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Introduction: Questions of Taste

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Volume 7 of *intervalla*, *Questions of Taste*, sets out to examine taste from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives. The current volume thus collects input from scholars who develop notions and understandings of taste ranging from gustatory sensations to quality appreciation, from dietary health to craft beer preference, from canned meat to curry, and from design furniture to fast fashion. We are pleased to have brought together a broad range of geographical and disciplinary points of departure, ones that build upon and sometimes take issue with the shared foundation of Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984). Bourdieu's analysis of taste reminds us that formation of taste is a social and cultural process; the articles collected here look at how the individual at once contributes to and becomes a product of this dynamic, evolving process.

Today there exists an overwhelming amount of information about diverse and divergent tastes, and we note that hierarchies of taste have come to play an important role in how we understand taste and ourselves. We know we all have certain tastes, and that some are more valued than others. As Parkhurst Ferguson (2004) explains: "many of us in fact spend a good deal of time accounting for taste…Hierarchies govern taste. Every social setting prizes certain tastes and disdains others, and food is no exception" (p. 19). As Blumer (1969) reminds us, tastes and more generally fashion, apply to all different social arenas from clothing and arts to food and sciences, and should be looked at as a dynamic social process, which suggests that certain hierarchies of taste exist in a given moment but what is considered as "a good taste" or "in fashion" constantly changes as a collective social function. With the expansion of social media broadcasting our tastes, what we like, what we claim to like, what we should like, and what we consume, the practice of "good taste" has gone from the local and physical to the global and virtual, implying the complex nature of audience. This means that the communication process of our tastes, particularly the symbolic meanings associated with certain objects and experiences we consume (from food, fashion, to lifestyle), is also increasingly complex; the information we obtain and share as well as the nature of social interactions that occur via social media play a critical role in shaping the trends and the standard of tastes locally, globally, and glocally. Furthermore, such meanings are in constant flux. The articles included in this volume invite the reader to take a step back and consider how taste expresses community within and across national borders, how it determines behavior, from an individual's beer of choice to broad patterns of consumer consumption, and how the media influence such expressions and consumption.

As Jeremy Strong (2011) explains in the introduction to Educated Tastes: "Questions of taste intrude into almost every act of selecting, combining, and positioning that we perform, particularly in a consumer society where we are as likely to be defined by what we wear, drive, eat, and drink as by our politics, beliefs, and jobs" (p. ix). This notion of performance connects all of the articles in the volume, as each with its own focus explores how individuals and community groups perform their tastes, preferences, and lifestyles. All of these performances play against the background of social media, moving local encounters to the global stage. Considering the performative aspect in formation of tastes also highlights the aforementioned nature of audience and social interactions that complicates the sense-making process that surrounds the question of taste.

Vaughn Bryan Baltzly's article, "The Interpersonal Variability of Gustatory Sensation and the Prospects for an Alimentary Aesthetics" delves into how individuals perceive and perform taste. He asks what we mean when we talk about our tastes in food, how we know that we are all talking about the same thing, and how we account for the inevitable variability in understanding. His essay, building off of Carolyn Korsmeyer and Alexandra Longue's research on the psychology and philosophy of taste, argues that given the possibility of measuring interpersonal differences regarding taste and the current lack of shared vocabulary to communicate these tastes, we should be able to fine tune our language choices so as to delineate both non-flavor and flavor-related dimensions of taste and smell. However, the possibility of this heightened performance of taste means that it is likely that we can never arrive at a common gustatory aesthetic.

Chris Fink investigates how the notion of gustatory aesthetic influences our expectations of individuals and their respective communities. In "Taste and the Nomethetic Diet," Fink takes issue with the US Dietary Guidelines for Americans, guidelines that never include a mention of taste, pleasure, or enjoyment in the creation or promotion of a healthy diet. Nonetheless, individuals and their communities build their dietary habits around taste and enjoyment, thus creating a disparity between recommendations and practical outcomes. Fink turns to P. Falk's notion of "good to think" vs. "good to eat" as it applies to food choices and dietary behaviors to help us reconsider how guidelines might function. Through the use of his university's work with the local community in the Cooking Matters® program, Fink demonstrates how "good to think" and "good to eat" are notions loaded with cultural influences, biases, and assumptions, ideas that are worth unpacking as we consider what different groups and communities value in their food choices. Further, both university students and local community members may perform the "good to think" ideas expected of them when it comes to a healthy diet, prioritizing what they assume to be healthy over what they demonstrably prefer when it comes to taste.

Maya Dodd and Arundhati Ail move our examination of taste to India, applying Pierre Bourdieu's theories of taste to the hierarchy embodied by the Indian caste system. "Understanding Taste in India: Social Systems to Digital Spaces" discusses the political underpinnings of food and eating in India. After examining the rules and classifications of food according to the caste system and religious dogma, the authors look to Appadurai's fundamental work on cookbooks in India as a means to nationalize and standardize Indian regional cuisines. Cookbooks thus produced a homogenized version of curry, one that catered to the colonial English-speaking (and literate) elite. Their article then moves from the cookbook to the virtual realm of the blogosphere, one that should, at least in theory, create spaces for less-represented regional cuisines. In practice, however, blogs and social media also cater to the social elite, leaving little room for oral histories of the less enfranchised.

Taste applies, of course, to drink as well as food, and the next articles in the collection examine the US beer market, the rise of craft beer, and the sharing and performing of the taste of beer via social media. Martin Stack's article, "From Bland to Grand: Path Creation and the Rise of Craft Beer," looks at how the US moved from the consistent but arguably tasteless brews made famous in the twentieth century in their regular and light forms to a veritable smorgasbord of craft beer selections with local and regional affinities. Stack uses the path dependency model to highlight the role of history and the influence of normalizing factors like industry standards to explain the rise of the bland, American beer. He then explains path creation narratives and how their accounts "highlight the process of mindful deviation" from earlier American beer tales. They replace the national with the regional, and in the process, offer a whole new taste panorama, focusing on the consumption rather than the production. Delving further into the mystique of craft beers and the change in American taste, Colleen Myles et al. investigate how social media records and shapes the taste for craft beer. Their article, "Virtual Pub Crawl: Assessing the Utility of Social Media for Geographic Beer Research in the United States," consider how social media serves to aggregate tastes and how it may help researchers explore personal consumer preferences related to taste. Their study looks at the geographic footprint of different beer labels on BeerAdvocate and Twitter so as to examine the different data sets for trends regarding taste and consumption. They ask whether big data can help us better understand beer tastes and beer culture, and whether the discussion of beer on social media sources may then influence the consumer and questions of taste.

The final article of the collection moves away from food and drink and squarely into the area of personal taste with regard to national stereotypes. In his article, "Nørdic-ness: Perception and Positionality of Scandinavian Taste as Good Taste," Milton Fernando Gonzalez-Rodriguez explores how notions of Nørdic-ness are conflated with definitions of good taste in consumer goods associated with Scandinavia. In particular, Gonzalez-Rodriguez looks at how brands cultivate and capitalize such associations through their promotional materials, and how consumers

perform this understanding in their purchasing of goods associated with Scandinavian lines, from Bang & Olufson to COS. He looks at qualities stressed by Nordic companies, specifically timelessness, simplicity, and functionality, all characteristics that we associate with the Scandinavian ethos. Gonzalez-Rodriguez also reminds us that taste goes beyond our gustatory habits and preferences, shaping who we are as individuals, communities and nations.

All told, the articles brought together here help us begin to rethink how discourses of taste are articulated and recorded, and they highlight how we perform to define our taste and how these discourses change across cultures. This volume of *intervalla* thus helps the reader to reimagine the parameters of taste across disciplinary and national boundaries. We can conclude that the more we learn about taste, from the gustatory to consumer goods, the more we learn about patterns of behavior for individuals and communities. Or, to paraphrase Brillat-Savarin, tell us your tastes, and we will tell you what you are. As the articles remind us, however, our tastes are not static, but instead, open to change, suggesting the importance of continuing to reflect upon the various cultural and sociological issues that surround tastes. Furthermore, the role of media technologies that produce big data and utilize algorithms started to play an indispensable role in the formation of tastes (Barile & Sugiyama, 2015) as well as a broader cultural production and practices (Striphas, 2015), which we also find in this collection. Thus, as the title of this volume "Questions of Taste" suggest, questions of taste remain open, calling for sustained research attention in the years to come.

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The Interpersonal Variability of Gustatory Sensation and the Prospects for an Alimentary Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT
We all have different "tastes" for different *tastes*: some of us have a sweet tooth, while others prefer more subtle flavors; some crave spicy foods, while others cannot stand them. As Bourdieu and others have pointed out, these varying judgments seem to be more than mere preferences; often they reflect (and partially constitute) differences of class and culture. But I want to suggest that we've possibly overlooked another important source of these divergent gastronomic evaluations, other than hierarchy and caste: mere interpersonal variability with respect to brute gustatory sensations. After all, we all know about "supertasters and cilantro-haters"; how likely is it, though, that the interpersonal heterogeneity of gustatory sensation is limited to this one dimension? In this paper, I make the case that we should take this possibility more seriously, and offer some thoughts on how we might start getting a better handle on the nature and scope of interpersonal gustatory variability—including by suggesting some diagnostics that can help us get at (what I call) some of the "non-flavor dimensions" of our gustatory experience. I conclude by developing some implications for the prospects of an "alimentary aesthetics": namely, that—should our gustatory experiences turn out to be quite heterogeneous—then they do not seem well-suited to serve as the basic ingredients of bona fide aesthetic judgment about food and drink.

KEY WORDS
Gustatory sensation, Aesthetics of food and drink, Inverted spectrum arguments, Gastronomy

The ambiguity in the English word "taste" is as familiar as it is easy to describe. On the one hand, it might refer to one of the five human senses—the one closely associated with the tongue. On the other hand, it might refer to preferences ranging over such widely-varying cultural products as music, art, film, fashion, décor, dance, hobbies, habits, pursuits, and even persons—preferences, as Pierre Bourdieu [1984] and others have pointed out, that are closely associated with hierarchies of class and caste. The term can always be disambiguated by application of the adjectival modifier "gustatory" to distinguish its use in the former sense, and "cultural" to distinguish the latter usage.[1] However, the domains of the *gustatory* and the *cultural* are not wholly distinct: they overlap in what we might call, somewhat colloquially, our "taste for tastes." In this respect, the double meaning of the English word "taste"—so amenable to clarification in most contexts—actually serves to obscure this overlap. For we are so accustomed to distinguishing the gustatory and the cultural senses of "taste" that we are apt to overlook the occasions wherein we are dealing with the two senses' important common domain of application: evaluative judgments regarding gustatory sensations.

At the same time, whenever we *do* find ourselves thinking about our evaluations of gustatory sensations, I believe we are prone to a certain kind of error as well. When attempting to account for the considerable degree of interpersonal heterogeneity that we observe with respect to *taste for tastes*, we are unlikely to adequately distinguish two potential sources of this heterogeneity: interpersonal *gustatory* variability and interpersonal *cultural* variability. That is, we are often too quick to assume that interpersonal variation with respect to gustatory taste judgments arises solely (or largely) from individual differences of *culture* (that is: from differences in individuals' levels of refinement or discernment, or palates, or aesthetic sensibilities). Instead, we should recognize that such interpersonal variation with respect to flavor-preferences might also arise, to a considerable extent, from interpersonal differences in mere, brute *gustatory sensation*. After all, we now know too much about this latter form of interpersonal heterogeneity to ignore its possible role in contributing to our diverging taste-preferences. Consider the following two well-known (stylized) facts. First, a certain portion of the population can detect the organic compound phenylthiocarbamide (PTC), whereas the remainder of the population lacks the requisite genetic material and is therefore utterly unable to taste it. (This fact is no doubt familiar to most contemporary alumni of high school biology classes.) Second, a significant minority of the population regards cilantro as tasting like dish soap—or like various other non-edible items which are as disgusting as they are oddly specific.[2]

In this paper I aim to facilitate improved discourse about gustatory judgment by suggesting ways to get a handle on the manner and magnitude of the potential interpersonal variability with respect to brute gustatory sensations, as distinct from interpersonal diversity with respect to cultural gustatory taste. (To facilitate our ability to speak clearly about our subject, the domain of taste for tastes, let us henceforth use the phrases already thus employed—"brute gustatory sensation" and "cultural gustatory taste"—in the expected ways to mark the needed distinctions.)

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[1] Alternatively—and again following Bourdieu—we might effect the disambiguation by substituting the word "distinction" for the word "taste" when using it in the latter sense. Other ways of marking the difference might include distinguishing "literal" from "metaphorical" or "analogical" taste, employing the modifier "critical" to convey the latter sense, or (as in chapter 2 of Korsmeyer [1999]) distinguishing "taste" from "Taste."

[2] See https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/14/dining/14curious.html. The existence of "supertasters" is another stylized fact in this vicinity, though it appears that the set of supertasters (those with elevated taste sensitivities, and in particular a heightened aversion to bitter flavors) is largely coextensive with the set of "cilantro-haters."

For if we are truly to understand the varieties of the latter, we must first be able to distinguish it from the former. I will help us to get this handle in two ways: first, by describing what interpersonal gustatory variation probably is *not* like, and second, by suggesting some ways in which our gustatory sensations probably actually *do* considerably differ. I perform this latter task by offering some questions that might be instructive in identifying and characterizing three possible dimensions of interpersonal variability. I conclude with some reflections on the consequences of these considerations for the prospects of an *alimentary aesthetics*—the possibility, that is, that cultural gustatory taste judgments might be more than mere (socially-conditioned?) gustatory preferences, and might actually rise to the level of bona fide *aesthetic* judgments.

I. WHAT THE INTERPERSONAL VARIABILITY OF GUSTATORY SENSATION IS ***NOT.***

Since at least the publication of John Locke's *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding* in 1690, it has been commonplace for students of human vision to ponder what has come to be known as the "inverted spectrum" hypothesis—*viz.*, the worry that, for all you know, the visual color sensation *you* have when you look at ripe raspberries matches the visual sensation *I* have when I look at the sky, and vice versa. That is: I may see what you'd call *red* when I look at what you call *blue* things. This makes vivid the utter "privacy" of what are sometimes called *qualia*: there is seemingly no way for you and I to directly compare the "phenomenal character" of our respective visual experiences. Furthermore, nothing in our respective behaviors, least of all our verbal behaviors, could ever reveal to us whether or not our two visual "spectra" were "inverted" in just this manner.

Less attention has been paid, however, to similar thought experiments respecting our other perceptual modalities. Relatively little is mentioned, for instance, about the possibility of an "inverted *olfactory* spectrum." However, a few moments' reflection reveals why this might be the case: our color sensations exhibit a number of features—in particular, a kind of *structure*—that are absent in the sensations specific to our other modalities; thus, the possibility of such "qualitative inversion" does not arise for them. In a pair of papers published in the early 2000's, Neil Campbell [2000, 2004] has argued that for these and other reasons, inverted spectrum-type worries do not generalize beyond the visual case. (In fact, he argues that they do not arise even in the visual case.) I will soon argue that our recognition of the (putative) impossibility of an inverted gustatory spectrum does not preclude the possibility of a considerable degree of interpersonal heterogeneity with respect to gustatory sensation. But it is worthwhile to first rehearse our reasons for rejecting the possibility of full-on gustatory spectrum inversion, for this will narrow the range of relevant possibility, and will help us to focus on the ways in which our gustatory sensations likely actually do differ.

