of "Accessibility and Accommodation" in that initial access is about the *experience* of arriving on site and the perceived ability to move about as one pleases as opposed to the physical and temporal aspects of accessing the space in general. When entering a craft brewery, ideally a customer can orient themselves to both the product and infrastructure within a short period of time. Orientation toward the product and infrastructure includes identifying where and moving to order or pay for a product (i.e. the menu and the bar) where the restroom is, and where the product is made. All but one of the sites visited had visual access to the production space as an intentional part of their taproom experience. The one site that did not have visual access was not intentional, rather due to county code requiring the presence of a firewall between the production space and taproom.

Perceived agency is the sense that one is free to enter and move freely around a space. Mostly, this includes finding a seat at a table where one can spend their time, either with those in one's party or with those nearby. To the CB professional, this means organizing the taproom in a way where someone will engage with the setting of the taproom space or find social connection.

One participant noted the intention of not mirroring the layout of the taproom in order to allow patrons to "see something different" from every angle within the taproom (Participant 13). While visiting research sites, observation revealed that none of the breweries visited required purchase of anything in order to enter the premises, though one may try a small sampling of a variety of beers for a nominal fee. Additionally, it was not required that one take a tour of the facility as part of their experience. Nor was there any intended order to the ways which people congregated on the part of the brewery. Additionally, all expressed that they were family friendly. Of the seven breweries that were visited during business hours (the other six were visited outside of business hours) all but one had children present at the time of interview. This was likely due to the hour at which the brewery was visited, just after lunch time on a weekday in addition to this study taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic. If tours were offered, they were on a regular rotating schedule or given at will by the staff on-site at no cost to the customer. This is much different from the experience of a Georgia craft brewery before SB 85 passed in 2017. At that time, it was a regular practice that a purchase of a tour was required in order to be on-site, tour the production space, or try the product. To one participant, having neutral ground meant being one stop among many in their respective downtown area to the extent that they do not have to stay on site at all:

> We are in the middle of an entertainment district where you can come in our door, you can have your beer poured into a cup, and you can take your beer and you can walk down to the river, you could walk over to the aquarium. (Participant 12)

Oldenburg notes the enemy of third places are the "social reformers" that police the access and perceived agency around public spaces if allowing them to exist at all (1997, p.23). Though less obtuse than these reformers, many craft breweries had to employ their own limits on

the movement of people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Eleven of the thirteen research sites visited closed their doors completely to the public for some amount of time early in 2020. Two of the research sites were new craft breweries that were slated to open in late 2019 or early 2020. They intentionally postponed their grand openings until Summer, 2020. All of the other research sites excluded on-site visitation completely for an extended period of time. For those that had the ability, they would only sell pre-packaged beer through the front door, prohibiting any entry to the taproom at all. As one owner/brewer was quoted:

> It was soul destroying. Because we opened a brewery you know, you want to interact with people, talk to them, serve them beers and everything. And after COVID hit those first few months… we were just a convenience store. (Participant 10)

Interestingly, two of the breweries visited chose to do virtual events during the height of the pandemic when on-site visitation was not possible. Between the two breweries, they hosted bingo, trivia nights and happy hours virtually through the zoom online video conferencing software. These events allowed customers of the brewery to get updates on beer releases, see their friends virtually, and interact with the craft brewery in a similar way as when on-site. Each virtual event would allow customers to interact with the brewery in various ways from meeting the brewers to receiving updates about upcoming collaborations participate in fundraising efforts for partner non-profit agencies or specific community members in need. Though no longer at the physical taproom space, these virtual events allowed both access and agency in ways that were not possible at that time at the physical brewery site.

Once CB professionals began to allow access, all of the sites allowed limited agency through the use of floor markers to wait in line at least six feet apart. All sites structured their taproom space in a socially distant manner, spacing tables apart to limit the potential for viral

transmission, ultimately limiting social interaction. One of the breweries that had their grand opening in the middle of the pandemic limited customer seating to an outdoor patio area only. Additionally, the use of a host to facilitate access to the limited taproom space and to clarify masking requirements was common throughout the pandemic. At the time of interviews, all sites required face coverings for customers until seated. Overall, the intention to provide neutral ground is a common theme among craft brewery professionals. The ability to which professionals adjusted their physical operation due to the pandemic was relatively uniform. The use of alternative virtual technologies to provide neutral ground was uncommon though successful in its implementation.

Social Leveling

Participants eloquently spoke about the intended social leveling nature of their craft brewery. As Oldenburg writes, "worldly status… must not intrude" into the atmosphere of a third place (1997, p.25). This sentiment echoed across responses through the idea that craft breweries should both be accessible to everyone in addition to providing a relative level of pleasure to everybody. This is generally achieved through having a variety of beers on tap in addition to providing community wide events that are both family friendly and free of charge to attend. Participants shared how an ideal customer would have open mind to craft beer and a good attitude is what counts when coming into their establishment. The theme that emerged in relation to social leveling most readily is the intention to create a space where everyone can feel welcome. As one CB professional from Coastal Georgia expressed,

> And we we're, you know the South, people expect, you know, good hospitality. So, we want, we've always said like, we want it to be kind of more comfortable and you can

> come in and you know, dressed up or come in dressed t shirt, flip flops, and you're going to feel at home (Participant 13).

Another South Georgia CB professional expressed a similar sentiment regarding their relationship with a customer that is part of their "mug club", an annual membership for customers who wish to frequent the brewery:

> In our opinion, everybody drinks beer. And we see it firsthand. I mean, one of our members has pretty opposite political beliefs as we do. And we're like, great buddies. Like he, we had birthday dinner last night, he came out, he came out with us, I mean, he's one of our best friends. And you'll see it at the tables when people are here. It's like the great equalizer. It's a very bipartisan environment. Nobody cares about any of that. They're just here to have a good beer and smile. And that's what ultimately, and it's kind of cheesy, but ultimately, that's what we're in the business to do. We're in the business of putting smiles on people's faces because if you're drinking beer and you're not smiling, you're doing it wrong (Participant 9).

These responses represent how CB professionals tend to be intentional to create a space where customers may feel comfortable no matter their social status or political belief. However, given that the majority of craft beer drinkers are white males (Brewers Association, 2020), respondents were additionally prompted to comment on how they felt about racial and ethnic representation in their customer base. It was clear participants are actively wrestling with this reality. As one North Georgia CB professional responded,

> It really is a conundrum. I mean, because I mean, to a certain extent, let's be very simplistic here for a second. To an extent we're in downtown, we open our doors, we hope whoever wants to come, can and will and will feel comfortable there. But you're

> right. The brand of craft beer attracts a certain consumer. I can't even begin to imagine why that is. I mean, I can make a few educated guesses. But bottom line? Yeah, there's a problem here. And that's been another opportunity for this past year with the social unrest, surfacing new questions, and really, really, really old questions. Why have things not changed (Participant 11).

Withers (2017) notes that the CB industry is predominately white in both the producer and consumer bases. The extent to which it is the responsibility of the industry to expand representation of racial and ethnic minorities is an interesting question to wrestle with. There is opportunity here for a host of other studies simply unpacking perspectives of both professionals and consumers related to representation in the industry. Oldenburg stops short of addressing ways in which third places can be inherently privileged in nature, rather positions himself in a place of advocacy for their intentional planning and existence in modern society. However, this study took place in a cultural moment where American society at large is wrestling with the issue of systemic racism. Therefore, the conversation surrounding representation largely falls outside the scope of this study yet is inseparable from the individual conversations with CB professionals.

It was clear that the extent to which pursuit of social leveling through social justice varied between participants. This level of engagement with this question was largely expressed through the extent to which the participant felt their personal beliefs should be represented in their business. One participant noted that they felt it was “poor professionalism” for breweries to take overt political stances through their social media platforms (Participant 7). Another participant noted a more neutral stance in that they are “really proud of the cross section of patrons” they have visiting their brewery (Participant 4). Lastly, one participant had been wrestling with this

question for some time before this study. They found social leveling in their own space through engaging with non-white food and beverage business owners about how to expand the craft beer community to non-white communities through a series of podcast interviews. To them, it was not an access issue related to affordability or proximity to a brewery. Rather, they found that being vocal about their allyship was important for them to communicate that the craft beer community was accessible for all.

> …there are a lot of customers and a lot of people a lot of demographics that just don't think craft beer is for them. And they're wrong. They'll find a style. But it's not just about the style. It's not just about fear. It's about the community behind it. And it's something that everyone should, I think everyone would appreciate being in and would enjoy the community vibe that comes from it (Participant 5).

Though one's status in the world did not belong in the third place according to Oldenburg (1997), it seems that for craft breweries to be the healthiest version of a third place possible, a further exploration of the social context in which they exist is warranted. While as public places, craft breweries may be entered and navigated at will (neutral ground), and while CB professionals in this study view craft beer as something for everyone to enjoy (social leveling), there are unanswered questions related to access, representation and the extent to which the industry should engage with those questions. For example, multiple participants noted vetting a demographic when structuring their business plan in addition to choosing a neighborhood and location for their brewery. This illustrates a possible interesting critique of the industry. If craft beer should be accessible to everyone then why is there a necessity to vet a demographic before establishing a brewery in a certain neighborhood?

Efforts to expand access were wrestled with by a few of this study's participants though not highlighted by the majority. Participant 5 noted how they intentionally use unique flavors in their beer to expand access in order to reinvent the perception of who beer is intended for:

> So it's like, you know, how do we get these people in and you know what, it will help our business. So there's, it's not like we're extending ourselves and like, you know, virtue signaling and placating these people. It's, we're wanting them to see how awesome this industry is how awesome this community is. That's it. And if they support us, or they go to another brewery that's closer to them, and they feel the same way, they feel that same sense of community, we accomplished our goal. Because guess what, they're still going to come and support us. We are their entry point. We were their, you know, entry point into craft beer, we get a lot of those people, a lot of people regardless of demographics. I hear all the time. "I don't like beer. I'm not a beer person". It's like, "Challenge accepted". I'm going to find a beer for you. And so we do a lot of these crazy fruited sours, and big pastry stouts, and things like that. Because I want them to get into craft beer. And then try some things outside their scope, and they're like, "Oh, I didn't realize I liked saison, I would never try one. But I got into it by drinking a crazy, fruited sour."

Participant 5 makes interesting use of the term "virtue signaling" here. This is the idea that a person or an organization takes action in order to "signal" a value without an actual conviction toward it the value underneath it. The point they are making is that it is not simply virtue signaling in they are making large business decisions, namely their production choices, on expanding the horizons of possible future craft beer drinkers. An interesting point was made by Participant 11 highlighting how "we open our doors and whoever wants to come, can and will feel welcome." The point they were making was wrestling with the question of the extent to

which the industry is responsible for promoting diverse customer access. They went on to share that since they have not identified concrete ways to diversify their customer base, they developed a diversity and inclusion strategy with staffing choices. There is interesting inquiry here to be had surrounding diversity initiatives within the industry as they relate to the perception of virtue signaling. Future studies would do well to engage with non-white, non-straight, non-cisgender craft beer professionals and consumers to further explore perspectives of representation in the industry.

Conversation is Prevalent

If the characteristics of third places were represented as a series of concentric circles where within each circle is nested another smaller, yet more important one, there is a cogent argument to be made that Oldenburg would place conversation at the center. He writes with deep conviction that in order for a place to be considered a third place, conversation must be "the main activity" (1997, p.26). This study found that while the specific word *conversation* did not arise as glaringly as Oldenburg may hope, the sentiment was just as present. It was clear from study participants that while there may be different activities going on at the brewery on a day to do basis, the general enjoyment of each other was the ultimate goal of an ideal experience at their establishment. To one participant, recalling how they were inspired to open their own brewery, articulated how it was not simply making beer that motivated them but rather:

> It was the interactions at the tap rooms, at the small space. Just shooting the shit with people, talking about their lives, talking about I mean, just typical pub style stuff that's gone on for hundreds of years. People talking about and enjoying and smiling and

> laughing and joking around with each other in the flesh in over the course of an awesome beer (Participant 1).

This perspective was interesting in that it was the first in a series of interviews that revealed this common sentiment. All respondents communicated the need to make great beer, however, not as the primary function of the brewery. The production of beer had to exist only in that it laid the groundwork for meaningful social interactions to take place between customers and between professional and customer. One participant regarded production brewing, which is where large scale creation of flagship offerings that are mostly shipped to outside markets, as "quite boring". Rather, this participant preferred small batch brewing as preferrable in that it allowed them to offer something "more interesting to talk about" with customers (Participant 12). Overall, the themes that emerged related to conversation as the primary focus is the role of technology, positioning of furniture, and the role of providing activities for patrons in the taproom.

Oldenburg (1997) did not mince words when it came to his opinion on conversation in American society: "we don't value it and we're not good at it" (p. 27). He lauds the third place as a remedy to this deficiency. However, he cautions us by saying anything that "interrupts conversations lively flow is ruinous to a third place" including "mechanical or electronic gadgetry" (1997, p.30). While none of this study's participants echoed such a conviction about the quality of American conversation, respondents did wrestle with the role in which technology has within their taproom. One metro Atlanta CB professional articulated that if a customer wanted to watch television, "there are places for that. But I think it would come across as disingenuous if we had a bunch of TVs in here or something" (Participant 2). They went on:

> Look at the way technology has changed everything in our lives. Everything from architecture, you know, go back 50 years ago, every house had a big front porch on it because it was a community gathering space. Now they have small stoops with a couple of stairs. Everyone's inside. You don't have to talk to anyone anymore, you don't have to, you don't have to leave your house anymore. You can order groceries, you can order food, everything can be done from the comfort of your own home. And that's seen as a luxury. And I think it's depressing. I think it's depressing. So, to me, the conversation is so important (Participant 2).

Another participant noted how they consciously chose to not have QR code menus (digital images that a customer may scan with their smartphone and be led to a website) in the taproom because they wanted to avoid "people looking at their phones when they sit down with one another around the table" (Participant 11). Moments later they expressed:

> The whole point of this is human connection. And I think, you know, in today's world, we get so caught up in, you know, the technology in the New York news minute and the 24 hour news cycles and social media. And for me, it's important to, to have a space for people to sit back, relax, get themselves out of that 24 hour cycle of screen time. And just engage, you know, I think checking into your sensory experience and with one another is important (Participant 11).

These quotes reveal the most conservative convictions regarding the presence of technology in the taproom. Five out of the twelve sites visited had no televisions in the taproom while all the others did. That said, none of the respondents mentioned engagement with a screen as a primary tenant of the ideal experience at their brewery.

When discussing the ideal experience that participants wished to provide to their patrons, positioning of furniture emerged as a common element of focus with regard to encouraging conversation at the taproom. This is similar to the findings from Waxman (2006) who found that comfortable furniture was high in priority to desired elements of third place coffee shops. All of the sites visited had a mix of bar space, tables for two to four people, in addition to long tables where eight or more would be able to sit. Just after mentioning the intentional absence of televisions, Participant 2 noted that "we want people to sit, no, we want to force people to sit next to strangers". They went on:

> That's why this (the table) is not that wide. We are closer than we would be at a picnic table. And then it sort of forces you have, to sit next to somebody and then you can start a conversation and you won't just sit here and zombie out on a ballgame. It kind of encourages conversations. That's what we wanted (Participant 2).

Four of the other twelve participants mentioned providing the opportunity to talk to unknown persons or cultivate new relationships as the intention of the orientation of their furniture. This is consistent with past third place research finding that seating in third places is a crucial element to promoting sociability among patrons (Mehta and Bosson, 2010). During the few site visits that took place during business hours, it was difficult to parse which conversations between patrons were between acquaintances and which were among strangers prior to their particular visit. Future work may do well to lean into this question, that of how the physical positioning of furniture in a taproom may encourage or discourage what quality and type of conversation between patrons.