As Campbell points out, the range of our possible color sensations (or our "color space") exhibits a certain structure—a structure that both renders intelligible the notion of an inverted spectrum of color sensations, and which crucially is seemingly *not* shared by the sorts of sensations that constitute our other forms of sensory experience. In his terms:

> …phenomenal colour space is highly structured in its dimensions of hue, saturation, and brightness. The elements thus have a fixed sequence in 'colour space' and are ordered, which gives rise to the notion of complementarities. The most natural way to conceive of the inversion is in terms of rotating colours around an axis passing through a unique pair of opponent hues. This

> will preserve the relational properties (such as harmony, contrast, similarity, etc.) of various colours to one another which would otherwise be altered by conceiving of the inversion in other ways. It is important for the inversion hypothesis that such relations be preserved, for otherwise differences in behavior toward coloured objects will quickly become evident since the abnormally sighted person will draw different relational connections between coloured objects than normally sighted people. [2000: 240-1]

As Campbell notes elsewhere [2004: 32], these structural features are, for the most part,[3] absent in the case of other sensory modalities—most saliently, in the case of gustatory sensations: "The problem with olfactory and gustatory qualia is that they lack the organizational structure characteristic of colour qualia, and without this structure, it is extremely difficult even to imagine how to conceive of an inversion of the relevant phenomenal elements." While it is commonplace to countenance a certain sort of "categorical structure" to gustatory sensations—e.g., that they somehow resolve into the five basic categories of *sweet, salty, sour, bitter,* and (more recently[4]) *umami*—it still seems clear enough that this cataloguing of tastes falls far short of constituting the sort of "structured space" that gives rise to the color "complementarities" of which Campbell speaks. Thus, the possibility of an inverted spectrum of gustatory sensations is precluded by the seeming incoherence of the notion of a "gustatory *spectrum*" in the first place.

But it is not only this structural asymmetry between color and taste qualia that bears witness to the unlikeliness of inverted "spectra" with respect to gustatory sensation. There is also the matter of the connection—possibly a *constitutive* connection—between certain phenomenal contents and certain associated affective states. The general relation between the phenomenal character of given sensations and those sensations' (sometimes quite closely) associated emotional or affective states is an interesting matter of philosophical investigation. For certain types of sensation, the relationship between *quale* and *affect* seems so tightly woven as to appear necessary or constitutive. Take pain sensations, for instance. Is it a matter of contingent—though perhaps constant—connection that painful sensations produce anxiety, distress, and "negative affect" in those who experience them? Or is it rather, and perhaps more plausibly, that the negative affect *just is* part of the phenomenal character of the experience—part and parcel with, partially constitutive *of*, the painful qualia? Pain sensations may represent the clearest or most plausible candidates for the "constitution thesis," the claim that, for a wide range of sensations, those sensations are at least partly constituted by, and/or individuated by, their affective character. But with other sorts of sensations, this connection seems less likely to be necessary or constitutive.

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[3] There may be, however, certain aspects of other sensory modalities that do display "invertible" characteristics. For example, it may be possible to imagine inter-personal inversions with respect to the tactual sensations of *hot* and *cold*. (Though not for tactual sensations generally: as Campbell [2000: 248-51, 2004: 30-1] convincingly argues, it is far more difficult to imagine such inversions with respect to the sensations of, e.g., *rough* and *smooth*.)

[4] The recent advent of (seemingly-near-universal) recognition of "umami" as the "fifth flavor" perhaps illustrates the difficulties inherent in such attempts to categorize flavors. It is instructive in this regard to keep in mind Korsmeyer's [1999: 75-6] summary of the relevant history here: "The number of tastes selected as 'basic' has declined over the years. At the end of the sixteenth century, nine basic tastes were recognized: sweet, sour, sharp, pungent, harsh, fatty, bitter, insipid, and salty. In the next century Linnaeus added astringent, viscous, aqueous, and nauseous, but omitted pungent and harsh; Albrecht von Haller added to the original list spirituous, aromatic, ruinous, and putrid, but dropped fatty." It appears that the centuries-long contraction documented here by Korsmeyer has reversed itself just in the two decades since she wrote these words.

Take aural sensations, for instance. Granted: certain sounds may be plausibly construed as *inherently* or *naturally* pleasing to the human ear—a baby's giggle, for instance, or certain forms of harmony—while other sounds may seem to intrinsically involve negative affect (nails screeching on a chalkboard, for example). But for most sounds—even when (positive or negative) affect becomes connected by association—it's doubtful whether such connection is *constitutive*. The sounds of crickets and frogs singing at nighttime may be happily associated with cherished memories of summers at Grandma's and Grandpa's country home for you, and may be distressingly associated with camping and discomfort and fear of coyote-attacks for me, but these are contingent connections. Visual sensations may seem closer to this "contingent" end of the spectrum—a little closer to sounds, and at the opposite end of the spectrum from pain—but Campbell argues that, even here, there are close and possibly even constitutive relations between certain forms of visual sensation and certain kinds of affective states (the experience of "seeing red," and the state of *becoming agitated*, e.g., or the experience of seeing green or blue and the state of *being soothed*). As Campbell [2000: 243] writes, there is a "well researched body of evidence pointing to the connection between affect and sensation in the case of colour vision. While the research is ambiguous about whether these emotional reactions are effects of colour experiences or are part of the experiences themselves, as I have suggested, the intimacy of the relation provides support for" the constitution thesis.

For their part, gustatory sensations along with olfactory ones would seem to fall much closer to the *pain sensation* end of this spectrum than to the visual/aural end; as Korsmeyer [1999: 41] puts it, "[t]he sensation of tasting seems to carry a virtually inescapable affective valence: tasting involves registering the sensation as pleasant or unpleasant." Thus, any systematic interpersonal "transpositions" with respect to the phenomenal character of a certain range of gustatory sensations would likely reveal themselves via affectively- or emotionally-driven behavioral differences. That is: even if you were to have a "localized" spectrum of gustatory sensations that were inverted with respect to mine—if you were to taste as *sweet* what I taste as *sour*, for instance—we would likely quickly discover this fact by way of our starkly contrasting behaviors (lip-licking vs. lip-puckering) with respect to, e.g., eating lemons.

So it does not appear that our gustatory spectra could possibly be subject to wholesale qualitative inversion. Nor does it seem likely that the gustatory realm might include "sub-spectra" (like a "sweet-to-sour" spectrum) that are invertible: the dearth of behavioral evidence of the kind just cited seemingly attests to that. However, I contend that there *is* a plethora of behavioral evidence available to us respecting *certain* dimensions of interpersonal variability with respect to gustatory sensations. The behavioral evidence available to us here is principally *linguistic* behavior, and the reason that its extent has yet to be fully appreciated is that it can only be elicited in response to the right sorts of *inputs*—specifically, in response to certain *verbal* inputs. In other words: perhaps it's only when we ask each other the right sorts of questions about our gustatory experiences that we can uncover some surprising dimensions of interpersonal variability here—degrees of heterogeneity that are more pronounced for gustatory sensations than they are in the other sensory modalities like vision and hearing. And perhaps these "right sorts of questions" still await our discovery and formulation. Let us see if we can now make progress in this regard.

II. HOW TO GET A HANDLE ON WHAT THE INTERPERSONAL VARIABILITY OF GUSTATORY SENSTATION MIGHT BE.

Alexandra Logue [2015: 45], a preeminent psychologist of eating and drinking, opens a discussion of what we have termed "interpersonal variability of gustatory sensation" by suggesting that her

readers "may be surprised to learn that not everyone tastes and smells in the same way." But even readers *not* surprised by this might be surprised to learn of the relative paucity of empirical and even philosophical investigation of such "separate worlds of taste."[5] In part this may be due to the general disparagement of gustatory taste in the Western canon of philosophical, aesthetic, and moral thought. (This pattern of disparagement is nicely documented in Korsmeyer [1999: chp. 1]; its "echo" in the form of more recent *scientific* neglect of the sense of taste is likewise documented in her [1999: 75-86].) Or it might be that "the real reason for the scanty scientific study of taste and smell [is] the fact that their operation [has] yet to be understood" and that there are a "number of unknowns still remaining to be discovered about taste" [Korsmeyer 1999: 74-5, citing both Boring [1942: 438] and McLaughlin and Margolskee [1994]]. And it might result from a combination of these two factors: as the opening statement of the treatment of taste in one famous study of the human senses puts it: "Taste is the 'poor relation' of the family of senses. It is poor in having only a restricted set of qualities to contribute to the sum of human experience. It is also relatively poor as an object of productive scientific inquiry. The two things are not unrelated" [Geldard 1972: 480, quoted at Korsmeyer 1999: 75].

The dearth of rigorous, technical analysis of gustatory sensation should not be overstated, however—particularly in light of the existence of a parallel discipline: that of *gastronomy*. Gastronomy is perhaps not a "scientific subfield," *per se*, nor perhaps is it even an "academic discipline." (Though no doubt many would take issue with either or both of these characterizations.) Nevertheless, it is certainly a robust cultural *praxis*, comprising a body of both practical *and* theoretical knowledge. As Korsmeyer [1999: 94] puts it, "the vocabularies developed by culinary experts and oenologists" present "rich critical lexicons referring to food and drink, preparing and tasting, which are understood by initiates, if baffling to outsiders."

Notwithstanding the level of sophistication and development of current psychological and physiological research on gustatory sensation, and further notwithstanding the accessibility of gourmands' "rich critical lexicons" for describing and cataloguing gustatory sensations, it seems indisputable that a rich, nuanced vocabulary, one suitable for effecting the discernment and communication of fine-grained distinctions among, e.g., different flavor profiles, or general gustatory experiences, has not (yet, at least) "trickled down" into the general vernacular. As Korsmeyer [1999: 94] states, "It is commonly asserted that the linguistic resources available to describe and analyze taste experience are relatively scanty in comparison with the resources to describe the experiences of other senses, especially vision." Elsewhere she writes that "[o]ur words for the sensations of taste and smell are often hard to come by, and this perhaps is another reason we succumb rather passively to the idea that there are 'only' four basic tastes" [Korsmeyer 1999: 78]. Relatedly, she cites Logue as noting that "the ability to recognize and identify smells is limited in spite of this sense's incredible acuity, in part because of the poverty of the linguistic labels we ordinarily apply to odors" [Korsmeyer 1999: 79].

So we have two facts now before us. The first is the seeming possibility of crafting carefully-designed behavioral tests to elicit interpersonal differences in the phenomenal character of our qualia—a possibility Campbell believes achievable even in the case of (allegedly) inverted spectra of visual qualia. The second is the relative paucity of a shared vocabulary for communicating the variety of our gustatory experiences—and in particular, a vocabulary for characterizing the various dimensions along which our gustatory sensations might vary. In light of these two facts, it would thus appear worthwhile to introduce into our vernacular and our daily

[5] In the phrasing of Linda Bartoshuk [1986]. Logue [2015: 57] describes Bartoshuk has "the top expert on taste in the world."

practice some simple, memorable means of eliciting and discussing such differences in taste sensations.

In attempting to get a grip on the various dimensions along which we might exhibit genuine heterogeneity in our brute gustatory sensations, it is important to focus our inquiry in such a fashion that we exclude any possibility that the heterogeneity of cultural gustatory taste contaminates our findings. The questions we must ask must be carefully crafted so that interpersonal variability of cultural taste does not influence the answers we get. Since cultural taste can act as a confounding variable, we must not formulate questions that will serve merely to elicit *these* sorts of differences, but rather questions that get at the possibility of diverse sensations. And the easiest way to do this, I propose, is to limit our queries to what we might call the "non-flavor dimensions" of our gustatory experience.

To that end, I propose that we make progress here by formulating and refining sets of questions that explore the degree of interpersonal variability along (at least) three dimensions other than differences in flavor: what we might term the "immediacy," the "ephemerality," and the "analyzability" dimensions of our gustatory sensations.[6] The *immediacy* dimension concerns how quickly flavors register once a morsel of food enters the mouth. The *ephemerality* dimension of gustatory sensation concerns how long such flavor sensations continue, even after (perhaps even *long* after) the morsel of food has left the mouth. Finally, the *analyzability* dimension concerns how well one is able to decompose one's gustatory sensation into simpler, constituent—perhaps, one might even think, *atomic* or *elemental*—parts. I also propose that we continue reflecting on our gustatory experiences to see whether we're able to identify other, similar (non-flavor-related) dimensions of our sensations that are similarly ripe for exploration and analysis. But in the meantime, and until such further dimensions are unearthed, I hereby offer three sets of questions that, speaking purely anecdotally, I have found to be fruitful and stimulating in this regard when I've asked them of friends and colleagues. These questions seem rather straightforward once you've considered them; nevertheless, they seem to be heretofore underappreciated for their probative power. Here are some sample questions pertaining to each of our three dimensions:

(a) **Regarding immediacy:** "Do you have a fully-formed gustatory sensation the moment a morsel of food or a sip of beverage hits your tongue? Or does it sometimes take several seconds or longer for the fully-fledged taste to develop?" I've noticed that people tend to instantly categorize themselves as either "immediate tasters" or "delayed tasters." Folks in the former camp sometimes profess considerable surprise that, for me, a delayed taster for sure, flavors sometimes only slowly materialize. However, their bewilderment often dissipates after I point out that the canons of, e.g., oenology countenance phenomena such as flavors "at the front" or "at the finish," or flavors that "slowly develop."

(b) **Regarding ephemerality:** "Do tastes 'linger' in your mouth for moments after you've swallowed, or do they disappear as soon as the food does? If you do experience lingering: which foods linger, which foods linger the longest, and for how long do you experience said lingering? Are you sometimes disinclined to order dessert after a sumptuous meal for fear that the taste of sweets will interfere with your continued savoring of the enjoyable flavors still lingering on your tongue?" I've likewise encountered folks who report that their gustatory sensations disappear almost the moment the morsel of food does, and who even profess some degree of astonishment that, for "lingerers" like myself, flavors will remain after swallowing, sometimes even for quite some time. This astonishment is frequently considerably blunted, however, after I point out the widespread currency of the notion of an *aftertaste*.

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[6] I thank Anthony Cross for suggesting that I assign names to these three dimensions, and for stimulating my thoughts as to which labels are most apt.

(c) **Regarding analyzability:** "When tasting a morsel or a sip, are you often able to analyze or decompose the gustatory sensation into its component parts—gustatory 'simples' or 'primitives', as it were—or is it typically the case that the flavors simply 'blend' more or less into one undifferentiated 'whole'? In other words: can you really taste all 23 flavors in Dr. Pepper,[7] or all 11 of the Colonel's 'secret recipe' of herbs and spices? Alternatively: how many flavors *are* you be able to identify in, say, Dr. Pepper, or KFC?" I have always envied some of my friends' abilities to decompose morsels into (some of) their constituent spices and flavors; evidently, I'm a hopeless case of a "non-analytic" taster.

Our emphasis thus far has been on the non-flavor dimensions of our gustatory sensations, largely to ensure that our results avoid contamination from differences of cultural taste. But if our investigations uncover a significant degree of interpersonal variability just with regard to these non-flavor-related dimensions—dimensions that are arguably rather peripheral to the overall sense of taste—then we seemingly have reason to wonder how much interpersonal variability we exhibit with respect to the (far more central) *flavor*-related dimensions of our gustatory sensations. The inextricable influence of cultural factors may inhibit our efforts to assess the variability of flavor-related dimensions in isolation; nevertheless, our discovery of significant heterogeneity along the *immediacy*, *ephemerality*, and/or *analyzability* dimensions—especially when coupled with familiar phenomena such as "supertasters and cilantro-haters"—should give us pause.[8]

One further reason to think that humanity might exhibit considerable interpersonal variability of gustatory experience is the close connection between taste and smell, and how much we already know about interpersonal olfactory diversity as well. So it may be worthwhile to likewise investigate the degree of interpersonal variability with respect to olfactory sensation, and the sorts of questions that might enable us to get a grip on this heterogeneity. Without attempting to delineate anything like a semi-systematic taxonomy of the sorts of "non-aromatic dimensions" along which our olfactory sensations might vary, akin to the "immediacy / ephemerality / analyzability" trichotomy for gustatory dimensions employed above, here are some clusters of questions to get us started:

(i) "Are olfactory sensations *ubiquitous*? That is, are you always smelling something? Or are there some moments (maybe even most of your moments) when you're simply not having any olfactory experiences at all?"

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[7] In recent marketing campaigns, Dr. Pepper has claimed that its soft drink comprises 23 distinct flavors. See, e.g., https://www.drpepper.com/en/faq#9.