Oldenburg (1997) wrote that just as there are "activities that interfere with conversation, so there are those that aid and encourage it" (p.30). So then, it seems natural that the role of

activities emerged as a theme as it relates to promoting conversation or general social interactions in the taproom. It is somewhat of a given that those visiting a craft brewery would, in fact, drink craft beer. It was important to this study to understand what activities CB professionals felt valuable outside of the purveyance of alcohol. When prompted, all participants noted the value of providing some sort of activity other than drinking alcohol as important in order to enhance the quality of social interaction at the brewery. The primary activity mentioned other than drinking was eating. All participants noted positioning of their taproom near established restaurants or regularly hosting food trucks and food pop-ups as a vital non-alcohol related event at the taproom. Additionally, all respondents noted allowing off-site food to be brought on-site to be consumed.

Gaming emerged as a theme tertiary to drinking and eating as a regular activity at the taprooms visited. The type of gaming provided spanned a wide range, however. It was common for taprooms to have a modest catalog of board games on hand for patrons to occupy their time if they pleased. One participant noted card gaming as a theme for their entire branding model. In addition to board and card games, the tailgating game cornhole was often on hand at sites visited. One of the sites visited was in a community with a large disc golf community, so they provided disc golf *baskets*, the catching device for the game disc golf, for a regular disc golf competitive league. The most unique game provided was a North Georgia brewery that was housed in repurposed miniature golf and driving range facility. At the time, the course was being resurfaced and has since been opened to full operation. Interestingly, only one brewery visited on site had digital gaming, a classic combination arcade game where the player could choose to play either Pacman or Galaga. In addition to games designed to hold only a few patron's attention, all but two respondents reported holding events that were games the entire patronage could

participate in, namely trivia and bingo. The reality that the majority of the games hosted at participant breweries highlights the “social potential of games” as highlighted by Oldenburg (1997, p.31).

This study, however, was able to explore the creativity on the part of CB professionals to continue to provide opportunities to socialize around their product when visiting the taproom was not possible. Two of the respondents spoke at length about the value of holding virtual games over Zoom video conferencing for their patrons during the COVID-19 pandemic. These virtual events created their own cohort of regulars not necessarily seen when the brewery was in full operation. Trivia and bingo were the games of choice, with “meet the brewer” events where patrons could ask questions to CB professionals, either the brewer or owner, about upcoming beer releases and events at the brewery. Some virtual events doubled as fundraising for contemporary causes related to the community. A future study seeking to understand the meaning of these virtual events to brewery regulars would be interesting through the lens of Rosenbaum’s (2006) study of the “social supportive role of third places”. The prevalent responses toward clarifying the presence of games to provide opportunity for community highlights the intended social nature of the craft brewery. Even the games where there was a winner known to the patronage at that time, no single person’s name was announced, nor a trophy given. It was clear that the presence of games was not to crown a regular winner of a given game, but to provide a social lubricant for gathering, conversation, and community. This is true to intended spirit of Oldenburg’s original writing, that the “game is conversation and third place is its home court” (1997, p.31).

Another type of event regularly provided to brewery patrons were those related to health and fitness. Inherently not competitive, all of these events revolved around some variety of

physical activity performed in a group setting. Three of the participants noted hosting regular group fitness classes, yoga main among them. During one site visit on a Saturday morning, a high intensity interval training group class had just concluded and many of the participants were enjoying a beer before going their separate ways. In this particular case, a staff had the credential to be able to host this class. In another case, the brewery regularly hired an outside instructor to teach the fitness class on-site. Another way breweries provided health and fitness opportunities is through partnerships with local activity clubs. For example, one brewery acted as a hub for a local running club where runners would have a choice of a one, three, or five mile run ending back at the brewery. Runners who participated would receive a discount on their tab at the brewery. A site visit for this study took place during one of these events and interestingly many runners stayed engaged in conversation well after they had finished their beer, much longer than they had spent running in the first place.

There were also a host of events that did not fall into the previously mentioned categories of food, gaming, or health and fitness. These miscellaneous events often were a function of the fact that the brewery and taproom space allowed these larger events to take place. Three of the participant breweries hosted regular farmers market events. The intention of these events were not conversation and social opportunity as many of the other events but rather a form of social capital, where community members could share their penchant for sourcing and purchasing locally grown produce or artisanal made products alongside enjoying a locally made craft beer (Healy, et al., 2001). Additionally, many breweries leveraged their space to host music acts. The most committed music venue infrastructure of a participant location was a South Georgia farm brewery that had a local radio studio in the taproom. Self-reported as “the most important” element of their taproom outside of serving beer, having the radio station allowed the brewery to

host music and community events over the radio through the entire pandemic (Participant 12). The most unique of miscellaneous events was a regular religious discussion group that met monthly in the taproom of a South Georgia brewery. The participant notes the cultural significance of people in the South, who do not necessarily know each other, talking about religion while drinking beer:

> And it'd be a very diverse group, you know, religious folks, non-religious folks. And they basically just get together and talk about theology over a pint. Which is super rare in southeastern states, in the Bible Belt. So that's just, that's a marvelous thing to be able to say, "hey, we hosted that here." It really is (Participant 7).

Overall, it was clear that the craft breweries in this study did not simply rely on their own inherent value in order to draw customers to their doors. CB professionals in this study saw conversation among patrons as a crucial element to positive social interaction and sought to provide the opportunity for events that promoted such interaction.

Access and Accommodation

Oldenburg's argument that a third place is easily accessible and regularly accommodating hinges upon the times which a potential third place is open in addition to the location relative to one's home, work, or other regularly patronized spaces. To this study, then, it was important to understand the hours which a craft brewery was open in addition to the proximity to the closest dwelling places of community members. However, it became clear that these two criteria were not controlled solely by the CB professional but were a function of a social and political reality that changed town to town and county to county. This reality was not lost on Oldenburg who touts taverns and pubs serving early in the morning until late into the evening "unless the law

decrees otherwise" (1997, p.32). This is the case in Georgia, where alcohol sales are not allowed until 12:30p.m. on Sundays. This alone is enough to challenge the idea that a craft brewery may provide a healthy third place experience if the primary tenant of production and sale is prohibited during certain times of the week. Furthermore, all of the breweries visited for this study kept their taproom operating hours later in the afternoon into the evening. The only times sites visited had hours open to the public during the traditional lunch hour was on weekends. Further inquiry may have led this study to better understand the decision making process of CB professionals in choosing hours of operation. Regardless, if the inherent limited hours of the craft brewery taprooms in this study challenge their ability to be third places as Oldenburg originally conceived as "accessible during both the on and off hours of the day" (1997, p.32).

Oldenburg (1997) felt that third places must not only be accessible to patronage in a temporal sense, but also must also be able to be frequented as often or as little as one pleases in a disorganized manner. In contrast to one's family and work life, visitation to a third place is not punctual or ritualistic, rather the "timing is loose, days are missed, some visits are brief, etc." (p.32). This was most readily demonstrated by Participant 9 of this study. When talking about one particular regular to the brewery, they looked across the brewery to point them out to me only to see their spouse. With a look of confusion, they brushed off this missing of their subject with "Wait, *name removed* was right there… Oh, I guess he left already. Well, either way…" (Participant 9). This sense that the regular customer's presence was regular enough to the study participant that their absence alongside their partner was not unusual speaks to this point that Oldenburg (1997) makes of one coming and going irregularly.

Lastly, access and accommodation came down to proximity for Oldenburg (1989, 1997). He felt third places should be close to where the other tenants of their lives took place, namely

home and work. The intention of proximity to people was unquestionable in this study. However, what group of people is where discrepancies arose. To one participant, the proximity to where people live was a decision making criteria when choosing a location. They wanted their location to be one of many reasons a customer came to the neighborhood:

> So, the main thing, I guess, that we kept telling ourselves, when we were in this search was we wanted to be part of a destination, which meant more than just us being a brewery as an island somewhere. But we wanted to be part of where people were going to be moving about and where things were happening. And it would give more than just one reason for people to stop in at the brewery, they would have other connection points (Participant 3).