[8] One might sensibly ask why we oughtn't think of the immediacy, ephemerality, and analyzability dimensions as themselves culturally created (or at least culturally conditioned)—and, if so, whether I haven't simply begged the question here. In response, I simply reiterate and amplify my initial motivation for selecting these seemingly "non-flavor-related" dimensions of our gustatory sensations: these do not seem to be the sorts of factors that our cultural practices and hierarchies speak to, and would thus appear to be largely beyond the reach of cultural influence. Consider: "Everyone knows that 'refined palates' can appreciate, e.g., caviar and *Côtes du Rhône*; everyone knows that only low-brow palates could appreciate Cheetos." We are all familiar with *these* sorts of cultural norms. But can you think of any comparable commonplaces that bear on the issues of immediacy or ephemerality? Admittedly, the analyzability dimension *does* vary somewhat with respect to palate refinement—but presumably only for those foods and drinks (e.g., wine, cheese) for which people train their palates: "general capacity for flavor analysis" does not appear to be a culturally-mediated phenomenon. (We wouldn't expect oenophiles to be necessarily better-equipped than are lay-persons at decomposing, e.g., Dr. Pepper into its constituent 23 flavors, or the 11-flavor blend of herbs and spices used at KFC.) I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for *intervalla* for pressing me on this point.

(ii) "Is your olfaction *directional*? That is, can you detect the direction from which a smell is coming?"

(iii) "To what extent is your general olfactory perception of the world impacted when you have a head cold? To what extent do such colds impact your gustatory experiences?"

(iv) "Can you smell sautéing garlic?"[9]

What might be the results of a widespread uptake (among both lay and scientific investigators) of these (and other similar, related) questions about our gustatory (and olfactory) experiences? Might the result be a widespread and newfound appreciation of just how much interpersonal variability we exhibit with respect to our brute gustatory sensations? And, assuming for the moment that the answer to the preceding question just might be "yes," how might that finding impact some of our other related social, cultural, and intellectual practices? In the paper's brief final section, I explore the potential ramifications here for what might be termed "alimentary aesthetics"—the extension of traditional canons of aesthetic evaluation and criticism, customarily reserved for the *visual* and *performing*—but not as often the *culinary*—arts, so as to cover gastronomic pursuits as well.

III. THE PROSPECTS FOR AN ALIMENTARY AESTHETICS?

A recent spate of writers[10] has defended the claim that judgments about the relative merits of tastes and flavors and foods and meals—what we have here termed "cultural gustatory taste"—qualify as genuinely *aesthetic* judgments, philosophically on a par with judgments about the beauty of paintings and sunsets and symphonies. If Korsmeyer, Sweeney, Brady, and their ilk are correct, such judgments are more than mere preference. Cultural gustatory taste judgments would instead belong, not only to what Kant, in his *Critique of Judgment*, calls the "realm of the agreeable," but also to Kant's "realm of the beautiful." (An alternative Kantian mode of expression here is to say that gustatory experiences are subject, not only to the "taste of sense"—Kant's expression for "pleasure or displeasure" that "constitute[s] only our personal evaluation about what we have experienced"—but also to the "taste of reflection"—wherein "the pleasure or displeasure … the hedonic experience is not immediately felt," but is felt "only as a consequence of our aesthetic engagement."[11])

However, in light of the considerations adduced in the foregoing section, it would seem that the "alimentary aestheticians" face a basic challenge in their defense of the genuinely aesthetic character of gustatory evaluations—judgments regarding, say, the relative inferiority and superiority of certain flavors (e.g., "raspberries taste better than strawberries" or "organic peaches taste better than non-organic ones"). For we might exhibit so much interpersonal variability in gustatory evaluations, not only because we have such widely-differing preferences or inclinations (Kantian "tastes of sense")—and not only because we "work" these preferences up in different ways so as to arrive at gustatory aesthetic judgments—but also because we exhibit a striking degree

[9] Logue [2015: 53-4] surveys what is currently known about "specific anosmias": "the inability to smell a particular odor when all other odors can be smelled normally." I include this question on the list because I have long suspected (even before I was introduced to the term) that I have a specific anosmia when it comes to the aroma of garlic—which, for most people (at least, most that I have ever lived [and cooked] with), is wonderful and fragrant. But for me it barely exists.

[10] See, e.g., Korsmeyer [1999] and [2012], Sweeney [2012], and Brady [2012].

[11] As well as furnishing the two quoted passages characterizing this Kantian distinction, Sweeney [2012: 61-2] provides a helpful discussion of Kant's views here, which are set forth in the same passage from the third *Critique* wherein Kant distinguishes the "agreeable" from the "beautiful."

of interpersonal variability merely when it comes to brute gustatory sensation. But if this is so, then gustatory sensations might not provide a very solid foundation upon which to build aesthetic judgments after all.

Consider the following disanalogy with the visual and auditory cases, taking each in turn. When two critics disagree in their assessments as to the merits of a painting—say, Mark Rothko's *Orange and Yellow*—it seems safe to assume that each critic, in regarding the work, is having essentially the same visual experience. Granted, the precise qualitative, phenomenal character of the critics' visual sensations might vary slightly, conditional on the details of their respective visual systems and (depending on what we accept respecting the "cognitive penetrability" thesis with respect to visual perception[12]) each critic's background knowledge and training. Nevertheless, we can assume that the two critics' visual experiences are in the same ballpark: the Rothko painting basically will ("literally" or "objectively") "look the same" to each of them—even though they have different artistic preferences and arrive at divergent aesthetic judgments regarding the work's merit. Likewise with respect to music critics: two critics disagreeing about the beauty of a Mozart piano concerto are presumably having very much the same aural experiences when listening to it. But in cases of diverging *gustatory* evaluation, we would seem to be on shaky footing were we to make analogous assumptions regarding the phenomenal character of different critics' gustatory sensations. When two food critics arrive at divergent judgments regarding the relative merits of a given flavor or dish, it seems much *less* safe to assume that, at the level of brute gustatory sensation, these critics are having commensurable experiences. In other words: when you and I have different preference-orderings with respect to the relative merits of cilantro vs. curry, we must ask: is this because—despite the fact that, at some "objective" level of brute gustatory sensation, they "taste the same"—we have different preferences (Kant's "tastes of sense"), and thereby arrive at different aesthetic judgments (Kant's "taste of reflection") with regard to these two flavors? Or could it be that these two spices *taste differently* to each of us? Plausibly, in a fairly wide range of cases, it is the latter: we disagree about the merits of cilantro and curry, in large part, because our brute gustatory sensations differ to a considerable extent.

Invoking a distinction sometimes used in contemporary aesthetic theory, we might say that—unlike in the case of visual or auditory aesthetic judgments—we cannot safely assume that discordant food critics share in common a qualitatively similar experience of a meal's *descriptive* gustatory properties, which descriptive properties then nevertheless serve to ground conflicting assessments as to the meal's *verdictive* properties ("delicious," "well-balanced," "sumptuous," and the like). For, as the discussion in Section II suggests, we have good grounds for thinking that a given meal's descriptive gustatory properties will differ for different people. But if this is so, the inter-subjective basis upon which gustatory aesthetic judgments seemingly rely is called into question: food *cannot* rise to the level of painting, poetry, or music as an object of genuinely aesthetic assessment, because the basic ingredients of which alimentary aesthetic judgments would be constructed—bare gustatory sensations—exhibit far too much interpersonal heterogeneity.[13]

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[12] "The thesis of cognitive penetrability of perception states that the content of perceptual experience can be influenced by prior or concurrent psychological factors, such as beliefs, fears and desires." For more on this notion, see Georgakakis and Moretti [2019], from which this quotation was taken.

[13] For helpful comments on a previous draft of this paper, I am grateful to Anthony Cross, Andrew Kania, and an anonymous reviewer for *intervalla*. Early in the project, Dr. Cross also supplied me with a helpful overview of the relevant conceptual terrain and literatures.

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BIOGRAPHY

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Taste and the Nomothetic Diet

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ABSTRACT
Dietary health promotion often lacks reconciliation between population-level nomothetic nutritional guidance and the ideographic application of such information in a wide range of populations. While some global dietary guidelines include pleasure and enjoyment in their recommendations, the United States *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* lacks any direct mention of these factors in promoting a "healthy" diet. Despite this, taste and palatability are often identified as key drivers in food choice, indicating support for Brillat-Savarin's oft-cited and long-standing contention that taste "...invites us by pleasure to repair the losses which result from the use of life." In the time since, the exploration of taste in relation to food has included aesthetic judgement and discernment, cultural pressures, exclusivity, and anxieties around body image and health, in addition to physiological/sensory aspects. Over the past five years, we have directed a community food education program in Central Ohio using the Cooking Matters® curriculum. Because Cooking Matters® classes are facilitated by undergraduate students who often come from a different socio-economic background than program participants, tensions around class identity, individual and group conceptions of health, and sensory judgements of food have often come to light. This essay seeks to explore these tensions in light of theoretical constructs of taste.

KEY WORDS
Taste, Dietary Guidelines, Food Insecurity, Dietary Health

MISSING TASTE

The link between human dietary behavior and taste remains inextricable, and yet the world of dietary health promotion has struggled to incorporate the concept in any meaningful way into the realm of dietary recommendations, perhaps in part because of the nomothetic nature of such work. Dietary recommendations such as the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020* are intended to provide guidance for policies and programs at the federal, state, and local levels, as well as to inform the work of health professionals. The guidelines even state, in clear language, that the document is not intended for the general public (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015). Despite this stated purpose, the guidelines are applied directly to the general pubic in programs and policies across the nation, thus impacting food access, availability, and beliefs in important ways. In a time when dietary guidelines and nutrition policy are at the forefront of consumer consciousness and food marketing efforts (Turnwald & Crum, 2018), it seems essential to consider the realm of taste when creating such far-reaching strategies. Despite that, the word *taste* appears nowhere in the 144-page document, and related concepts such as flavor, palatability, and enjoyment appear only indirectly and rarely. This paper demonstrates the tensions around taste and nomothetic guidelines, and how these tensions can be both illuminated and lessened with the exchange of experiences and ideas across class, age, and cultural divisions.

THE MANY DIMENSIONS OF TASTE

Academic consideration of taste has been longstanding and cross-disciplinary, with realms that exist far outside of the study of food. As one can imagine, the exploration of taste within food includes biological, socio-cultural, and aesthetic considerations, among others. Brillat-Savarin (1854) famously divided taste into three forms, including the physical apparatus of flavor sensation, the ability of various elements we consume to arouse a sensation of flavor, and the sensation of flavor itself (Jackson, 2015). He poetically (and poignantly) described two purposes for taste which hold substantial weight even today. The first suggested that taste invites us to use pleasure to repair the losses inflicted by life's demands, and the second that it assists us in choosing among all of the "alimentary" elements of nature (Brillat-Savarin & Robinson, 1854). More recently, and particularly in western societies, sensory taste is discussed in categories – with five basic tastes (sweet, salty, bitter, sour, and umami) having been identified through standard positivist, reductionist, experimental and quasi-experimental means. Other societies (Indian, Chinese, Japanese) and theorists (Hay, Kunz & Kaminski) have approached taste more holistically, and have identified further categories of sensory taste using phenomenological and constructivist approaches (Wertz, 2013). While these are relatively objective considerations of taste, each is interpreted subjectively – as perception and interpretations are individual and varied.

Beyond the objective sensory and gustatory nature of taste that underlies Brillat-Savarin's musings, cultural debates around taste as judgement and preference abound. Even as far back as the 1700s, philosophical debates about aesthetic judgement and standards were ongoing and considered the tension between individual preferences and societal standards of taste (Jackson, 2015). Societal pressure continues to influence choice in this realm. For instance, societal pressures to appreciate fine wines, or expensive cheeses often clash with personal preferences around these products. Further, among a range of societal strata (SES, ethnicity, religion, etc.), standards for taste can vary, and can come into tension with individual preferences. Some might expect a wealthy financier to order an expensive cut of meat at dinner, and if she were to order a hot dog and fries (because of her preferences), it could be a shock for her dinner companions (because of societal standards and expectations). Further, our choices around food can embody our place in society – providing externally viewable "evidence" about our societal standing, and our identity.

These societal standards not only vary among social strata, but also vary over time and

across cultures. As fads and trends change, so do standards. While being a connoisseur of India Pale Ales could have been considered a rarity and a sign of elevated social standing and refined taste in the 1990s, the proliferation of IPAs in today's American beer landscape makes this a much more common occurrence, and perhaps less of a bellwether of social standing. When foods or drinks seem unattainable to some strata of society, the exclusivity of those foods can be a marker of high social standing at the top levels. As proliferation occurs, the social standing marker can erode. Now trends change so quickly that some have suggested that diversity of food preferences and experiences (instead of exclusivity) may be the hallmark of refinement. This lack of exclusivity in choice still breeds a societal stratification in taste through the search for simple, global flavors and cultural authenticity. Since individuals with fewer financial resources to travel or explore wide ranges of foods may have less change to gain cultural capital in experiences and knowledge relative to taste, they are left out of this climb up the ladder of social hierarchy (Jackson, 2015; Johnston & Bauman, 2007; Peterson & Kern, 1996).

It is useful to consider here the notion proposed by Falk that food can be considered both "good to think" and "good to eat" (1991, p. 758). The former consideration is related to the societal propensity to treat food as good or bad, and right or wrong. Depending on the ideology at hand (health, environment, social justice, social class), foods can be classified along a range of continua of good/right, or bad/wrong in this regard. The latter consideration is related to the pleasure of eating – specifically the individual preferences around sensory experiences of tasting foods, and the preference of appreciation of their flavors. Falk's dual conception is another helpful framework for considering the dynamics of taste, and can be useful in considering that both the "good to think" and "good to eat" can have objective and subjective influences and manifestations. In other words, whether we are considering the ideologies of our food, or experiencing and reflecting upon the flavors of that food, social standards and individual perceptions are at work in determining our taste. Something can be "good to think," but subjectively not "good to eat," such as a locally grown beet (environmentally responsible, healthy) but still not considered tasty for certain people. Because taste preferences change, one could argue that the "good to think" ideologies can influence our subjective taste preferences, as is the case for those who grow to appreciate and enjoy foods to which they were formerly averse.

Regardless of the framework we use to examine taste, our personal and collective experiences play a role in determining them. Perullo (2016) suggests that taste is "ecologically situated" (p. 9), meaning that taste experiences draw from a relationship between the individual doing the tasting, the food itself, and the societal context. But, what are the experiential routes into the arena of taste? Perullo (2016) once again suggests three experiential pathways to taste – through pleasure, knowledge, and indifference. The pleasure and knowledge pathways link back to Falk's conceptions of "good to eat" and "good to taste," respectively, but what about the indifference pathway? Considering indifference in food experiences allows us to understand that neither every taste experience is fully mindful, nor is every person going to attend to taste experiences in the same way or to the same degree every time they eat. This is especially important to consider when discussing educational experiences around food, which the following sections will do.

Inside of the knowledge pathway, the "good to think" conceptualization, and the societal standards realm of taste exists the influence of a rise in nutritionism on dietary behaviors in the U.S. today. Scrinis (2015) describes nutritionism as the societal obsession with health-related nutritional guidance, and particularly the overriding focus on reductionist nutrients instead of broader food pattern guidance (such as eating more plant-based foods). This approach, Scrinis suggests, has led to decreased focus on the more holistic and nuanced relationship between food and the body, and I would suggest, the broader absence of taste in current nutritional guidelines. This focus on utilitarian aspects of food has even been demonstrated to effect consumer evaluations of taste and preference. Huang & Wu (2016), who found that individuals with a higher pleasure orientation (hedonic food perspective) evaluated food with a healthy name as tastier than those with a lower pleasure orientation (utilitarian food perspective). Conversely, the more

utilitarian participants rated the unhealthy food as significantly more tasty and appealing than those with the hedonic perspective. This indicates that in certain cases, a utilitarian, reductionist perspective on food predisposes individuals to perceive unhealthy options as more delicious than those individuals with a hedonic, pleasure-oriented perspective. This can be culturally and contextually grounded, however, as research has shown in France, where healthy food is often associated with good flavor, and unhealthy food with bad flavor (Werle, Trendel, & Ardito, 2013). Even in the United States, however, marketing healthy foods using taste has shown a significant sales advantage over marketing toward healthiness (Turnwald & Crum, 2018).