Multiple participants in the Atlanta metro area mentioned positioning around a certain demographic as a crucial part of their decision making. However, production space, as opposed to taproom space, was a primary decision making criteria for two other Atlanta breweries. A central tourism location was important to Participant 12, as mentioned above. Participant 5 mentioned visiting 41 different locations before settling on a location. The final decision making criteria for them was the particular city they chose. Municipal support helped them step into a large production space with plenty of taproom space. To Oldenburg, positioning was extremely important. Breweries in this study found themselves in a variety of locations. Those breweries which relied on large production spaces established locations in warehouse districts, often difficult to navigate to. That said, those larger spaces allowed for more open and free-feeling taproom spaces. Conversely, those locations which relied on tourism centers tended to also feel relatively inaccessible to members of the community. Often tourism centers were located in downtown areas near other attractions where one may have to pay to park, or simply be just as

out of the way as the aforementioned warehouse style brewery. Those breweries that tended to feel more community oriented relied more on on-site sales rather than production and distribution and tended to be nested among neighborhoods where the next closest brewery was relatively nearby. These smaller breweries tended to focus on being a gathering space for the nearby neighborhood rather than a production facility or a tourist attraction.

The variety in responses related to how and why participants settled on a certain location, regular business hours in addition to Georgia's laws regarding alcohol sales highlight how craft breweries in Georgia wrestle with Oldenburg's original intent of access and accommodation as a third place. That said, it is clear that once a craft brewery is open to the public, barring a pandemic, access is relatively easy and accommodating to the times which customers choose to enjoy craft beer. Further inquiry would be interesting to understand to what extent CB professionals would be willing to serve customers as a space to gather earlier in the day.

A Place for Regulars

Oldenburg (1989, 1997) breaks from a description of a physical space and the activity within it to the regularity which one visits as a hallmark of identifying a third place. This is a shift in tone in that he distances the conversation from the responsibility of the venue to create the conditions for a third place experience to occur, rather his narrative highlights the responsibility of the patron needed to normalize their patronage and become accepted by other regulars. He writes:

> Mainly, one simply keeps reappearing and tries not to be obnoxious. Of these two requirements for admission or acceptance, regularity of attendance is clearly the more important (1997, p. 35).

The participants of this study were able to tell manifold stories of their famed regulars. Every participant spent ranging amounts of time responding with quotes as short as “yeah, we have a few regulars” (Participant 10) to rich descriptions of stories of their regulars that have seemingly become part of the work of the brewery itself. One participant described their regulars as such:

> They feel like family, we want them to feel like family, anyway, when they're here. You know, I mean, the staff knows him by name. They know their kid’s names. They (the staff) know what they do for a living. I mean, it's just this really tight knit group. And we rely on them to give us feedback on the beers (Participant 9).

This quote represents how the meaning of regulars to the CB professionals in this study extend beyond the description by Oldenburg. To some participants in this study, the regulars do not simply show up and be amenable, rather, they rely on each other for their expertise in their respective fields. Another participant in this study notes how he finds conviction in the idea of leaning on taproom regulars for work on different things around the brewery:

> …it's only fair, they come in here and support you, then if they've got a business and they can help you out in the making of your product or even fixing anything, like I don't care. Like, if some guy is an electrician or a plumber, and he comes in here three times a week and he supports me, I'd rather pay him almost double the amount than another person that I don't know (Participant 1).

One story was particularly revealing to the idea that every space has a storied history, each potentially with its own regulars. One participant shared about when they were introduced to the owners of the building they repurposed as their brewery. The building used to be an

auction house which had its own group of regulars. The first time they visit the building after purchase, an active auction was taking place.

> So we're in the back and the auction's happening and the lady goes, she sees us, and I'd never met her…(*comments removed)*…She sees (*name removed)* and I come in. She goes, "we have an announcement to make". I'm like, "Don't do this". She goes, "we're selling the business". I just want everyone to know that this December 20th, I believe it was, is our last auction. And we're selling the business and this space is going to become a brewery. And owners are in the back. And this was a generational place, like families had come here for generations. They turn around, some of them, some of them tears in their eyes looking back at us crying and stuff.

This story is interesting in that it highlights how stories of places are told on the heels of a previous story. Further inquiry would do well to try to understand the histories of the spaces that are converted into craft breweries and how, if at all, those histories are preserved and shared through the brewery space similar to Paulsen and Tuller's (2017) study.

Profile is Low

Oldenburg (1997) thought that for a place to be a third place, its draw should not come from its façade, rather from the quality of social interaction which it holds. To that end, he notes that third places are "plain", "unimpressive looking", and not advertised (p.36). The idea that a third place should not be ornate allows the posture of its inhabitants to keep from becoming self-important. Oldenburg (1997) contrasts third places with the "shiny bright appearance of the franchise establishment" in that they "do not attract a high volume of strangers or transient customers" (p.36). This point directly challenges the notion that a craft brewery can be a third

place in that a brewery's purpose is to attract strangers and regulars alike. This also challenges the idea of a tourist's third place experience if the intent is to keep close company. That said, when considering the model of a franchise restaurant or sports bar, it is conceivable that the craft breweries in this study hold a lower profile as Oldenburg intended. However, it seems the idea of a low profile is antithetical to his continuous point of a third place being qualified by the social interactions held within. If this is the case, it is then difficult to consider physical characteristics of a space also defining of its third place potential. That said, I defined a low profile relative to a craft brewery in this study as a place that blends in with its surroundings.

In this study, three themes emerged as helpful in considering the relative perception of a breweries given low profile: type of building, location, and perception of advertising. I found that those breweries repurposed from existing buildings tended to have a lower profile than those purpose built. They blend in with the buildings around them more than a new building among those with historic character. Furthermore, the relative amount of space needed for production inherent in brewing tended to correlate with a given brewery being farther away from a downtown or populated area. That is, breweries that brewed on smaller systems or did not distribute did not need as large of a space as those that did. Therefore, larger production breweries tended to have a perceived lower profile in that they were often out of the way, in an industrial location among other warehouses. This is referential to the point made regarding access and accommodation in that there seems to be an optimal level of production size which emerges when a brewery positions themselves truly in a neighborhood. When a brewery is positioned in a warehouse district, the profile is certainly low, yet access is cumbersome. When a brewery is positioned in a tourism district, the profile is much higher than I would expect Oldenburg would prefer, but again, access is not ideal for the majority of people. In this study, it

seemed that nano breweries of one to 3.5 barrel, up to 10 barrel systems found themselves in neighborhoods and reported the biggest local following. Those with larger systems not in neighborhoods seemed to talk more about production and distribution as a crucial part of their model. There was no seemingly geographical connection with the perception of ornateness in the taproom. Once in the taproom, each craft brewery had its own brand with the décor and feel. Interestingly, however, only three breweries used billboard advertising to draw customers to their establishment. These three breweries were in towns that were well off a highway corridor. Interestingly, these three breweries reported an intentional draw of a craft brewery tourist, where the breweries closer to metropolitan centers showed less intention around seeking craft beer tourists and more interest in serving their own neighborhood. Regardless of the intention to attract tourism, the breweries in this study relied heavily on social media in order to publicize brewery events, beer releases, and regular goings on at the taproom.

A Playful Mood

Oldenburg likens the ideal mood of a third place to that of a playground. A place where activity is engaging yet unstructured, time is inconsequential yet ever present, and the desire to return and recreate the experience is imperative. This intention was echoed in the desire of all the participants in this study. The common theme that emerged from this study related to a playful mood was the idea that a craft brewery is different than other drinking establishments where one actively engages with a craft product and other patrons. As one participant noted:

> This is not a bar. I love bars. But, I like the fact that we don't close at two o'clock in the morning on Saturday, and rolling out of here at 3:30 in the morning. Most breweries don't do that. You know, on Saturdays, we're home by 11 and we close at 10. I like going home

> early-ish. And we're not trying to cultivate alcoholics. We're trying to cultivate people who enjoy a product. We definitely serve in moderation all the time. We teach about the product that we make. So our staff, *(name removed)* sitting down right now, talking to customers and that's what we do. So, if the place didn't exist, I don't know where you would go to find this, honestly, I don't know if you go to Buffalo Wild Wings, and there's people walking around and dogs everywhere. I don't know if that would be a thing (Participant 9).