PROGRAMMING TASTE AND HEALTH

In an attempt to address some of the disconnect between taste and dietary health, a range of food- and cooking-focused programs exist in communities around the country. Some are developed at the local level, and others, such as Cooking Matters®, are developed, updated, and administered at the national level. Cooking Matters® aims to focus the conversation on food, cooking, and conviviality with a target to reduce food insecurity, particularly among families and children (Share Our Strength, 2019b). At the core of Cooking Matters® is a free, 6-week course where participants (adults, families, and/or kids) spend 2 hours learning about healthy eating, budgeting, shopping, and meal planning, and then cook a meal together. Participants also receive free groceries to take home so that they can prepare the recipe from class for their families. This is a key part of the program, because participants often experience the impact of food insecurity, and thus don't often have the margin in their food budget to prepare an unsuccessful (thus uneaten) recipe at home. Cooking Matters® programming can also include one-time demos and classes at farmers markets, food pantries, and other community resources, as well as grocery store tours.

At our institution, we have been offering Cooking Matters® programming in our local community for over 5 years, as part of the health promotion and nutrition curricula. We partner with a regional non-profit for support and data management, as well as Share Our Strength, the national non-profit that developed and administers the Cooking Matters® initiative. Our institution is a residential, undergraduate-only, liberal-arts university with a strong history of community service. As a health-focused department, we are aimed at providing students with an evidence-based foundation, opportunities for students to apply their learning to both themselves and their community, and leadership opportunities that foster the application and reflection cycle that is so critical to experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Cooking Matters® provides many opportunities to engage in this cycle in student roles that range from coordinating the program, grant-writing, instruction (we call this facilitation), and logistics. Students in both the health promotion and nutrition programs rotate through roles in the Cooking Matters® program during their time in the department, and have described the program as transformative and edifying, particularly when it comes to their academic and professional options after graduation.

In the time since we began offering Cooking Matters® in our community, we have had over 2,000 participants take part in one of our classes, demonstrations, or tours. All of these participants have come from the city in which the University is located, or the broader county. The program is connected to the community health improvement plan, which directs the local public health department and community partners toward progress on health needs in the community. In summary, the Cooking Matters® initiative at our institution is enmeshed in the curriculum, the departmental learning objectives, and the local public health system. We feel strongly that this type of thoughtful linkage between higher education and the community is at the leading edge of the future of the liberal arts, and provides exceptional opportunities for our students as future professionals.

The curriculum itself attempts to focus nutritional discussion not on nutrients and reductionist principles, but on foods that help individuals reduce their risk for chronic disease. Each week has a recipe at the center of the lesson, and several nutrition and planning/budgeting

concepts on which we focus. For instance, one week may focus on the dietary benefits of whole grains, and that focus will be reflected in activities around identifying and selecting whole grain foods at the store, discussing whole grain substitutions that participants would be willing to try given their taste preferences, cultural context, and budget. In one of our more memorable classes, a group of women with food traditions from Central America were thrilled to have discovered (and tasted) barley in class, and used it at home in some of their traditional foods – with great success. They described that the taste and texture was a good fit for their family – who didn't enjoy the brown rice and other whole grain options they had tried previously. We aim to focus very intentionally on taste, not trying to dictate the tastes of our participants, but rather exploring *with* them the things they like and dislike, and trying to find a fit for their individual taste preferences.

To foster this food-centric (and taste-oriented) dialogue, we use a facilitated dialogue approach to teaching. Briefly, features of this approach include the recognition that learners have deep expertise in their own life contexts, and builds upon having a safe space where participants and instructors can share and compare their life experiences around the issues being discussed in class (Share Our Strength, 2019a). Aside from the clear learning benefits for our participants, this approach also allows our student instructors to move away from the "sage on the stage" role that they often assume regarding teaching, and into an empathetic and engaged listener and facilitator. This is simultaneously a relief for them (because our participants are often much older with more life experience), and a challenge (because it requires flexibility and close engagement). Further, it brings into relief the variance in life experiences that we often find between our participants and our student instructors. Our students come from a range of SES, racial, ethnic, and other social strata, and the life experiences of our participants are often quite different from those of our students.

TASTE, ASSUMPTIONS, SOCIAL STRATA

Our students and the participants each enjoy the interactions and the ideas that are shared, but now and then the tension between ideas about taste and nutrition are revealed in the perceptions and assumptions of both groups. A few instances serve to illustrate this point. First, in a summer lunch program at a local school, we had scheduled a weekly "taste education" event where our Cooking Matters® team would present a range of foods within a category (fruits, cheeses, vegetables, grains, etc.) and the children would talk with us about which foods they liked, why they liked them, what flavors and textures they were sensing, and more. Children would vote for their favorites, and we would tally the votes and come back next week with an update of their favorites. My colleague and I challenged the students to include foods that would challenge their palates a bit. For instance, during the week of cheese tasting, we included not only mild cheddar and mozzarella cheeses, but brie and a few other sharper cheeses. While we recognized that the children and their families may not be able to access all of these foods, we tried to keep the range of options affordable and not select anything that would be far outside of budget constraints. The children selected a sharp cheese as their favorite that week, surprising all of the students and instructors in our program. In fact, the students were hesitant to include these cheeses because of their assumptions about the palate and taste preferences of the children, based on both their age and perceptions of their experiences and opportunities. My students made similar assumptions about the children throughout the summer, only to be confronted with results that broke their expectations. Another example occurred during a week where we had various types of canned meat products for the children to taste and describe. Our instructors assumed that the children would not like these foods, because in their opinion they were neither "good to eat" nor "good to think." However, the children likely had different experiences with canned meat in their home lives, and many enjoyed a range of the selections. My students were surprised at this, but also felt justified when the children didn't like the canned meat. This is in stark contrast with a week where various vegetables were offered, and when children didn't like certain options, my students

encouraged them to keep trying them, asserting that they might eventually like them. It seems that when foods are "good to think," it is easier to justify encouraging the changing of tastes, where foods that are not "good to think" are not encouraged – despite the reality that "good to think" is loaded with cultural, ideological, and contextual influences. We talked often with the student instructors about their assumptions, and the biases that lead to them, and while I believe that there were fewer assumptions at the end of the 10 weeks, the tensions between the expectations of my students and the subjective, ideographic, varying tastes of the participants still remained.

In another instance, in a 6-week course focused on adult participants, both our students and the participants made interesting assumptions about each others' taste preferences. In a lesson focused on both increasing vegetable intake and using a flexible recipe "framework" for cooking, students wanted to avoid using tofu and peanut sauce because they felt that the participants would be resistant to trying these foods. In the end, these ingredients were included. And, much to the surprise of our students, the favorite dish of the class (with little exception) was the stir fry dish that used the tofu and peanut sauce. Conversely, in the same class, our participants made assumptions about foods that our student instructors (me included!) would and would not enjoy – particularly focused on perceived "unhealthy" and "processed" foods like frozen pizza and pop tarts. They were surprised (and delighted) to learn that many of us also enjoy frozen pizza and pop tarts, and because our approach is focused on patterns and not individual foods, we were not admonishing them for these preferences.

There have been other instances of misguided assumptions – from my students assuming that our participants have experienced specialty foods with a "health halo" (Schuldt, Muller, & Schwarz, 2012) such as pomegranate, quinoa or amaranth; to assumptions about the presence (or absence) or cooking equipment, such as a slow cooker or a blender, in participants' kitchens. While these assumptions aren't directly taste-oriented, they flow into the experiential avenues of taste, by both decreasing the direct experience of tasting certain foods, to developing a societal "expectation" around particular foods, based on their perceived refinement and link to social class. These tensions reinforce societal boundaries, even in the midst of dialogue focused on navigating the differences. Indeed, both our Cooking Matters® team and our participants are not only discussing objective, sensory taste relative to the foods in our class, but we're also negotiating and navigating subjective, societal taste, and broadening our exposure and experiences together. It is no wonder that the ideographic application of nutritional guidelines is rare – it takes real work and dedication to navigate!

TASTE IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

These illustrations attempt to demonstrate the complexity of taste, and how ideologies and experiences around taste can clash across social strata. They also attempt to illustrate some of the tensions in the descriptions of taste that were explored earlier in this paper. If we are to repair the losses of life through taste, as Brillat-Savarin (1854) implores, perhaps we need to recognize the many dimensions of taste in the process of doing so. Even if we provide ample opportunity for experiences as routes into taste – through pleasure, knowledge, and even indifference, it is important to recognize that taste is also loaded with societal expectations and standards, which can both aid in forming individual taste preferences, and also come into conflict with them.

In our case, we are treading the murky waters of embedding taste within a rhetorical landscape focused on reductionist nutritional principles. We're using Perullo's (2016) notion of experience around pleasure and knowledge as an avenue into these discussions, and coming face-to-face with objective, societal norms around which food is "good to think," (Falk, 1991) when our student instructors *and* our participants each reveal their assumptions about the other. When we break through those assumptions, and have a chance to discuss food on a subjective, ideographic level, we reach outcomes that move beyond objective, societal conceptions of taste,

and our participants can find solutions that meld the best evidence regarding dietary health with the myriad of individual cultural, sensory, and economic realities. Examples of this level of success abound, from the example used earlier of barley as a substitution in Latin American recipes, to the range of participants who have experienced new flavors and textures and built them into their family's food landscape. Perhaps in the future, dietary guidelines will consider the range of both subjective and objective aspects of taste, and find ways to encourage dialogue that facilitates an ideographic approach to dietary health, and the application of evidence-based dietary guidance within the experiential ecology of taste development. As one of our young Cooking Matters® participants once said, "I didn't think I'd like this, but I did. It makes me wonder what other things I might like if I tried them." Taste is important, and can be a great way to foster dialogue, break the cycle of nutritional reductionism, and bring together people from a range of backgrounds, beliefs, and life experiences.

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BIOGRAPHY

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Understanding Taste in India: Social Systems to Digital Spaces

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ABSTRACT
Food studies includes ideas on the environment, constructions of regional identity and culinary history. Pierre Bourdieu said "taste is the basis of all that one has—people and things—and all that one is for others, whereby one classifies oneself and is classified by others." In the Indian context, his words find relevance in the way food and taste are hierarchized through the caste system. The Indian caste system was born out of the need to segregate beef and meat-eaters from vegetarians, leading to the classification of people as impure and pure based on their tastes. The caste system has, over the years, acted simultaneously as a creator and reinforcer of such taste hierarchies and culinary history evidences such dominant inscription. With time, however, social mobility has increased and, as Appadurai says in the landmark essay "How to Make a National Cuisine," the moral implications of food have shifted. Today, food tradition in India is being documented more than ever, with food blogs being as prolifically abundant as comments, reviews and recommendations of food destinations. These recipes and food experiences, situated in the digital space, have begun defining our interactions around food, opening new windows for Indian food studies as a whole. In exploring these shifts in understandings of taste from social systems to digital ones, we will explore changing trends in the documentation of food culture and its implications for community in India.

KEY WORDS
Caste, Cookbooks, India

Food played a central role in the life and culture of Indians of all religious communities, social strata and geographical regions. P.V Kane, the great authority on Hindu law, observed that in the myriad dharmashastra texts, the rules regarding the subject of taking meals, bhojana, were second in importance only to those of marriage...food and its consumption have represented at once a medium of exchange and rank and a reflection of personal moral identity and social relationship.

-Frank F. Conlon, *Dining Out in Bombay*

THE MORALITY OF EATING

Food is inherently political. What we eat and how we do so is determined by the larger political, social and economic systems that surround us. What better place than India to find the meaning of this statement: a country where defining a national cuisine is nearly impossible due to the sheer variety of regional cuisines and ways of eating. Known for its food extremes, with scarcity and malnutrition on one hand, and its rich history of spices and treasured, expensive ingredients on the other, India represents a complex context for the study and understanding of food.

Owing to this very complexity, the politics of eating in India consists of multiple aspects, and includes moral, religious and spiritual connotations. It is not just about what you eat, it is also about what you don't eat, and when you choose not to eat. For Gandhi, for instance, fasting was a political act as well as one that he considered absolutely essential to his being (Slate, 2019). He saw it as a form of prayer, a means to disconnect from the material world to allow his body to rest. He saw it as a purification of the physical body and the soul- what we today refer to as a "detox" (ibid). At the same time, his fasts also garnered national attention and became a means of protest. When he encouraged Indians to fast for a day after the First World War and the British rule's denial to grant India home rule, the sheer numbers and commitment to the cause made the fast a mass strike. It was an act of defiance and a demonstration of the power of the people, in the most silent way possible. It was, as Nico Slate says, "a radical protest in a religious act" (Slate, 2019, p. 149). Thus, his choice not to eat, became at once a moral, spiritual and deeply political act.

This overlap of the political, spiritual, moral and social in food is visible in various food practices in India as well. In many ways, food is a site of intersection for all of these factors, making the act of eating one that is loaded with meaning. The food ethos in India is obviously a diverse one. However, most beliefs about food tend to find their origins in Aryan food practices (Achaya, 1994). The belief was that all food had some inherent qualities, beyond nutritional value. When consumed, these qualities would transfer from the food, into the eater. Spicy foods were associated with qualities like lust and anger, while relatively mild foods were linked with peace and tranquillity. For the Aryans, thus, consumption of food figured into a much larger cosmic moral cycle. Cooking and eating were not just about sustenance, but about connecting the qualities of the food with those of the eater. In this way, food becomes intrinsically linked to identity and thus becomes an increasingly important part of who you are and where you come from (Fischler, 1988).

FOOD TABOOS AND CASTE

Rules and classifications help us, in large part, understand and make sense of food. Claude Fischler outlines two such classifications that define a cuisine: the first level classifies food as edible and inedible. Once this classification has been established, a more complicated segregation occurs- one often based on religion and social taboos (Fischler, 1988). Indian food and the many rituals associated with it are inseparable. Apart from the basic classification of foods into different groups based on nutritional value, there is also a division based on what is "pure" and "impure". And these notions are not limited to food items, but also extend to the cook and the eater. Specifically, Appadurai points to how early Hindu treatises on food pertain more to the consumption of the

food than its creation. This peculiar feature of Indian food history marks the trend to regard commentaries on food more as instructional manuals than what we today view as recipe books (Appadurai, 1981).

K T Achaya in *Indian Food: A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food* notes a distinct taxonomy of Hindu food that derives from a distinction of cooking with and without fire. As sources for such histories he notes the discussion of food often happened in ancient medical treatises like *Susrutasamhita* (written around 3rd or 4th century AD) and *Charakasamhita* (written in the 3rd century BC) that devoted over 5 of its 120 chapters to food, detailing the kind and quantity of recommended eating (as cited in Zimmerman, 1987).

These taboos are best understood in the context of the Indian caste system. Traditionally, members of the upper caste did not deem it acceptable to receive cooked food from members of lower castes (Achaya, 1994). So ingrained are ideas of purity and pollution within this system that there were also restrictions on sharing of utensils among members of different castes. No amount of cleaning could purify utensils used by members of a lower caste. Upper caste tastes and sensibilities dictated how food was understood, defined and consumed. Food items that were most valued would thus be the ones most ridden with transactional complexity. Milk was one such item, owing to its versatility as a food and to the fact that it came from the cow, an animal greatly revered and worshipped in the country. Held as almost sacred, milk distribution and consumption were regulated, so as for it not to be "polluted"[1].

Food and ways of eating, do not just mark the boundaries between upper and lower castes, but also between human beings and God (Rege et al, 2009). The upper castes, owing to their knowledge of ancient texts, considered themselves closer to God, and thus deserving of privileges in matters of food and consumption. They even considered the domestic hearth to be a place of sanctity, and often situated it right next to the place of worship in a home. When eating a meal, it was common practice to first offer a small amount to the Gods. For the upper castes, food was understood in the context of religion and was thus treated with associated notions of purity.

Members of the lower castes, owing to these very regulations, did not have the luxury of thinking of food in the same way. The privileges of the upper caste determined the nature of food available to them. As a result, lower castes would often eat what the upper caste wouldn't or deemed impure/unworthy of consumption. The luxury of choice was afforded only to the elite. This is reflective of Bourdieu's analysis of taste, in that, what was and even today is considered "good food" originates from this luxury that the upper castes enjoyed. The cuisines of the lower castes, on the other hand, were born out of necessity, originating from making the best of what they had (Deepak, 2018). Chicken feet stews, animal blood and ant *chutney* became delicacies for them. Their tastes developed, not from concerns about nutrition or through ingenious cooking methods, but through what was left over. The Hindi word *joothan* means "that which is left over after eating". This was a precious word for people belonging to the lower castes. It was what made their daily meals and what dictated their understanding of flavour, food and the social system they were a part of. The following quote by Om Prakash Valmiki, a Dalit[2] (lower caste) man, for instance, highlights the ways in which immense pleasure was derived from eating leftovers from upper caste weddings:

[1] "Pollution" here refers to the upper caste idea that objects or spaces touched or inhabited by members of the lower caste would become impure or contaminated and thus unusable or unfit for consumption thereafter.

[2] Dalit means "broken/scattered" in Hindi and Sanskrit. It is a term used to refer to the members of the lowest social group in the Hindu caste system. This is considered an acceptable, non-derogatory term of reference as it is the name the members of this group gave themselves in the 1930's.

> During a wedding, when the guests and the baratis, the bridegroom's party, were eating their meals, the chuhras would sit outside with huge baskets. After the baratis had eaten, the dirty pattals or leaf plates were put in the chuhras baskets, which they would take home to save the jhootan sticking to them. The little pieces of pooris, bits of sweetmeat and a little bit of vegetable were enough to make them happy. The jhootan was eaten with much relish." (as quoted in Rege et al, 2009)

In the hierarchy of food, sweets and dairy products were considered upper caste luxuries. While for the upper castes, sweets represented the highest form of food, since they were prepared with milk and clarified butter; for the lower castes, they represented a sense of desire, one more aspirational than real (Deepak, 2018). In a *Marathi* folk song, a woman belonging to the lower caste asserts that a bowl of sweets will never compare to a bowl of beef, because the beef can give them a lot more nutrition and actually fill their stomach; implying that sweets are a luxury of the rich. The phrase is relevant in many ways. For one, it implies that sweets are a luxury of the elite and entirely impractical for lower castes. It also highlights an important difference in the understanding of food, thinking of it in terms of taste and as an assertion of social status versus thinking of it in terms of sustenance and necessity. For the upper castes, a bowl of sweets does not mean too much. Easily affordable, it is a symbol of celebration and happiness. For the lower castes, however, it symbolizes privilege, wealth and prosperity.

Another important thing the phrase does is resignify that which is looked down upon, in this case, beef (Guru, 2019). In Hinduism, beef is a taboo meat to be avoided at all costs. Again, this is because the meat comes from the cow, a being so revered in the religion that it is often referred to as "Mother". Thus, the lower castes' consumption of beef was seen as a reinstatement of their lowly status. In this phrase, however, a Dalit woman flips the narrative by dismissing the symbol of wealth (sweets) and choosing the food of the lower castes over it.

This kind of resignification is also visible in present-day Dalit protests. Often, Dalit agitations are named after the foods specific to their cuisine (Masoodi, 2016). For instance, they consume the head (*mundi*), trotters (*khur*) and digestive system (*sundari*) of a goat and several protests are thus titled *khur-mundi-sundari andolan* (head-trotters-intestine protest). This is important because in the process, they are reclaiming the foods they eat, that are otherwise looked down upon by the upper castes, and using it to assert their rights.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a Dalit activist, believed that the hierarchization of food is what led to the creation of the caste system and the systems of power within it. He stated that in this system, vegetarians were placed at the top of the pyramid, followed by people who consumed meat, with beef-eaters at the very end (ibid). Even today, the consumption of beef is a site of immense contestation. These decades-old rituals and taboos still seem to dictate tastes. However, in this complex hierarchy, foods considered more "elite" are also increasingly aspirational. Previous research, in conversations with members of lower castes, reveal that they have begun to change their eating habits in order to fit in with the more elite (Chigateri, 2008). While the caste system still finds a stronghold on Indian society, a lot has changed around it. Employment opportunities, education levels and mobility have all increased, leading to rural to urban migration. People from different backgrounds now work together, use the same public transport and live in the same neighbourhoods. As a result, in order to situate themselves appropriately in their milieu, members of lower castes sometimes stop consuming beef and other such delicacies, at least outwardly. This may be understood as a kind of sanskritization (Guru, 2019). However, even here, it is important not to misunderstand this as a personal choice. Decisions to forgo the consumption of specific foods, known to belong to specific social groups, seem to have more to do with forgoing markers of social status and avoiding judgement than with personal agency. In this context, aspiring to a

more "sophisticated taste" also means aspiring to a higher caste and class and what is understood as a better life.

TASTE AND DOMINANT INSCRIPTION

Though Pierre Bourdieu wrote about taste in the context of French society, the construction of taste through the construction of social hierarchy is a narrative account that we also see evidenced in the history of taste making in the Indian sub-continent. In his 1984 ethnography on class in France, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* Bourdieu noted the relation between culture and value as power and class and how taste operates at the boundaries of classes (Bourdieu, 1984). Even within the Indian context, regional identity was forged through food and as dishes became metonymies of regions, the distinctive marker of place was more its food than its people. Even though gastronomic practices differed between castes in the same region, the broader associations of food as region were written in elite terms. Unsurprisingly, a brief survey of the history of cookbooks in the Indian sub-continent reveals this practice of dominant inscription

As is frequently the case in food studies, referring to cookbooks in India reveals only a certain slice of the historical pie. What it showcases more than anything else though is the absence or exclusion of certain transcriptions of identity. What Appadurai's landmark essay points to is that while the history of cookbooks reveals that there has been a nationalization and standardization of Indian cuisine, this practice of dominant transcription has led to misrepresentation of several regions and further reveals the textual trace of social hegemony in caste terms. While an available chronology of the cookbook would reinforce this automatically, tracing foodways through Indian historical sources also reveals dominant transcription and social exclusion, through a selective documentation of exalted memory. The written record does not in any way subsume food memories but, as this essay will detail, the gaps in documentation and cookbook chronology are refracted through other records. As Appadurai (1998) so eloquently says,

> Cookbooks, which usually belong to the humble literature of complex civilizations, tell unusual cultural tales. They combine the sturdy pragmatic virtues of all manuals with the vicarious pleasures of the literature of the senses. They reflect shifts in the boundaries of edibility, the proprieties of the culinary process, the logic of meals, the exigencies of the household budget, the vagaries of the market, and the structure of domestic ideologies. The existence of cookbooks presupposes not only some degree of literacy, but often an effort on the part of some variety of specialist to standardize the regime of the kitchen, to transmit culinary lore, and to publicize particular traditions guiding the journey of food from marketplace to kitchen to table.

While the dominant trace of foodway stories for India would focus on the history of trade, a side history emerges, as is the case for example with Arabic cookbooks like Al Warraq (that date to the 9th century), when we see how an early 12th century Sanskrit text, *Manasolassa*, has incidental descriptions of food habits. The five book compendium *Manasolassa,* details this in an entire volume, namely Book 3, *Bhartur Upabhogakarna.* As early treatises on ancient India, such texts, as Achaya states in the case of the Keladi Kingdom's King Basavaraja's S*hivatattvaratnakara,* as a work that includes food as one of the 64 arts are looked to as a historical source for ecological and food histories of ancient India. (Achaya, 1994).

Recently, recuperative attempts have drawn from records that also directly recorded age-old recipes. In keeping with these records of royal patronage, recent publications such as *The Mughal Feast* (which transcribes the Persian *nuskha-e-shahjani*) and *Khazana: An Indo-Persian Cookbook*

with recipes inspired by the Mughals also draw on the limited availability of archival sources for their descriptions. The former is a translation from the original Persian manuscript of handwritten recipes from the kitchen of Mughal emperor, Shah Jehan into English and the latter (as the cover informs us is written by the winner of Masterchef 2017) is a contemporary adaptation inspired by a history of traditional dishes. All things considered, the abundance of Persian and Mughal food references is also as mention of archival abundance--recipes were extensively documented in Emperor Akbar's *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Alwan-E-Nemat* written during Emperor Jehangir's time, and many cookbooks derive such historical inspiration (Vishal, 2019).

Such historical developments reflect a specific culture of food and gastronomy that are now framed by the modern-day genre of the cookbook. This was even the case in Richard II's era, when we already see the textual appearance of a homogenized "curry" that denotes a single ingredient wrapped in mystery and lore. "Indian" food was a similar invention for nation and diaspora. In K T Achaya's foundational historical companion, chapter 10 details "regional cuisines" through archaeological and literary evidence. Achaya notes the history of arrival of foods from the new world where he finds that "language carries clues to food movements and adoptions wherever cultures have come into contact," right from very ancient times to later historical periods, and in his description of region too Achaya relies on finding culinary traces in language. So, in the case of Karnataka, he delineates a progression over 1000 years and also identifies specific regions such as Hyderabad, Kerala etc. as containing points of contact and modification. It is this selective transcription of taste, as region, which constitutes the secret history of cookbooks. Just as Arjun Appadurai (1998) has argued in "How to Make a National Cuisine", a narrative of nationalization conceals the specific elision of region and caste.

Moving on from "moral and medical beliefs and prescriptions" and royal kitchens, the rise of the modern-day recipe book gains importance with dislocation. As Appadurai notes, when communities move away from their original homelands and nostalgia drives the need to remember, we see a new category of food writing emerge in the form of transcribed recipes. The "textualization" of food into cookbooks already indicates privileged arrival. As many of these works are in English, Appadurai notes that cookbooks in postcolonial India circulated amongst middle class women through magazine recipes and manuals of aspiration. Given that many of these publications are in English, it also indicates an urban readership, whether in India or abroad. The popularity of Madhur Jaffrey's cookbooks in the west, with titles like *World of the East, 1981* and Tarla Dalal's bestsellers in India, most famously, *The Pleasures of Vegetarian Cooking*, point to a new audience ready to learn the ways of cooking via an imagined past or cosmopolitan future. Whether in the form of cookbooks or community anthologies, these collections tended to select a few samples of the vast cuisines they claimed to represent, and in so doing often ended up constituting the category of that very community's identity on the basis of that sample selection of consumption.

Today too, whether in food blogs or other media, the narrative of food memory is still recorded through dominant inscription. The perception of the digital world as one of freedom, where many voices mingle does not bear out much subaltern inscription. With greater accessibility and fewer barriers to language and class, one would expect the digital to be a site of diversity and inclusion, especially with regard to food and cooking. However, the voices of diaspora, in blogs like Archanaskitchen.com or the emphasis on vegan options on foodomania.com reflect the aspirations of a citizenry that craves the familiar or the sanctioned surprise through a known cosmopolitanism. Well known food journals and platforms cater more to food in relation to lifestyle choices, rather than a new historical documentation of what was largely left out in the past. The food histories of the lower castes remain in oral histories, just as they have always been and still struggle to find their way into mainstream digital spaces and bestselling cookbooks. Just as there was a historical lack of culinary documentation in India, today we have homogenized the

caste distinctions to focus on common aspirations for fast food, western cuisines or, closer home, food that is largely upper caste and elite. If the history of culinary documentation and its present have shown us anything, it is that those who remain hungry, are also left off the page. In order to even begin piecing together and understanding the great mystery that is Indian food, we must first acknowledge and actively bring forward the oral histories and food memories of the lower castes, the voices that could change the entire narrative of culinary history in India.

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From Bland to Grand: Path Creation and The Rise of Craft Beer

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ABSTRACT
The rise of craft beer in the United States reflects the interplay of demand-side and supply-side forces. Most studies of this development have focused on the supply side, discussing the key role played by entrepreneurial brewers. Yet, an equally important part of the story concerns how and why consumer tastes changed away from mass-produced lager-style beer in favor of the wide range of styles developed through the craft beer revolution. This paper develops a path creation analysis to explain how and why craft beer emerged in the United States.

KEY WORDS
Path Dependency; Path Creation; Brewing; Craft Beer

For much of the 20th century, American beer made headlines more for its consistency than its taste or flavor. While economists often lauded the industry for its size and operational efficiency, many consumers and brewers lamented the boring sameness of its best-selling brands. Eric Idle, in a famous 1982 Monty Python routine, joked that American beer was like making love in a canoe since both were "f***ing close to water." A few years later, Michael Jackson (1988), a well-known English beer journalist, echoed this sentiment, though in slightly more polite language, asserting that "[The big U.S. brewers] first intention is to win widespread acceptance. They seek to offend no one, therefore offer little to excite anyone. Should any drinker nonetheless become excited, there is always the option of an even lighter-bodied version of the same style." A decade later, the prominent US industrial economist, F.M. Scherer (1996) continued this critique, writing that "the leading U.S. premium brewers have deliberately chosen formulas sufficiently bland to win a mass following among relatively inexperienced consumers and (through repeat purchase) consumers acculturated to bland beers." More recently, Choi and Stack (2005), set out to explain how and why "American beers…become less flavorful and less distinguishable during the 20th century."

Yet, in a completely unanticipated development, the seeds of a beer revolution had begun to take root in the US during the 1970s and 1980s. Drawing inspiration from fuller-bodied, more flavorful European beers they had tasted while traveling abroad or had consumed in the US as imports, a handful of entrepreneurs opened what came to be called microbreweries, very small operations typically brewing hundreds or thousands of barrels of beer as opposed to the tens of millions of barrels brewed by large scale industrial operations. Rather surprisingly, microbreweries slowly caught on and by the 1990s and 2000s, they had spread throughout much of the US. In an amazing turn of events, by the 2010s, many of the world's leading beer commentators argued that the US, once mocked for the homogenization of its mass-produced beer, had emerged as the world's most varied and interesting beer market. The speed of this development was quite amazing: by the mid 2010s, craft beer accounted for more than 10% of volume of sales and close to 25% of the total value of sales.

Yet, thus far, discussions of this revolution have focused more on the what than the why. Elzinga et al (2015) and Elzinga et al (2017) discuss the craft beer revolution, but reflecting their roles as industrial organization economists, they focus primarily on supply side factors. Hindy (2015) and Acitelli (2013) provide excellent general overviews of the craft beer revolution, but again, the focus is more on supply than demand. Hindy writes from his perspective as a cofounder of Brooklyn Brewery while Acitelli examines this development as an informed beer journalist. Both books provide detailed chronologies of the who, what, and where of the US craft beer revolution; however, they do not focus as much on the why: how did a nation that had developed a well-known taste for bland beer suddenly go in the opposite direction and become host to (arguably) the most diverse, most unique, most creative beer scene in the world? To help answer this question, this paper situates the craft beer revolution within the broader context of changing attitudes and understandings about food and drink in the US during these years. It examines developments involving brewers, consumers, and other complementary forces which combined to help foster this radically new market.

The article begins with a brief overview of the concepts of path dependency and path creation and it then explores how these ideas can help account for the emergence of the craft beer revolution in the US.

PART I: FROM PATH DEPENDENCY TO PATH CREATION

Social scientists have introduced a raft of models and techniques to study markets. Many standard economic models have been criticized for being ahistorical (for not exploring how and why a market changes over time) and for assuming a high degree of market efficiency (that natural forces automatically lead to superior market allocations and efficient outcomes). An alternative approach to studying market developments come through the literature of path dependency and path creation. Path Dependency stories focus on how inefficiencies and sub-optimalities can become

locked-in as industry standards, while Path Creation analyses highlight the role entrepreneurs play in shaping new market boundaries and possibilities. Insights from both of these lines of thought can help explain the how and the why of the craft beer revolution.

Paul David (1985) and Brian Arthur (1989, 1990) published the first path dependency papers: the basic assertion in these and related essays is that suboptimal or inefficient technologies can be become locked in as industry standards and, in instances where there are significant network effects, these inefficiencies may persist for extended periods of time (Garud et al., 2003; Stack and Gartland, 2003).

During the 1990s, Robin Cowan provided additional examples to support David and Arthur's work (1990, 1996). In his 1990 essay on nuclear power reactors, he argues that light water reactors emerged as the dominant technology despite the fact that it was "not the best technology, either economically or technically"(Cowan,1990, p.541). Cowan asserts that when there are competing technologies and strong increasing returns, sub-optimal technologies may become locked-in as industry standards (Cowan, 1990).