To Participant 11, this meant being intentional to create a *sensory* experience in the taproom. When asked to clarify, he explained how tasting beer is not limited to simply smelling and tasting. He is intentional with the music, lighting, and rotating art on the walls to continually create a holistic sensory experience that cradles what is achieved with the beer tasting. To them, it was important that all aspects of the physical surrounding support the experience with the product. The explained in their own words how they felt the drudgery of the daily news cycle did not belong in the taproom. They supported this notion with the aforementioned absence of screens in the taproom area. To them, a playful mood meant connecting with others through conversation and a craft product, with the features of the taproom setting supporting that type of atmosphere. Furthermore, all taprooms visited had some sort of non-beer activity for patrons to immerse themselves in while visiting, namely board games. These games were usually out in the taproom space, available for patrons to engage with as they pleased. Additionally, when asked what the experience is like on a day to day basis in the taproom, all respondents mentioned patrons drinking, having conversation, and playing games as possible activities patrons would be engaged in. This directly falls in line with Oldenburg's idea of a playful mood in a third place in that participants literally believe play should take place in the taproom. This is also supported

through the presence of not only board games but more kinesthetic games and activities promoted as regular programming at taprooms involved in this study.

Home Away From Home

Oldenburg (1997) posits the "third place is more homelike than home" (p. 39). In this study, we saw craft breweries demonstrating qualities of both the physical home as well as the supportive role it plays to its inhabitants. It is natural to consider the third place homelike as an extension of the reality of the aforementioned characteristics. This intention rang somewhat true with our participants as there were multiple mentions of regular customers painted as *family* and the brewery a *living room*. As one mentioned regarding their regulars:

> …that's definitely the environment that we strive to provide. You know, we want this, we want this taproom to be like our town's living room. Whether you whether you come here every day, or you're visiting for the first time, once you walk in the door, you should feel comfortable, and welcome (Participant 9).

Participant 13 echoed a similar sentiment:

> …we just want it to be like that kind of like family, living room, family room and fire. Just relax and have a beer or go outside and have some fun (Participant 13).

Additionally, all participants alluded to being available for private event space for groups and families to gather. This demonstrates the tendency for CB professionals to be intentional to allow families to gather comfortably, as if it were their own home. These examples demonstrate how craft breweries can be considered an extension of an actual family's home. Whether it be that additional space is needed or another reason where a central or neutral location is needed, craft breweries in this study provide a place that, as one participant put it, "parents can come and drink

and have fun and not have to go to a fricking Chuck E Cheese" (Participant 9). In addition to thinking about craft breweries as a physical extension of the home, they also demonstrate the supportive role of the home.

Oldenburg (1997) relays a story about a psychiatrist who studied the patrons of a tavern he called "The Star". He notes how he found the tavern was "meeting the needs of the local homeless men far better than the local health and welfare agencies. The Star was not a home away from home for those men. It *was* home" (p. 40). There were multiple instances of our participant breweries allocating resources to meet the extenuating needs of those in need within their community regardless of the utility of the physical space for those people. For example, one Atlanta brewery hosted a Santa every year around the Christmas holiday for adult patrons to bring their children. In 2020 during the height of the pandemic, the person who was regularly Santa for this brewery came down with prostate cancer and they were not able to host him as usual. The brewery decided to move forward with their regular holiday event, albeit outdoors and socially distanced. Community members could dress their car in holiday decorations, visit Santa's workshop, and enjoy beer from the brewery. Proceeds from this day went directly to support the medical bills of "Santa's" prostate cancer recovery. Another case of a brewery being instrumental in the support of community need is a South Georgia brewery who has a year round beer that directly supports a non-profit directed toward supporting the non-profit with the mission to support mental health and family services of Air Force servicepeople. One Middle Georgia brewery has a year round flagship offering that supports protection of their local watershed. Lastly, a North Georgia brewery developed two actively funded, standalone community development programs. Both of these programs are funded in part by proceeds from annual one-off beers. The flagship of these two programs is a funded largely through the sales of

a collaboration beer brewed with a different regional brewery every year. The purpose of this program is to address child poverty and food security in the resident county through direct funding of rotating program partners. The other is designed to showcase a rotating local artist via beer can art which proceeds directly contribute to the local creative economy through funding of art spaces, rotating exhibitions and art programs for the local community. The formality of these programs highlight an extreme case among study participants. Regardless, these examples show how craft breweries in the state of Georgia engage with their communities outside the confines of the brewery to actively engage with meeting the basic human needs of individuals in their communities. This has implications for what we understand about the social supportive role of third places (Rosenbaum, 2006). It also demonstrates how the role third places play extend well deeper than simply social or "love or belonging or esteem needs" but also "physiological and safety needs" (Maslow, 1948).

Another theme related to the craft brewery being home is what Oldenburg (1997) coins as "privileges and proprietary rights denied transient or casual customers" (p. 40). Three of the breweries visited have a club of founding members which are extended discounts on beer either for life or for the year. In the case of year-long memberships, renewal is possible but in all cases these membership spots were capped at a certain number. Additionally, one brewery wanted the local homebrewing community to share in its homebrewing roots by allowing local homebrewers to upscale their own recipe on the larger production system, name the beer, and have it on tap at the brewery. To Participant 4, that meant allowing taproom patrons to take control of the music if they wanted, providing an internet jukebox where a patron may queue songs via their smartphone.

COVID-19 and the Craft Brewery Experience

It was mentioned throughout our findings that the ability for CB professionals to provide the ideal experience for patrons was severely hamstringed. Oldenburg (1989, 1997) did not write his thoughts on the need and value of a third place with the reality of a global pandemic looming. The lynchpin of a third place is the ability to gather. COVID-19 severely limited people's ability to gather due to quarantining and social distancing guidelines. Furthermore, people consciously chose to avoid even the slightest social contact with others. Research would do well to further explore what it meant to those regular patrons of craft breweries to not be able to frequent their regular haunts for upwards of an entire calendar year. This study, however, chose to ask CB professionals how the pandemic affected their ability to provide an ideal experience at their taproom. The main themes that emerged in relation to how the pandemic affected craft brewery operations were daily operations and philanthropy.

The state of Georgia ordered all craft breweries to close on March 23rd, 2020 and a mandatory shelter in place order went into effect on April 2nd, 2020. Restaurant dining rooms were allowed to reopen on April 27th, 2020 though many taprooms stayed closed and only offered to-go sales through this time (McKibben, 2020; 2021). Taprooms began to reopen as the Summer began with all taprooms open to the public with social distancing in place during the time of each interview in this study. In terms of daily operations, this prolonged closure was thought to be devastating to many craft breweries. All the participants in this study shared how their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A South Georgia CB professional shared how local ordinances kept their taproom closed weeks after the state mandate was lifted. They could not sell beer out of the taproom, even to-go sales, when brewers around the state were able do so. This forced them to pivot their entire

operation to the production of hand sanitizer simply to have a product to sell in order to stay in business. However, they were able to partner with a nearby ethanol manufacturer who had a glut of inventory due to fewer people driving during the pandemic.

> Instead of putting, you know, beer in tanks to replenish what had gone out the door, we mixed hand sanitizer in our fermenters and packaged it in every format known to man from two ounce bottles to 250 gallon totes (Participant 12).

This same CB professional noted their shift to hand sanitizer production was also a function of being unable to source packaging for beer during this time. This participant shared how even well into the year 2021, they are still cautiously optimistic:

> It's not back to normal. It's better. Places are reopening. But even reopening, the people are still cautious, not as many people coming out. Even at our retailers, people might stay for two beers, but they're not gonna stay for that third beer and watch the game (Participant 12).

Another North Georgia CB professional who opened their doors during the pandemic shared they still showed concern about how COVID-19 “may be the one thing that sinks us” (Participant 3).