While the path dependency literature is best known for these examples of technology lock-in, there are in fact two other important dimensions of path dependency: regulatory lock-in and behavioral lock-in. Malone & Gomez (2019) examine the market for hemp in the US and explain how and why the particular regulatory system for hemp emerged in the US. They show why hemp, a product described by some as "no more harmful than industrial switchgrass" came to be classified and regulated as a Schedule 1 drug (Malone and Gomez, 2019). As a result, they conclude that although there is broad bi-partisan and industrial support for reclassifying hemp, the regulatory lock-in that has been set in place for over seventy years has proved very difficult to overcome. Regulatory lock-in can prove just as difficult to overcome as technical lock-in.

A third type of lock-in deals with institutional, firm, and individual actions. Behavioral lock-in occurs when a producer or consumer becomes "stuck" in some sort of inefficiency or suboptimality due to habit, organizational learning or culture. Once a product has become established as an industry standard, and once consumers or users have invested time or money in learning a particular system or becoming comfortable with a traditional practice, they will be less likely to try a rival process, even if over time it proves superior.

Historians and sociologists of food have argued that people develop deep-seated roots to the particular foods, tastes and flavors they grow up with (Hess and Hess, 1977; Levenstein, 1993). As a particular food or beverage takes root in a culture, it can become very difficult to alter prevailing perceptions about what this product is and what it could or should be. This may diminish the willingness of consumers to try new foodstuffs, especially if they look, smell and taste different from more familiar offerings (Krugman, 1998). Stack et al (2016) utilized a path dependency model to explain how the lock-in of brand preferences in national beer markets has impeded efforts to create truly global beer brands. They showed that while a handful of breweries have grown into very large global breweries, the strong cultural preference for beer brands that consumers grew up with has stymied the emergence of true global beer brands.

While path dependency stories are tremendously important for highlighting the role of history and for showing that sub-optimal processes may become locked in as industry standards, some scholars have developed a related line of thought that they have termed path creation. These authors seek to combine the insight of sub-optimal lock-in with an emphasis on the active role firms play in shaping their external environments. This perspective highlights the role of entrepreneurs and firms in shaping and interacting with their environments (Garud and Karnoe, 2001).

Two ideas in particular help differentiate path creation from path dependency; real time influence and mindful deviation. In contrast to path dependent stories, path creation narratives focus on the real time effects firms can have on their surroundings. According to Garud and Karnoe, "entrepreneurs meaningfully navigate a flow of events even as they constitute them . . . entrepreneurs attempt to shape paths in real time, by setting processes in motion that actively

shape emerging social practices and artifacts, only some of which may result in the creation of a new technological field" (Garud and Karnoe, 2001). This is quite different from the post-hoc explanations that characterize path dependent arguments.

In addition, path creation accounts highlight the process of mindful deviation. As noted above, path dependency does not focus on how entrepreneurs may actively shape their environment. By mindful deviation, path creation writers mean that entrepreneurs often need to change the endogenzied social practice, regulations or institutions away from an accepted, comfortable or optimal structure. For example, the first generation of craft brewers who wanted to establish brewpubs (restaurants which also produce their own beer) had to change state regulatory laws which did not allow beer producers to also sell their beer directly to consumers.

According to path creation, the new technologies and production processes that win out in the marketplace reflect the dynamic interplay of producers, consumers, and regulators. According to this line of thought, industry analysis must be guided by detailed historical overviews of particular markets. It is not enough to assert that inferior technologies have become locked-in as industry standards; rather, the goal must be to demonstrate how strategic groups of firms or particular firms have interacted with their buyers, suppliers, and regulators to enable them to standardize what may have been and continues to be a substandard product or technology. Consequently, path creation stories highlight the active role of the entrepreneur and the firm, for it is these actors that help shape the evolution of markets and the rules by which markets operate. In essence, path dependency has the entrepreneur passively on the outside looking in, while path creation has the entrepreneur actively on the inside looking out (Stack and Gartland, 2003).

Path Creation has played a very important role in bringing firm agency into the story; however, existing path creation stories may be faulted for focusing mostly on the supply side of the equation and not devoting a commensurate amount of analysis to the demand side. New paths require buyers and sellers, and a key question that emerges is why buyers are willing to break from their established patterns in favor of a new product. This is particularly important in the area of food and drink when consumer tastes have developed over decades (even centuries in some cases), and efforts to explain changing consumer preferences most go beyond the role of entrepreneurs: that is, analysis of the supply side is necessary but not sufficient.

The rise of craft beer in the US clearly shows that the path dependent lock-in of bland, homogenous beer has been broken; the craft beer revolution can be viewed as a new path in which consumers increasingly value a wider array of beer styles and flavors. Yet, this process should not be viewed as the inexorable result of successful entrepreneurs creating a new supply for which demand miraculously emerged. The emerging market for craft beer in the US reflects the interplay of a number of forces, some operating within the traditional market for beer with others unfolding at a broader social level.

PART II: FROM PATH DEPENDENCY AND BLAND BEER TO PATH CREATION AND CRAFT BEER

In their analysis of the post-Prohibition US beer market, Choi and Stack (2005) highlighted the active role breweries played in helping to create and foster a demand for a particularly American type of beer. They examined a series of steps taken by a small set of firms that, in combination with a series of broader social and technological developments, helped lock-in a preference for blander, more generically-tasting, beer. Their story, though, basically ends in the 1980s: at this point the direction of the US beer market seemed pre-ordained and the only real question concerned the relative market share of the three largest breweries (Anheuser Busch, Miller and Coors) which collectively accounted for over 80 percent of total sales. Yet, in a development no one really anticipated, the 1980s and 1990s represented the last decades of beer monopoly and beer monotony in the US.

The Supply Side

Since path creation theorists have typically focused on the steps entrepreneurs have taken to (re)shape their competitive environment, this analysis will also begin on the supply side. From the vantage of craft beer's recent successes, it is sometimes hard to remember the amazingly humble roots of the craft beer revolution. It truly began with one very small brewery and it then took over a decade before any additional craft breweries entered the market. Fritz Maytag, the founder of Anchor Steam Brewing in San Francisco, is widely acknowledged to be the father of American craft beer. Anchor Steam produced a number of beers that greatly influenced the first generation of craft breweries in the US in the 1980s and 1990s. Closely following Maytag in importance are Ken Grossman, who established Sierra Nevada in 1981 and Jim Koch, who started Boston Beer Company in 1984. Grossman and Koch, in turn, both inspired many of the craft breweries that followed, though they took radically different paths on their way to market success. Koch was trained as both a lawyer and an MBA and was working as a consultant at BCG before forming Boston Beer Company. He pioneered the contract brewing model where he outsourced the physical brewing operations and concentrated his energies on branding and marketing (Koch, 2016). Grossman, by contrast, started as a homebrewer who was able to slowly but steadily expand his business behind excellent products and shrewd business dealings (Grossman, 2013). In direct contrast to Koch, Grossman notes in his memoir that he did not want Sierra Nevada to invest in marketing and advertising early on, viewing such expenditures as distractions from the real goal: brewing great beer.

What Koch, Grossman and other early craft brewers shared in common was a frustration with the dominant homogenous beers in the US and a desire to offer something different. Collectively, these pioneering craft breweries helped to mindfully deviate from the established rules of the beer market. They offered a radically different type of beer and they challenged prevailing business models regarding how to get their beer to market; however, in this instance supply did not automatically create its own demand.

The Demand Side

While it is tempting to think that the biggest challenge to changing the market for beer in the US was simply to have entrepreneurs like Maytag, Grossman, and Koch work their magic and start selling their new beers, in fact, the biggest stumbling block to this reordering came from seventy years of entrenched consumer preferences for a specific style of beer. Over the course of the 20th century, beer, more than many products, came to have significant cultural and social allegiances. Many American beer drinkers developed deep brand loyalty during the middle-late 20th century, and the fact that most of them couldn't differentiate between competing brands in blind taste tests did not seem to matter in the marketplace. This presented the first generation of craft brewers with a tremendous challenge: even if they could successfully figure out how to brew quality craft beers and get them to market, would consumers drink them?

The craft beer revolution required both a new set of entrepreneurs and a changing consumer mindset. The issue of how and why tastes change is complicated, but two sets of interconnected factors helped shape changing consumer attitudes in the market for beer. The first set of factors reflect developments within the beer market while the second set reflected broader social-cultural developments. Part of the reason path creation stories have traditionally focused on the supply side is that it is relatively easier to identify and discuss the roles played by key producers: explaining why some brand-loyal consumers began to explore quite different alternatives is not nearly as straightforward.

There are three particularly important factors that helped contribute to changing consumer preferences within the beer market: a) the legalization of home brewing; b) the expanding portfolio of importers and distributors; and c) the quality and broader availability of beer journalism. In 1978, President Carter signed legislation that legalized home brewing: following the repeal of Prohibition, home brewing was technically illegal in the US, though small levels of home brewing

were tolerated. After 1978, however, the hobby and business of home brewing exploded in the US, and many consumers tasted their first craft beers at home. The home brew movement grew significantly following Charlie Papazian's publication of his highly influential *Complete Joy of Homebrewing* in 1984, a book that influenced future craft brewers and consumers looking for something different.

While discussions of the craft beer revolution typically focus on the birth and growth of US craft breweries, during the 1980s and 1990s, imported "craft" beers from the UK, Belgium and Germany played a very important role in exposing many Americans to new and different beer flavors and styles. During these formative years of the craft beer revolution, the annual production and geographic reach of America's new breweries was quite limited: more American beer drinkers had access to the increasing range of imported beers. While imported beers were not new, in the 1980s and 1990s, two importers in particular began to bring in a series of beers that were quite different from the light lagers that had dominated this market segment: Merchant du Vin in Seattle and VanBerg & DeWulf in New York.

Charlie Finkel founded Merchant du Vin in 1978 and he introduced several distinctive beers into the US including Samuel Smiths from England, Orval and Rodenbach from Belgium, and Ayinger and Pinkus from Germany. Don Feinberg and Wendy Littlefield founded Vanberg & DeWulf in 1982. A bit different from Merchant du Vin, they focused exclusively on Belgian beers, though they readily acknowledged the challenges with this strategy. Reflecting back on their experiences in the 1980s they explained: "It was the dark ages. People couldn't care less. Distributors actually spit out sour beer we presented to them, saying 'Don't ever bring me anything like that again!' Slowly, we were able to educate and expose people to the great brews of 'The Beer Country.'" (DrinkingBelgianBeer.com, 2013). Discussions about changing consumer preferences often gloss over how it happens, how slow it is, and how difficult it is for the pioneering firms.

Finally, the emergence and rapid growth of quality beer journalism helped inform and entertain consumers looking to better understand how the market for beer was changing. While writers had been chronicling wine, wineries, and the market for wine for decades, this type of analysis only began for beer in the 1980s and 1990s. Michael Jackson, a British writer, pioneered serious and systematic beer journalism. Combining a voracious curiosity with a detailed understanding of beer and beer styles, his writings introduced brewers and drinkers throughout the world to the wide array of beer traditions, many of which were scarcely known outside of their local community. In 2011, *Brewery History (BH)* dedicated an entire issue to the impact Jackson and his writings had on the development of craft beer. Jackson was a skilled writer, a great story-teller, and his influence cannot be underestimated: in some ways, he was as influential on the demand side as Fritz Maytag was on the supply side. Over time, a number of other talented writers entered the field, and through these collective efforts a growing number of consumers began to learn about brewing, techniques, and styles through expertly written and produced magazines, books and videos.

However, as important as these industry-level developments were, it can be argued that an even more transformational process was unfolding at a broader socio-cultural level. Several writers have discussed the wide-ranging changes that transformed food and drinking tastes and trends in the US over the 20th century (Hess & Hess, 1977; Kamp, 2007; Levenstein, 1993). Beginning in the early 20th century, Americans slowly but steadily came to prefer the convenience of packaged (frozen, canned, bottled) foodstuffs over fresh. Large processed food companies helped transform American cooking and eating habits over the course of the 20th century; it is not surprising that mainstream American beer become more homogenous and more dependent on branding during this period (Choi and Stack, 2005). However, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, new trends emerged in American cooking. The increasing number of farmers markets, the emergence of farm-to-table restaurants, the popularity of cooking shows and celebrity chefs combined to redefine food preferences. The emergence of the craft beer revolution cannot be understood apart from

these broader social and cultural changes. In fact, the influence was two-way: for some consumers, their exposure and interest in craft beer heighted their willingness to try new foodstuffs.

PART 3: CONCLUSION

This paper has set out to explain how and, more importantly, why tastes for beer have changed in the US. It is clear that craft beer represents a clear and decisive break from the homogenized, industrial lager that dominated the market for decades following the repeal of Prohibition. However, most discussions regarding the rise of craft beer have focused on the supply side. This risks a Field of Dreams, "if you brew it, they will drink it" interpretation of this phenomena. While craft beer entrepreneurs were obviously an essential part of this process, the creation of this new path required commensurate developments on both the supply and demand side.

Stack (2020) discusses the interesting case of the Celis brewery in Austin, Texas in the 1990s. Pierre Celis was an important brewer in Belgium who helped revive the traditional witbier at his Hoegaarden brewer. In the early 1990s, Celis moved to Austin, Texas where he opened a new brewery. While his beers won critical acclaim--Michael Jackson awarded the Celis White, a perfect 4-star rating (Kitsock, 2011), the brewery was not successful, and it closed in 2000. The following year, a reporter argued that consumer tastes in Austin and Texas during the 1990s were not ready for Celis: "the kind of beer Texans overwhelmingly prefer is the antithesis of the kind of beer Pierre Celis spent his life perfecting" (Lisheron, 2001). According to this article, Texas was simply not a good market for craft beer. It is fascinating to look back and reflect on how quickly and significantly the US craft market has changed. Today, Austin is home to several highly regarded microbreweries, most notably Jester King which was founded in 2010, a decade after Lisheron's article. Jester King specializes in beers fermented with wild yeasts, a style that is seemingly much more challenging that Celis' white ales. The failure of the Celis Brewery is an important reminder that during the 1990s, craft beer culture in the US was still relatively undeveloped. That a world-class brewer producing award winning beers failed in a city that a decade later was famous for boutique breweries shows how rapidly craft beer culture and awareness can evolve.

The history of Celis brewery is a cautionary tale for path creation stories that focus too much on the supply side of the equation. The creation of a new path in areas such as beer require balanced stories that integrate producers and consumers and that incorporate the interplay between broader social and cultural forces with internal market dynamics.

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BIOGRAPHY

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Virtual Pub Crawl: Assessing the Utility of Social Media for Geographic Beer Research in the United States

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ABSTRACT
(Re)localized craft ferments have taken hold of the public imagination. Moreover, beer has become an important economic and social driver, making it an increasingly popular focus for academic study and for public policy. We surveyed the existing literature and found that most beer-related geographic research was based on historical, cultural, and economic analyses. To broaden the horizons for beer research, especially given its increasing prominence in public perceptions of taste, we examined how big data sources might be leveraged to add narrative and description to the geographic study of beer. As little is known about the utility or validity of big data sources on this topic, we investigated the presence of seven beers in two online social media communities, BeerAdvocate and Twitter. By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, vis a vis the analysis of geo-tagged social media data, we assess the potential for researchers to examine beer attributes in more granular ways. We find that BeerAdvocate is useful in terms of identifying both spatial, temporal, and thematic attributes about specific beers and breweries in a systematic way while Twitter is primarily used to re-broadcast contributions made on other platforms. Further, the results of our investigation provide information about the abundance, validity, and content of beer posts within two social media communities, directing further studies concerned with assessing the geographic taste(s) for (craft) beer in the United States.

KEY WORDS
Craft Beer, Geography, Social Media, Taste, Methods

INTRODUCTION

Craft beer in the United States has experienced meteoric growth in the past several decades; "local" beer, produced by microbreweries in identifiable communities, in particular, has grown increasingly popular (Garavaglia & Swinnen, 2017). While still only a small segment of the overall beer market, these (re)localized craft ferments have taken hold of the public imagination (Acitelli, 2017; Hindy, 2014). More importantly, beer has become an important economic and social driver (Reid & Gatrell, 2017; Slocum, Kline; Cavaliere, 2018), making it an increasingly popular focus for academic study (Patterson& Hoalst-Pullen, 2014) and for economic and social development policies (Garavaglia & Swinnen 2018; Kline, Slocum, & Cavaliere, 2017; Myles & Breen, 2018; Williams, 2017).

As a material good, beer is no longer (only) seen as a mass-produced, homogenous beverage (Reid, McLaughlin, & Moore, 2014); cultural and economic shifts have opened space for the drink to evolve[1] into a "craft" product (Ocejo, 2017), and, in some cases, even a luxury item (Williams, Atwal & Bryson, 2019). As a cultural product, since early 2008 (Daniels, 2018), beer enthusiasts and specialists, once (and still sometimes) known as "beer sommeliers," have been able to pursue certification as a *Cicerone*, wherein participants receive similar training in taste and presentation for beer as sommeliers receive for wine (MacNeil, 2015). Such developments in the production and consumption of beer, reflect wider – and changing – perspectives of "taste" (Korsmeyer, 1999) regarding the product.

Given its increasing prominence in public perceptions of taste, we examined whether and how big data sources might be leveraged to add narrative and description to geographical beer research. Questions driving such analyses could include: How do mentions of different beers vary geographically? Are there differences in how beer is discussed between various social media sources? Are some types, styles, or differently-sourced beers more visible in this kind of data? Do the different representations of beer seem to reflect varying "taste(s)" for the product? As little is known about the utility or validity of big data sources on this topic, we investigated the presence of seven exemplary beers – beers selected for their seasonal or regional characteristics (as documented in detail in the Methodology section) – in two online social media communities to produce a proof-of-concept methodological technique for asking questions of interest within available big data sources. For this study, we use two social media forums, BeerAdvocate and Twitter – BeerAdvocate is an online community website centered around an interest in beer, and Twitter is a general interest community based site – to explore the *abundance* and *type* of data available as well as its *validity* and *reliability* as a data source using the selected beers as proxies. In addition, this paper investigates what, if anything, the representation of (craft) beer, both in terms of quality and quantity, on social media reveals about beer's mutable aesthetic "taste."

STUDY BACKGROUND

We conducted a survey of the existing literature focused on beer and found that most beer-related geographic research was based on historical, cultural, and economic analyses; the methods for content analysis were primarily the same, involving text and visual analysis by manual data collection methods and data used for historical and economic accounts were largely some flavor of aggregate consumption or production secondary data.[2] Further, geographic research on the beer and wine industries – such as production or consumption trends for a region (Batzli, 2014; Elzinga

[1] Dighe (2016) reminds us, though, that prior to the major consolidation events of the 20th century, when beer brewing and distribution became globalized (Howard 2014), historically beer in the United States was produced in small batches for local distribution.

[2] Seventy nine (79) articles were reviewed from geography journals and beyond, with attention to the data sources utilized and the methodological tools or techniques applied.

et. al. 2018), neolocalism (Flack, 1997; Mathews & Patton, 2016; Schnell and Reese, 2003), sense of place/place making (Banks, 2007; Flack, 1997; Tiefenbacher, 2013), and alcohol by volume (ABV) trends overtime (Silva et al. 2017; Myles et al. 2020.) – utilized two key approaches, spatial trend analysis and comparative analysis.

Spatial trend analyses investigate brewery counts and/or consumption data across some geographical area to determine spatial trends, as illustrated by Batzli (2014), Colen and Swinnen (2016), Elzinga et. al. (2018), Hoalst-Pullen et al. (2014), Lamertz et. al. (2016), and McLaughlin et. al (2014). Data used in these studies are collected by survey (primary and secondary, via international and national NGOs, governments, or industry lobbying groups).
Primary data collection is notorious for low response rates (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016) and potentially low self-reporting for alcohol consumption (Sobell & Sobell, 1990). A limitation to secondary data is that it can be incomplete or difficult to compare across contexts (Lake et al. 2010; Silva et al. 2017).[3]

Studies using comparative analysis examine different materials such as brewery websites, beer labels, and beer names to investigate a variety of phenomena, including neolocalism and sense of place/placemaking, as illustrated, for example, by Schnell and Reese (2014) and Mathews & Patton (2016). Schnell and Reese (2014) visually examined beer labels on brewery websites to conduct a content analysis. Mathews & Patton (2016) also visually looked at labels and brewery websites for content analysis based on ethnicity and race. While these kinds of studies provide rich data, they can be hard to replicate.

Social media allows like-minded individuals to virtually gather and bond, potentially influencing both temporal and spatial patterns of brands discussed online (Laroche et al. 2012). Past geographical studies used volunteered or crowdsourced social media information to supplement secondary data, concluding that it was reasonably accurate (at least compared to other sources) and valuable, in that data collection and analysis can be conducted in near real-time (Haklay, 2010; Heikinheimo, 2017; Schnebele & Cervone, 2013). While social media data has already been used in a number of geographic studies, including studies of transportation movement (Andrienko et al. 2017), disease outbreak (Allen 2016), and natural disaster and crisis management (MacEachren et al. 2011), little work in this area has been done related to beer. Social media platforms hold promise as a potential data source for studies in beer and wine geography due to the large volume of public, easily accessible data they generate. This is especially true for geographic social media data, those data points generated by the user and tagged with geographic coordinates. Access to high-resolution data, like that provided on social media sites, could unlock additional research opportunities, by providing opportunities to explore: first-person accounts of beer or wine consumption when and where it occurs; personal consumer preference(s) for beers; as well as attributes of the beer itself, such as look, smell, taste, mouthfeel, viscosity, ABV, and international bitter units (IBUs) (Grigg, 2004). Lastly, it allows for the investigation of contemporary beer trends in the moment due to the ability to collect and store the data in near-real-time.

This study is partially inspired by the work of Zook & Poorthius (2014), who have used Twitter data to map the mentions of keywords including "wine," "beer," as well as mentions of certain beers labeled as "light" and "cheap," producing and analyzing a broad overview of the spatial footprint of the resulting dataset. Looking to investigate if nuanced observations about spatial and temporal properties of *specific beer labels* can be derived from crowd-sourced datasets, we extend their work by explicitly selecting breweries based on their *expected seasonality and regionality patterns*, as well as adding a non-seasonal, non-regional beer label (Budweiser) as a form of control.

[3] Lake et al. (2010) describes how the classification of food establishments can leave out or misclassify establishment types (i.e. bars and pubs), leading to incomplete results. Silva et al. (2017) describes how two countries, Portugal and the Netherlands, calculate consumption differently, making comparison across borders difficult or unreliable.

Furthermore, we compare the spatial, temporal and thematic themes present in *two independent datasets* – BeerAdvocate and Twitter – to explore: whether the findings derived from different crowd-sourced datasets are comparable; whether such sources can complement the existing methods used by beer geographers; and to develop a better understanding about what kinds of research questions might be made possible by the effort invested in their analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Our methodological approach combines descriptive quantitative summaries, qualitative content analysis, and a synthesis and evaluation of the trends discovered in both quantitative and qualitative analyses, each described in detail below.

Data Collection

Here, we started by inspecting beer labels with the most reviews on BeerAdvocate (BA) (BeerAdvocate Most Popular Beers, n.d.). From this list, we selected seven beer labels to form a sample that encompasses different seasonal and regional properties. The *seasonality* of a beer is determined according to its patterns in release; specifically, a "seasonal beer" refers to one that is released only during certain times of the year as opposed to being available year round. Similarly, the *regionality* of a beer is related to its availability across geographic space; namely, a beer that is released in a smaller market (and is thus not available nationwide) would be considered more "regional" than a beer that is distributed across a greater area. Note that these are not mutually exclusive categories; a particular beer could be both seasonal and regional. Our list, which was designed to include examples across the *seasonality* and *regionality* spectrum, consisted of the following labels (in alphabetical order):

Bourbon County Brand Stout (referred to as BCBS henceforth),
Budweiser,
Celebration Fresh Hop IPA (Celebration),
Hopslam Ale (Hopslam),
Kentucky Breakfast Stout (KBS),
Two Hearted Ale, and
Zombie Dust.

With the exception of Budweiser (ranked 71st with 6,634 reviews), all of the beer labels ranked in the top 20 most reviewed, with the lowest review count in our list of 10,653 for the Celebration Fresh Hop IPA and the highest review count of 15,298 for the Two Hearted Ale.

We then built our first dataset (using BA) by scraping (with in-house tools) all of the BA reviews available for each of the beer labels on the resulting list, going as far back as 1998 for some of the labels. Our resulting BA dataset contains the timestamp and the content of each review, as well as the profile location of the user who left the review (BA provides the latter at the state level).

Finally, we built a second dataset (using Twitter) by filtering geographic tweets originating in the contiguous US during 2017-2018 that mention any of the beer brands on our beer label list, using in-house tools and geographic tweet database. We've approximated the notion of the beer mention by looking for an exact use of any of the following key phrases: "Bourbon County Brand Stout", "Bourbon County Stout ", "Budweiser", "Bud", "Celebration Fresh Hop IPA", "Sierra Nevada Celebration IPA", "Hopslam Ale", "Hopslam", "#hopslam", "Kentucky Breakfast Stout", "#KBS", "Two Hearted Ale", or "Zombie Dust". For beer labels with expected seasonal trends, we used a sample of one month of data, with the month chosen to match the peak availability of that beer. For beer labels with no expectation of seasonality, we used a sample of three months of data spread across the year and averaged out to make the counts comparable to the rest of the Twitter sample.

FINDINGS

Quantitative Results and Analysis

The BA dataset revealed clear seasonality (regular peaks in the number of reviews, as seen in Figure 1) for BCBS, Celebration, Hopslam and KBS, but no obvious seasonality for either Two Hearted Ale, Zombie Dust, or Budweiser, which was in agreement with our initial expectations. All beer reviews we inspected had a noticeable singular spike in volume around November 13, 2011. Although we do not have a definite explanation for this, we can say that the same spike can be seen in the history of Google queries for the term "beer advocate" (Google Trends 'beer advocate' search, n.d.) and might correspond to a surge in popularity of the BA community as a whole.

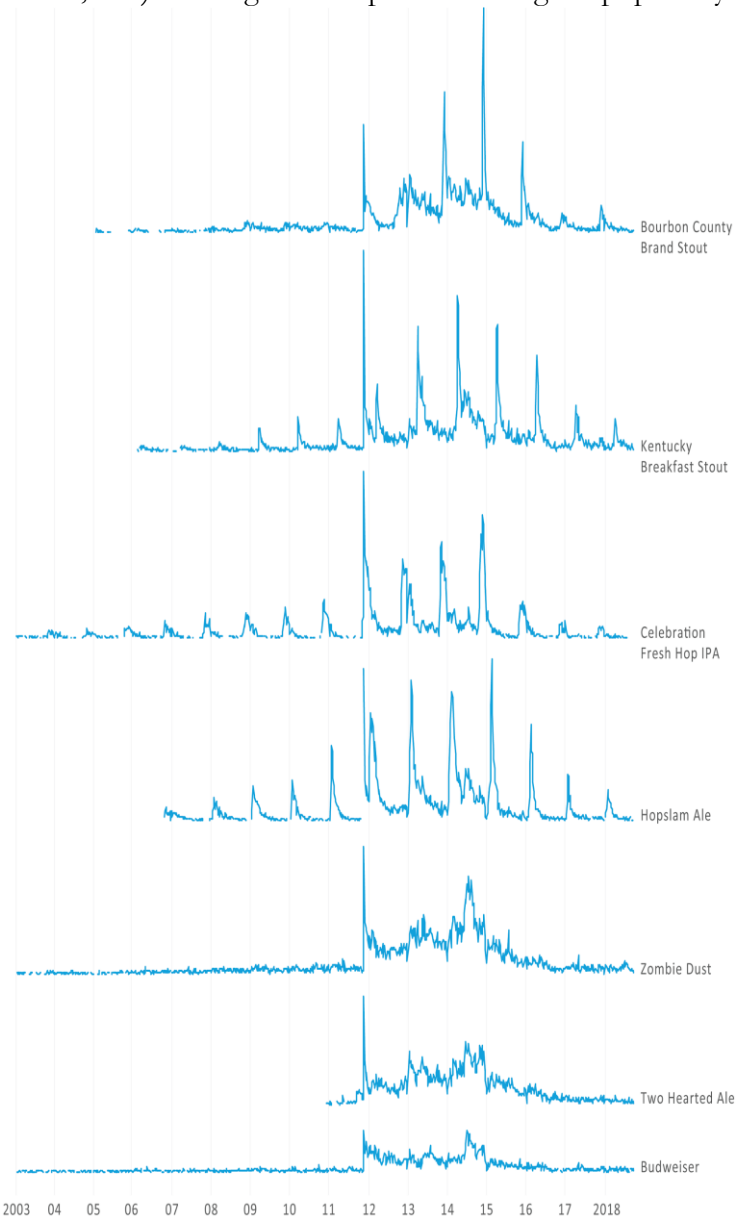

Figure 1. Timeline of BeerAdvocate reviews. The peak number of reviews is for Bourbon County Brand Stout at 319, other beer labels are shown at the same scale.

To compare the geographic footprint of various beer labels in both BA and Twitter datasets, we calculated estimates of both *cumulative* and *per-beer* review activity for each of the US states. The *cumulative review activity* refers to the total number of beer reviews (all beer labels from our list, combined) produced in each state, per capita. The *per-beer review activity* refers to the number

of reviews of a single specific beer label (e.g. BCBS) produced in each state, per capita. We used the per capita measurements as a rough standardization measure since the number of reviews appears to be linearly correlated to the population of each state, using 2010 census data (R^2 of 0.56).

Using these metrics, we produced a series of *slope charts*, shown in Figure 2, that capture the relative amount of interest in each of the beer labels in our list, for each state. For example, the slope chart in Figure 2, corresponding to Zombie Dust, shows two ascending lines that clearly stand out against the background with a clear opposite trend. The lines correspond to the states of Illinois and Indiana, implying a disproportionately high amount of reviews, per capita, of Zombie Dust. In contrast, other states that, on average, are fairly "prolific" in terms of number of reviews per capita (e.g. Massachusetts), produce a disproportionately low amount of reviews of the Zombie Dust.

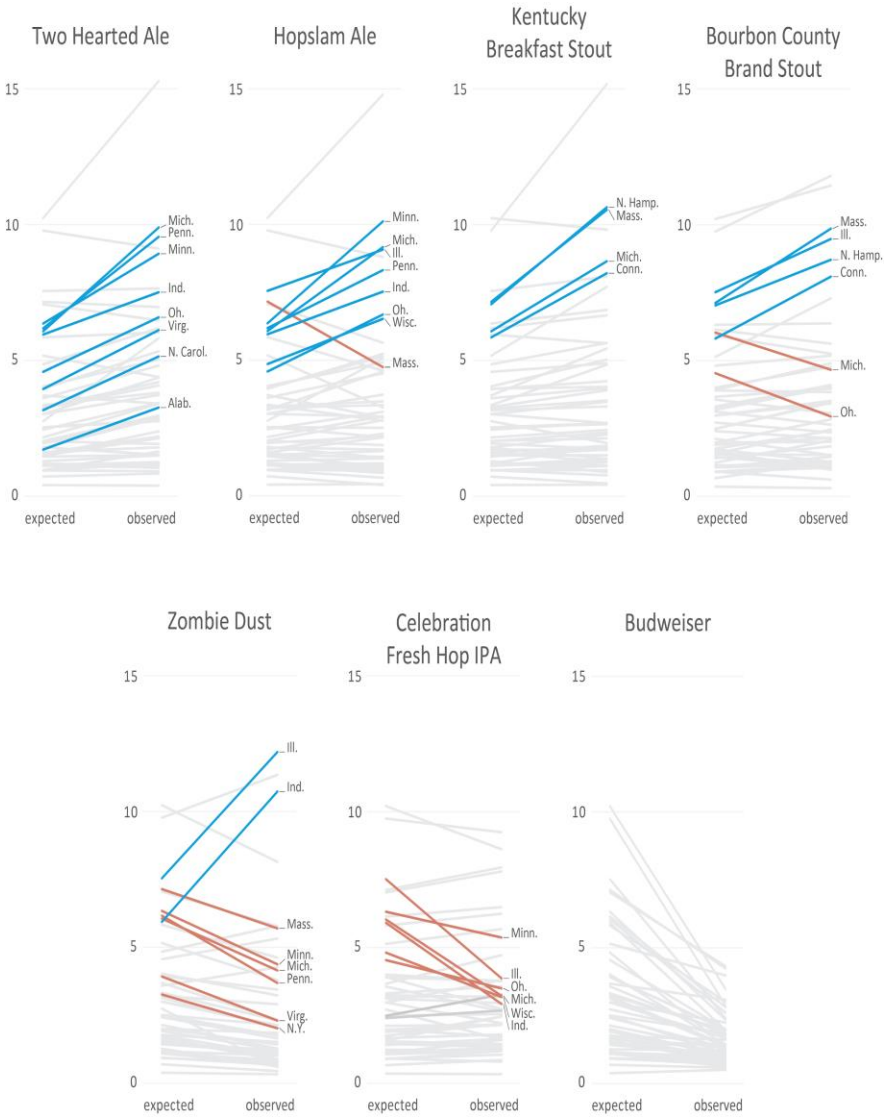

Figure 2. Slope charts showing the relative amount of interest in each of the beer labels across the US states. Each slope chart corresponds to one beer label, and each line in each slope chart corresponds to one state. The left and the right sides of each chart show the expected and the observed number of BeerAdvocate reviews, respectively, produced for the beer label in question. Ascending and descending lines correspond to states with disproportionately high and low numbers of reviews for the beer label in question. Differences of 10% or more from the expected

count are highlighted in color (unless substantiated by fewer than 100 reviews). The numbers on the vertical scale correspond to the number of reviews per 100,000 people.