Many of this studies participants shared stories of a silver lining during the pandemic. One Metro Atlanta CB professional recounted that he felt he had to lay off his bartenders for an unforeseen amount of time and tend bar himself. He realized after the first week of quarantine that the pandemic was not going to keep his regular customers at home:

> I was expecting it to be slow. So, I just set up at the bar with my laptop and was working and we were open x to x every day to come in and grab a six pack. We were just overwhelmed with community support, like people coming in and just like, “give me two

> cases, give me a case, give me whatever, give me all this product. Give me as much as you can. I want to support you guys". Like "y'all are awesome". Tons of community outpouring. And so I couldn't get any work done. I was so busy doing that. So, I called the bartenders up, like, "Hey, y'all are coming back to work this week" (Participant 4).

This was also the case for Participant 5 who noted actually increasing wages for their taproom staff during the pandemic due to increased hours for to-go sales and to allow them to continue to make a living wage. One interesting perspective came from a small Metro Atlanta CB professional who noted the shift in how he approached an extension of the craft brewery experience through shifting the way he packaged and labeled beer for at home consumption. As one of the smallest brewers in the state, they do not have any distribution contract, but sell everything they produce through the taproom. He shared how he did sell some to-go beer, however, it was usually packaged at the time of order in a crowler, a 32 ounce can that can be filled and sealed on-site. He went on:

> …long story short, once they couldn't have the experience here, it was like, "Okay, well, now I need to find a way to make the at home experience as curated and intentional as them being here". So we started doing individual labels, because before it was, like I said, it was the boilerplate one. But for our anniversary beers, (*name removed*), the Imperial stout, any collaborations we did, we had custom labels, but we didn't have custom labels for everything. And now, at the beginning of COVID, I reached out to the artist at the time she in her other job, she doesn't have time to do art for us now. So I've been doing a lot of myself last few months. But I reached out to her and I was like, "hey, do you think you can do a quick turn if these are the parameters for the art?" She was like, "Okay, yeah, I think I can have those for about a month". So we went as fast as we could to get

> them all overhauled and onto every bottle and every can having some sort of art. Yeah, it helped a lot. And then it also, you know, at a time when everybody was just at home, it helped with the brand perception. And it also helped me discover the blind spot that I didn't know that we could be selling more, if we had more intriguing labels. Like, I didn't really think about it that way. I just thought "somebody likes this beer, and they want one to take home. And it doesn't matter what the can looks like so much because they already know they like to beer and now they just want to take with them". Not like "Is this gonna be one of the cornerstone things that actually attracts them to it?"

Another North Georgia CB professional noted how the silver lining was that their staff grew closer as a team during the pandemic. Furthermore, they noted how prior to the pandemic, they had a solely bartender model. COVID-19 allowed them to explore what table service was like for their brewery. They went on:

> That's like a real source of pride for me when somebody comes up and says, you know, what, like, I haven't really been going out and they came here, and I feel completely safe with how you guys are, are managing your model here. And, to me, that's just, you know, just makes me really proud of the team for executing so well. It was just bartenders before, and now we're a total service model. You know, these guys went from standing behind a bar to walking 10 miles a day on a shift, ya know, carrying beers outside, we slowly reopened the inside, in October, I believe, October 1, timeframe. And so we've got kind of a dual inside outside model right now. And it's allowed us honestly, to just connect with consumers a lot more, and help them guide us guide them through the offerings, we have, instead of just like standing in line at a bar, feeling rushed to order a beer and reading a chalkboard. It's allowed us to like really navigate people when they

> come and sit down in the beer experience. And I don't think if COVID, if COVID never happened, I would say we would never would have snapped our fingers and gone to a table service model. And I think a silver lining in this is hey, I don't know, if I ever want to take the table service away. Perhaps we can do a hybrid model in the future. But I don't really ever want to take that, that kind of experience away, because it's just a very relaxed, comfortable inviting way for us to connect with people that come and visit us (Participant 11).

Other than shifting models of service, many of the participants noted how they leaned into philanthropy as part of the COVID-19 pandemic. Four participants noted that they were able to make hand sanitizer for sale or donation. Additionally, many either began or ramped up existing fundraising efforts for various causes. One brewer was proud to share their effort to give beer to first responders as a gesture of appreciation:

> So we're like, well, what can we do during this time? I mean, we can't make hand sanitizer, we don't have the licenses for it. But we can make beer. That's what we do is we make beer. So we got, we went in, we had every staff member, write "thank you", on a piece of paper, we gave that to our graphic artists, he designed a label for a beer called "Thank You Note". And then we brewed a beer. And we canned all of it. (*comments removed*) And we packaged it and gave all of it away to first responders. So the day we gave it away, it was awesome. We had everyone socially distanced out on this patio, going to this door in the middle room here. All the way down the driveway, folks were lined up all the way down the driveway and out towards the parking lot, for a couple of hours just come in and pick it up. They're free. We just gave them a six pack (Participant 2).

Another Middle Georgia CB professional shared how their philanthropic efforts are focused toward natural resource management of their local watershed. They noted how they have had an increase in solicitations for donations since the pandemic to the extent that they cannot meet growing need. However, during the pandemic they have continued donating proceeds from their flagship beer toward a non-profit which advocates for healthy management of that watershed.

This study was originally conceived without a global pandemic in mind. That said, I believe the reality of COVID-19 allowed an additional layer of inquiry that would not have been possible otherwise. For participants in this study, the pandemic put them in a place where they had the opportunity to step into an augmented role within their community that they had not yet explored. For some, that was simply changing the labels of their cans. For others, this was ramping up large scale philanthropic efforts that they had no inclination toward in the past. Regardless, all participants in this study made some mention of support from their local community exceeding expectations during the pandemic. As mentioned above, Participant 4 was able to keep staff employed when they thought they would need to lay off personnel. Participant 13 had so much support from their community that they decided to start their business in the middle of the pandemic. There were multiple instances of participants simply selling out of beer on-site because people kept showing up to support their business. This reality highlights a crucial element of the value of creating a third place for their communities. If our participants had not created the conditions for patrons to consider their brewery their third place, it is difficult to think that the outpouring of support they felt would manifest. Future work relying on the perspective of those patrons who consider their local brewery their third place would be interesting to understand what it meant to them to still have a relative level of access to this space during the pandemic.

Conclusion

This chapter unpacked interviews with twelve craft brewery professionals in the state of Georgia relative to their efforts to create an experience for the taproom patrons. These experiences are examined through the lens of a third place experience as Oldenburg (1989, 1997) originally conceived. It was clear that all characteristics had some relative presence in the responses related to the intention of creating an experience similar to that of a third place. The following chapter will discuss further conclusions related to the research questions. Research questions will be answered relative to participant response with the intent to further clarify the role of a craft brewery as a third place within existing literature.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This research was designed to develop an understanding of the different elements of an experience that craft brewery professionals in the state of Georgia intend to provide for brewery patrons compared to a third place experience as originally conceived by Oldenburg (1989, 1997). Findings from this study found that while all of Oldenburg's original characteristics of third place were present in the responses of study participants, there were minor deviations from Oldenburg's (1989, 1997) original work that clarified the positioning of a third place experience within the context of a craft brewery. Additionally, this study also revealed how craft brewery professionals in the state of Georgia were affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically how this forced many of them to reevaluate the type of experience they provided to taproom patrons.

These findings helped develop an understanding of the intended role a craft brewery plays within its community through the eyes of the professionals in charge of curating and managing these spaces. This understanding has value to professionals in the craft brewing industry in revealing how businesses create taproom experiences that encourage the development of regular customers, as well as simply understanding the lived experiences of their industry peers. This chapter will consolidate and review primary results of this study through the lens of the original research questions. Lastly, there will be suggested considerations for future research within this topic to continue to understand how CB professionals curate not only a craft product, but experiences that intersect with the daily lives of their communities.

Research Question 1. In what ways do craft brewery professionals provide experiences that resemble the original characteristics of a third place experience?

Overall, craft brewery professionals who participated in this study articulated an intention to create experiences that are very similar to that of a third place. This study was able to further clarify a third place experience within the context of a craft brewery. Oldenburg (1989, 1997) expressed that for a place to be considered a third place, the quality of experience held therein should demonstrate certain criteria. This study clarified sub-themes of each criteria that allowed a greater understanding of a third place experience at a craft brewery. While overall, the intended experience from participants in this study did mirror those characteristics of a third place, there were additional sub-themes that emerged that clarified the intention of CB professionals toward the role of their brewery within their specific community discussed in Chapter 4.

Prior to this study, there was not significant research in place regarding the intention of craft brewery professionals in creating a taproom experience as a third place. The majority of work in existence focuses on the experience of patrons. That said, in this study, the framing of participant conversations toward those patrons who regularly visited the brewery in addition to relationships curated within the local community mirrors suggestions by Rosenbaum (2006), that there is not simply a physical element to the development of a third place, but a social and emotional element as well.

Research Question 2. In what ways do craft brewery professionals provide experiences that fall outside the original character of a third place experience?

This research addressed the intended experience for patrons visiting a craft brewery from twelve different CB professionals around the state of Georgia. The majority of these participants were owners of their companies. The others were either head brewers or taproom managers. All participants were in a position of seeking the interest of their associated businesses. The primary way that a craft brewery is successful is by production and sale of craft beer. Therefore, all interviews carried an assumption of universal access to their craft brewery space, their product, and in turn, a third place experience at their establishment.

One way in which the issue of universal access provides a critique of the craft brewery as a third place experience is the assumption of purchase upon visitation. As opposed to publicly owned spaces such as parks, street corners, and the like, a craft brewery is a private establishment where the intention of purchase is unspoken yet assumed. While no participant in this study indicated one must purchase a beer if they were to visit their brewery, it is worth noting how there may be those potential patrons willing to engage in a craft beer experience yet do not have, or are not willing to invest, the resources routinely enough to make a craft brewery their third place. This reality challenges the first two characteristics of the third place, one where a patron may come and go as they please and one that levels the social status of patrons. This is not to say that all participants in this study are unaware and dismissive of this reality. Chapter 4 highlights multiple times where participants actively engaged with how to make craft beer more accessible. Another way in which this study found a possible discrepancy in the intention of a third place experience related to universal access is that of representation of minorities in customer base. During interviews, it was unclear to what extent all participants wished to engage in the conversation related to the color of their customer's skin. That said, a few respondents were willing to wrestle with the question during the interview. All in all, it was clear that all

respondents actively welcomed all potential customers through their doors. Regardless, there is still a fair critique of the craft brewery as a third place in that it is well established that there is disproportionate engagement with craft beer across races and ethnicities (Watson, 2020). All in all, this critique is consistent with that made of Soukup (2006) with regard to virtual spaces

Another way in which craft breweries emerged to continue the discussion outside of the original characteristics of third places is much more hopeful. Oldenburg (1989, 1997) leaves his discussion around the quality of a third place in the hands of those that inhabit it. He writes in detail on physical and social aspects of what makes a third place. He notes how third places are inherently good in nature in that they provide the patronage "more decent human relations than those on the outside" but largely leaves out the role of those in charge of the space (Oldenburg, 1997, p.78). Given this omission, he stops short of postulating on how those who run a third place for others may encourage the highest quality of such human relations nor what specific actions these relations should be. This provides an opportunity for this study to fill in that gap given its context. To many of the participants in this study, it is experience of engaging with the community *outside* the confines of the brewery from which they draw their value. This study found that craft breweries in the state of Georgia actively involve themselves in events, fundraisers, partnerships, and philanthropy that take place outside the brewery, often times where their product is not present at all. A more cynical academic may simply distill these community involvements to nothing more than marketing or good press. However, with the Millennial generation aging and craft beer becoming more and more popular (Watson, 2020), it is not unreasonable to believe that craft breweries would see patronage without benevolent action at all. To that end, this study suggests that active engagement with the local community outside of selling beer emerged as an inherent aspect of the third place experience. CB professionals know

that their regulars continue to return to their establishment to have a craft product, but they also believe they return because they feel as though the brewery is part of the process of community building which they themselves are a part of.

Research Question 3. How do answers to the first two questions inform our understanding of craft breweries as third places?

It is important to reiterate that this study was not intended to answer whether or not craft breweries are third places or not. To approach this inquiry as such would be misleading. It was the purpose of this study to understand in what ways CB professionals conceive their spaces in the same way that Oldenburg conceived third places. From this inquiry I can then see what falls away from his initial writing to help inform our understanding of the potential of craft breweries to be third places within their own context. Oldenburg wrote his original work on *The Great Good Place* (1997, 1989) outside of our present moment when craft breweries are at the height of popularity. He did not write in order to get people to go to craft breweries but to entreat society to be aware of a looming disconnect from social life. He felt in order to spurn the degradation of democratic society was to actively create places that foster the healthy congregation of people. He felt that power structures would not rise to this occasion on its own, rather he saw individual people connecting and gathering wherever they could as imperative. To that end, I believe Oldenburg would laud the growth of the craft beer industry. Responses from participants of this study demonstrate that this industry has created a rich, third-place-like context which has extended beyond a simple economic sector, but rather what is endearingly referred to as the *Craft Beer Community*.

This study suggests one way which the craft beer community, or craft-breweries-as-third-places, is unique is that it tends to be co-constructed between producers and consumers. As one participant in this study said, “my customers have told me what my flagship beers are” (Participant 3). This is a community of professionals and patrons who have become invested in a history, process, and success of a craft product. Given this reality, it is our assumption that access will continue to be a topic of discussion within the community. Second, this study suggests that the craft brewery third place experience may have the potential to be multilocational. Oldenburg’s original work suggested that one’s third place be simply exist within their daily context between work and home. This study suggests that the intention by CB professionals to be consistent with the global craft beer community may allow a consumer the ability to recreate that experience between from brewery to brewery. For example, if a consumer were traveling in another city or state for work, they may seek to spend their free time at a craft brewery in order to recreate their local third place experience as closely as possible. If true, it may be possible that a third place experience may then be further understood as just that, an experience, independent of any one location. Lastly, this study suggests that the level of attachment a CB professional has with their community may be related to the extent to which their business engages with their community outside of selling alcohol. Those CB professionals that were involved in philanthropy via their craft brewery tended to seem more enthusiastic and engaging when speaking about their feelings toward their community.

This study also can add to existing knowledge related to the craft beer industry and third places. In particular, the third place lens can help us further understand the role authenticity in food and beverage tourism. As mentioned in this literature review, the perception of authenticity has been paramount in the attribution of growth within the industry (Chhabra, Healy, Sills, 2003;

Minihan, 2014; Taylor, 2018). This work adds to our understanding of authenticity within the craft beer industry as it highlights the ways in which the connection between the business and the community manifest through the efforts of the CB professional. Additionally, this work builds on what Mehta and Bosson (2010) found as physical characteristics lending toward promoting sociability within third places. This research also gives additional detail to the history of craft beer in the state of Georgia (Cohran, 2019). Lastly, by consideration of a third place experience that extends beyond the confines of a single given space, this study adds to existing inquiry about the craft brewery experience as it relates to the motivations of tourists toward experiencing a place through seeking experiences that they can recreate time and time again between seemingly disparate locations (Kline & Bulla, 2017; Reid, et al., 2014; Paulauskaite, et al., 2017; Sofronov, 2018).

Implications

This research has implications for both CB professionals, industry partners and those aspiring to enter the industry as owners, brewers, or taproom professionals. The findings of this study have shed light on the context of CB professionals in Georgia conceive the experience they wish to provide and their experiences engaging with their respective communities. These findings were interpreted through the lens of Oldenburg's (1997, 1989) third place construct. Examining participant responses through the third place lens allow those adjacent to the industry a nuanced way to understand the experiences of CB professionals. Overall, the intended experiences that CB professionals intend to provide is primarily one that engages with their craft product. CB professionals felt a sense of togetherness with their regular customers partially through engagement and understanding of the brewing process. To this end, CB professionals

may be able to cultivate a connection to the brewing process through providing opportunities to further engage with the brewing process. This is consistent with the third place research of Waxman (2006) and Mehta and Bosson (2010) who suggest the permeability of a space, the ability to see and understand the activities in a space, foster a third place experience. CB professionals should be aware, however, that local ordinances may preclude their ability to structure futures spaces with a high level of permeability to the brewhouse as I saw with Participant 4 in this study. Another way CB professionals may provide the opportunity to engage with the brewing process is to provide the opportunity for homebrewers to scale up recipes at the brewhouse and have them on tap at the brewery as I saw with Participant 3. Furthermore, tasting panels comprised of regular customers may be an option for some CB professionals to engage their regulars in the brewing process.

In addition to serving beer and providing opportunities to engage with production, it was clear that the intention of participants in this study was to cultivate a community of regulars via non-beer related activities. Considering this, current and future CB professionals can cultivate partnerships that foster the development of high quality social interaction through hosting activities that possible regulars would be participating in regardless of involvement with their local brewery. Participants in this study reported that they found success in hosting group fitness activities, discounts for fitness clubs, and sponsorship of fitness events. Engagement with community based fitness activities may be beneficial to CB professionals in that the brewery itself may have the potential to become part and parcel of third place experiences that are already being cultivated in various community groups. This phenomenon has recently begun to be explored by research by Strohacker, Fitzhugh, Wozencroft, Ferrara, and Beaumont (2021).

Lastly, this study has implications for how the CB industry responds during times of crisis. When this study was taking shape, the COVID-19 pandemic had not happened yet. Through this study, CB professionals shared the manifold ways in which pandemic allowed them to explore opportunities they had not considered in the past. First, there are practical implications for the ways in which CB professionals had to pivot daily operations. Without being able to serve customers on-site for an extended amount of time, CB professionals had to get creative with how they got product to customers in addition to actively engaging with them while at home. Once on-site sales began to be considered, participants in this study shared how their model of service changed drastically once customers began coming back. This was not all bad in that it revealed ways in which they were able to enhance the customer experience. Further, the pandemic revealed ways in which CB professionals may engage with philanthropy. Many participants reported being involved in some level of philanthropic effort prior to the pandemic, however, COVID-19 mobilized many brewers toward alternative production measures. Of the four participants who noted the production of hand sanitizer during the pandemic, none of these reported the consideration of doing so prior to COVID-19. Furthermore, this study highlights how through the creation of a third place, craft breweries received support from customers that may not have manifest otherwise. This has implications for how craft breweries seek to develop resilience as a company, in that it may be inherently good for future craft breweries to integrate elements of third place into their model in order to achieve higher levels of community support and brand loyalty.

Limitations and Future Research

This study took place over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to this, the conversations had with CB professionals were inseparable from this reality. This study found many CB professionals in a relative moment of crisis, positioning many of the participants in a natural state of appreciation for support from their local community. At the time of interview, many of the breweries were still functioning under a limited capacity model. This reality inevitably shaped the context which all interviews took place. Further, participation in this study relied on CB professionals being willing to volunteer their time to be interviewed. Efforts to partner with the Georgia Craft Brewers Guild to network with brewers in the state failed due to a change in leadership of the guild at the time of this study. This, in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic, is seen to have resulted in a limited ability to connect with potential participants. Additionally, some of the participant breweries the researcher had already visited as a patron. This allowed the researcher to already have a greater understanding of the location and community at certain locations over others. Also, this study took place in one state and within one political context. This same research set across states may reveal ways in which craft brewing laws affect the interaction of craft breweries and adjacent communities. That said, this research is still believed to provide valuable insight to the third place experience as well as a greater understanding of craft breweries as third places overall.

The future of both craft brewery and third place research is bright. As mentioned, much of the research in existence revolves around the experiences of craft brewery consumers and those who are engaged in a third place experience. Little work exists to greater understand the lived experience of those industry professionals who curate spaces that act as third places for patrons. Additionally, there is existing work on the physical dimensions of third places, however,

not specifically within the context of craft breweries. Work can also be done to nest the benefit of third places within existing work related to craft breweries and social capital models (Slocum, 2018). There is also opportunity to continue to develop instruments to measure the temporal component of development of a third place in general. Meaning, at what point does a place become a third place for someone? Additionally, to what extent is (or should) the host of such a place be involved in third place development? Additionally, there is interesting work to be done to understand the third place experience and its potential to manifest in a variety of locations for one individual. In short, can one have a third place experience at multiple destinations of the same variety? If so, what are the specific criteria for this experience? This would have implications for craft brewery tourism professionals in developing models for understand motivations of consumers to feel like a regular when visiting a brewery they have not visited in the past. Finally, the role craft breweries play in fundraising efforts toward community development has not been fully explored. The varying extent to which craft breweries engage in community fundraising and development efforts varied greatly in this study. There is an opportunity to understand the decision making processes that lead CB professionals to choose what causes to allocate resources to, in addition to understanding the efficacy of those resources to meet the intended goal.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. Tell me your story. How did you get your start in the craft brewing industry?
2. How long have you been in this location?
    a. What about having this space was important to you?
3. Share with me how the physical space is designed.
4. Why did you set up the brewery this way?
5. Would you change anything about this space?
    a. If so, why?
6. On any given day, what's going on at the brewery?
    a. Who is here and what are they doing?
7. Do you do any non-beer related events here at the brewery?
8. What sort of engagement do you have with the community outside of selling beer?
9. Do you get the sense that you have developed a group of regulars?
10. Do you get the sense that you have a large draw of tourists?
11. If you don't mind, tell me about a few of your regulars.
    a. Why do you think they keep coming back?
12. Is there a certain group of people or type of person that you wish you saw more of at your brewery?
    a. Why do you think they are not here?
13. In your own words, what is the ideal experience someone would have at your brewery?

14. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the way you provide an ideal experience at the brewery?
15. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the way you connect with your community?
16. In your own words, what are the community benefits of having a craft brewery in their town?
17. Is there anything I didn't ask, or something you want to share or discuss before we finish?

Appendix B: Letter of Consent

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
CONSENT LETTER
WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME: THIRD PLACE AND THE CRAFT BREWERY EXPERIENCE

Dear Participant,

My name is Dave Rector and I am a student in the Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Department at the University of Georgia under the supervision of Dr. Kyle Woosnam. I am inviting you to take part in a research study.

I am doing this research study to learn more about the types of experiences craft brewery professionals in Georgia seek to provide to patrons. I am interested in how these experiences relate to the concept of "Third Place", a place that individuals regularly visit between home and work.

You are being invited to participate in this research study because you meet the criteria of a craft brewery professional in the state of Georgia. For the purposes of this study, a craft brewery professional is either a brewery owner, brewer or taproom manager. You have also been chosen because of your background in the Georgia craft beer industry goes as far back as 2017.

In this study, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview with the co-investigator either in person or via the Zoom application. The interviews will be recorded with your consent and should last between thirty minutes and one hour. Your name will be recorded in the interview; however, a pseudonym will be used to protect your identity when results are written.

Participation is voluntary. You can refuse to take part or stop at any time without penalty. The decision to refuse or withdraw will have no effect on any status or programs you participate in with the University of Georgia. Furthermore, a decision to refuse or withdraw will not be shared with any other participant in this study.

Your responses may help us understand how craft brewery professionals create meaningful spaces for their brewery patrons and their communities. With this information, we hope to apply this knowledge to understand how perception of "local beer" can be leveraged in order to optimize the experience for both locals and beer tourists to enrich Georgia's growing craft beer community.

If your interview takes place over zoom, this research will involve the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed. Research records will be labeled with study IDs that are linked to you by a separate list that includes your name. This list will be destroyed once we have finished collecting information from all participants. We will take steps to protect your privacy, but there is a small risk that your information could be accidentally disclosed to people not connected to the research. To reduce this risk, we will use pseudonyms when writing the results of this research so that your name will not be available to anyone except the researcher. We will only keep information that could identify you on the audio recordings, which will be stored solely on the researcher's personal computer and phone and destroyed four years after completion of data analysis.

Personal information, such as participant names, will not be used or distributed for future research. Participant's responses may be used in future research if the project is published. However, the names of participants will remain anonymous.

If you are interested in participating or have questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at 912-481-4249, dave.rector@uga.edu, or the Principal Investigator Dr. Kyle Woosnam at 706-542-9948, woosnam@uga.edu. If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the IRB at 706-542-3199 or by email at IRB@uga.edu.

Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely, Dave Rector