Finally, we compared the geographic trends seen in BA dataset against those seen in the Twitter dataset, using the same methodology. Overall, Twitter appears to capture a different aspect of the popular interest in beer labels, producing trends that are not always in agreement with those seen in the BA dataset. For example, trends found in Twitter mentions for Zombie Dust, Two Hearted Ale and BCBS could be seen in the BA dataset as well. Hopslam, however, sometimes appears differently through different datasets—there seems to be a hotspot in Minnesota in both datasets, but BA indicated a cold spot in Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin, whereas Twitter indicates a hotspot. KBS comparison produced similar results—trends for Massachusetts were in agreement between the datasets, whereas trends for Michigan were in disagreement. Given the results of the qualitative analysis (reported further below) suggesting that Twitter mentions of beer labels are *qualitatively* different from reviews on BeerAdvocate, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that the geographic trends (and the associated spatial processes) captured by the BA and Twitter datasets might be qualitatively different as well, with further research needed to precisely quantify these differences.

Overall, Twitter also provided sparse data: we calculated an average ratio of 9.9 BA reviews for each Twitter mention of either of the beer labels in our list. This ratio was not constant across the states either, suggesting further kinds of spatial heterogeneity: Arkansas, Indiana, Mississippi, Montana, and South Carolina appear over-represented on Twitter (producing over 100 percent more mentions than expected following the average ratio), whereas California appears under-represented (producing approximately 50 percent fewer mentions than expected). Given the success of Zook & Poorthius (2014), these observations initially came as a surprise. As we captured between 95 and 99% of all geographic tweets for our study period and area, this is unlikely to be an issue of poor sampling. It appears plausible, however, that while Twitter provides a sufficient amount of data for a broad type of survey (e.g. mapping of the mentions of "beer" versus "wine" keywords, as done by Zook & Poorthius), more nuanced queries (e.g. keyword matches for specific beer labels) are not sufficiently represented in Twitter, at least in comparison to the BA dataset.

The trends shown in the data bear out when considered alongside industry factors and consumer dynamics in relation to the selected beers. For example, *regionality* is visible in the data, as evidenced by the relative number of reviews seen in the states where a particular beer is produced (or in states nearby). Bourbon County Brand Stout, Hopslam, Kentucky Breakfast Stout, Two Hearted Ale, and Zombie Dust all display this characteristic. Bourbon County Brand Stout, for instance, is reviewed more in Illinois and less in Michigan while KBS is reviewed more in Michigan. We hypothesize that this trend reflects geographic variations, regional taste, and brand loyalty as well as product distribution since the two beers are the same style but are released during different seasons. If these other variables were not influential, we would expect the same trends for a similar beer style to hold true for both. Moreover, our analysis reveals that there are different kinds of regionality; for example, Zombie Dust displays the most "local" review zone (it is brewed in Indiana and reviewed most in Indiana and Illinois), while Two Hearted Ale and Hopslam are reviewed at greater rates in a wider zone. Celebration Fresh Hop IPA is the only beer label selected for analysis that presented itself differently across the datasets and in contrast to our expectations related to regionality.

In terms of *seasonality*, for annual, limited release beers, definite spikes in reviews are clear near the release months, and reviews of those brews dips during other seasons. Again, Celebration Fresh Hop IPA is the anomaly here; for this beer, while a seasonality trend was visible in the BA dataset as expected, the expected regionality trend was not (as noted above). In addition, the beer label was nearly nonexistent in the Twitter dataset, with only three mentions total appearing there. We speculate that this may be due to the overall decline in reviews during the beer release year by year or the difference in consumer reviews of (and taste for) seasonal barrel-conditioned annual

releases and other styles of annual releases. To understand this kind of anomaly in the findings, further research is required.

Qualitative Results and Analysis

Ratings on BeerAdvocate suggest a community of beer aficionados, or at least committed enthusiasts, critiquing beers on several attributes. Much like wine and beer tastings, a rating of one through five is used to evaluate the look, smell, taste, and feel of a beer as well as to offer an overall score. It is also a repository for information about the beer, including ABV, brewery, brewery address, annual availability dates, and non-independent owners. Most of the ratings contain no additional qualitative review notes beyond the static, quantifiable options, however several themes appeared within the qualitative reviews for those users that offered them.

BeerAdvocate users who offered qualitative reviews described the way the beer looked while being poured, the "head" (the carbonated foam at the top of the beer), aroma, mouth feel, and body of the beer, as well as the reasons for why they decided to try a particular beer. These details, taken collectively, are quite akin to the kind of commentary provided by avid wine drinkers in their tasting notes. Similarly, in some instances, reviewers of seasonal or otherwise limited release beers offered critiques of each year's release, much like a wine connoisseur might compare current vintages to past releases, noting their preferences for the various production years of the same beer over time. Overall and in contrast to the kinds of reviews found on Twitter, the reviews provided by users of BeerAdvocate were highly descriptive; Table 1 offers some examples of the kinds of detailed, qualitative assessments provided by BeerAdvocate users.

BeerAdvocate User Comments *(with dates posted)*
"Really wanted to give the famous KBS another try since I was disappointed the first time around - maybe I had a bad batch? Also saw the opportunity to try it on tap, and boy am I glad I did. Completely different experience! Great dark brown, almost black color with immediate great frothy tan head that slowly faded, along with some nice sheets of lingering lacing. Smells of dark coffee, chocolate and a little vanilla. Tastes of dark roast coffee, dark slightly bitter chocolate, molasses, vanilla, malt and a little caramel. Great bourbon oak undertones with some hints of sweetness. Smooth, slightly creamy mouthfeel and just the right amount of carbonation. High ABV is well-hidden in this beer's incredible flavor. Not too heavy or overpowering at all. I think this beer's reputation is well-deserved and I'm convinced my original bottle of beer was just not right." *(posted April 7, 2018)*
"This is by far my favorite beer. I wish it wasn't a seasonal, but maybe that is one of the reasons I appreciate it so much. Every year around Thanksgiving I start looking for this to show up at the liquor section at Hyvee. I was also fortunate to drink it on tap this year at one of my favorite alehouses. Wow...nothing better. Rich in dark amber color, Perfect blend of 3 different hops, and an amazing balance of bitter pine, citrus, and caramel toasted malt will satisfy any fan of a true American IPA. the only downside is that when it is gone...it is gone for about 10 months...that makes me sad!" *(posted April 16, 2018)*
"I have been fortunate enough to find Hopslam on tap for the past few years. Always tastes a little better to me from a tap. Tastes more like the Imperial IPA that it is, than when poured out of a can. But, I would never pass it up in any form when I'm lucky enough to find it. As Imperial IPAs go, this one is probably the most Hop forward I've ever tasted. But it doesn't have too much of that grapefruit hop taste, that's so popular right now, but that I don't like. But it varies from year to year, as its a true craft beer that depends on a lot of variables, like timing when to add the next dose of hops. That said,

this year's Hop[s]lam was the best I've ever tasted! 5 snifters from a tap, and two 6 packs... But not all in one night." *(posted February 23, 2017)*

Table 1. Examples of qualitative beer reviews posted by users on BeerAdvocate.

The Twitter data mainly yielded tweets that, rather than providing quantitative scores or qualitative comments on their own, linked to reviews posted on other social media forums, like Untappd[4], Instagram, or other social media applications. We hand coded and reviewed over 300 tweets. Ninety three percent of the tweets reviewed were reposts from other sites; Untappd (81%) and Instagram (12%) were the two most prominently linked applications. Of those analyzed, less than 10 tweets were comprised of content posted directly to Twitter. Tweets linked to Instagram always included a photo. On Untappd, which was by far the most frequently used outside site, about a third of the ratings (31%) included photos of the beers in question, while the others did not. If a photo was included, it almost always (95%) featured the beer in the bottle and/or glass after being poured but before being consumed.

Untappd reviews are mainly "am drinking" posts without much content about the actual beer characteristics or perceived quality. The drinking establishment or place of purchase was often tagged and displayed to other users in the community. Untappd contains explicit incentives for active users (e.g., badges, rewards, and increased community visibility) as well implicit motivation (e.g., the potential for gaining industry endorsements, establishing social status within the beer aficionado community, or engaging in conspicuous consumption). Whether posted to Untappd or Instagram, posted photos were usually taken when drinking (and eating) out and almost always included the beer and/or its container. In comparison to BeerAdvocate, the user posts on Twitter included noticeably less critique of the beer or its profile.

"Happy national beer day! - Drinking a Two Hearted Ale by @BellsBrewery @ Lucky's 13 Pub #photo"
"Drinking a Zombie Dust by @3floyds @ Rays Tasting Room #photo"

[4] Untappd (www.untappd.com) is a free social phone application that allows users to create friend groups, rate beers, check-in to establishments, get up-to-date beer menus, recommendations, and earn "achievements" for participation.

Figure 3. Example Tweet from our sample. This is a tweet generated by a user's post on Untappd. (Tweet from April 14, 2018, collected on December 11, 2018.)

LIMITATIONS

Despite its apparent potential, there are plenty of known limitations for using social media data, including issues such as poor data quality, low study validity, non-representative sampling, and presence of super users (extremely frequent users of a given platform) (Haklay, 2010; Lazer et al. 2014; Tsou, 2015). Although we were able to demonstrate the utility of using such data for more nuanced geographic inquiries than previous methods have allowed, we did not, due to the limited scope of the paper, explore the impact of non-representative sampling and super users on the resulting findings. Our study also made use of *exact keyword matching* as the methodology for Twitter data selection. Although straightforward, popular, and not without certain implicit validity, this technique is limited and is likely to have restricted the volume of data available for the analysis. A plethora of advanced data retrieval techniques could be used to substitute our approach, although the determination of the optimal technique for extracting beer-related posts – short of manually reading the millions of the tweets generated daily – would likely require an entire study of its own.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, we attempted to explore whether "big data" from social media could be harnessed to deepen and expand geographic research on beer. Our findings indicate that social media datasets can be used to explore certain broad aspects of the spatial and temporal phenomena associated with beer culture, including the regionality and seasonality of beer consumption, in an efficient and cost-effective way. However, certain discrepancies (both spatial and temporal) observed between the different datasets should serve as a caution against overgeneralizing from the observations made using any single dataset. Thus, we conclude that "big data" can complement the existing methods used by beer geographers, but a mixed-methods approach with expert knowledge cross-referenced to data-derived insights is recommended.

We also explored whether different forms of social media collect and portray differing perspectives on and experiences with beer, and our observations suggest that BA and Twitter might be qualitatively different in terms of their content. BA reviews are much more likely to

feature detailed descriptions and evaluations of a beer, while Twitter posts are (necessarily) shorter and less nuanced. These differences in content mean that an assessment of consumer taste is more feasible in the content provided by BA than that provided by Twitter.

In addition, we investigated whether some types, styles, or differently-sourced beers would be more visible in the data – and these kinds of differentiations were evident. Overall, BeerAdvocate users appear more committed to sharing their perspectives on the various qualities of different labels, positioning certain beers as worthy of consideration and acclaim while denying the same to others. Twitter, on the other hand, appears to mostly serve as a vehicle for conspicuous consumption, with its users re-broadcasting information already made available on other platforms such as Untappd. For scholars interested in studying the representation of (craft) beer, this might prove to be an important methodological consideration, as user motivation for sharing their personal opinions of and experiences with beer appears to vary between platforms, with noticeable impact on the resulting content.

In sum, the mentions of different beers do vary geographically, which is visible on both the BA and Twitter platforms. However, there are differences in how beer is discussed between these social media sources. Some types, styles, and/or differently-sourced beers are more visible in the data, and the different representations of the beer do seemingly reflect varying taste(s) for the product(s). In short, this "virtual pub crawl" has revealed that the representation of (craft) beer, both in terms of quality and quantity, on social media does help to reveal beer's mutable aesthetic "taste" as expressed by users of these online forums.

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Nørdic-ness: Perception and Positionality of Scandinavian Taste as Good Taste

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ABSTRACT
Central to this paper is to shed light on the positionality of Scandinavia as a region along a hierarchy that entwines the notions of *Nordic/Scandinavian* and *good taste*. Based on a qualitative discursive analysis of the promotional material, advertising campaigns and marketability approaches of Nordic-related/Nordic-oriented goods, I suggest that social progress and economic wealth explain why Scandinavia is perceived as fashionable. For decades, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, in particular, have asserted themselves as highly committed countries in the promotion of a better world. Not surprisingly, the region is continuously presented as a cluster of modern, advanced nations. From gender equality to social justice, the northernmost part of Europe is often cited as a model to follow. Use of specific letters from the Danish, Norwegian or Swedish alphabets (e.g. 'Ø'), references to cities or parts of them, or claims about minimalist, simplistic, but distinctively Nordic approaches are ways to convey a sense of *Nørdic-ness*. I suggest that *Nørdic-ness* emerges from a combination of references to stimulate consumers to link a product to the sets of ideas commonly held about the Nordic countries. These notions are mainly linked to the figure of an idealized Nordic citizen (Nordic ethnotype) who carries high prestige and occupies a high position along the arbitrary hierarchy of taste.

KEY WORDS
Taste, Scandinavia, Nordic, Design, Prestige

This paper attempts to shed light on the positionality of Scandinavia along a hierarchy that entwines the notions of *Nordic/Scandinavian* and *good taste*. All along, I use the term taste to refer to the operationalization of attitudes and sensitivities in line with cultural, social and personal preferences informed by trends, and most importantly by perception. I set forth as premise that 'good taste,' despite its illusionary, contestable and intangible nature, is an arbitrary, discursive, deterministic, but highly dissuasive categorization. As an evaluative category, 'good taste' attempts to designate which practices and objects become "signs of distinction" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 483), and which fail to symbolize status and prestige.

As I intend to show, items associated with Nordic lifestyles, values and geographies are marketed according to and in line with notions affixed to Scandinavian high-ranked positionality as a socially and economically advanced region. The underlying idea is that a connection to the Nordic nations prevents specific goods from being allocated in the imagined periphery of items arbitrarily considered to be undesirable, insignificant, ordinary, or worse, tasteless.

Focus lies on promotional material and advertisement campaigns of Nordic and pseudo-Nordic brands. Specifically, the main object of study in this paper are the discursive codes employed by these brands to describe and refer to Scandinavian style on Facebook and Instagram, and the responses of virtual audiences. By pseudo-Nordic, I refer to those brands that claim to be informed, inspired, or encouraged by Nordic values in the creation of their production, even though they are not based in the region. I equally apply the term pseudo-Nordic to the labels, logos, product names and trademarks that playfully, but strategically, allude to Scandinavian linguistic codes in order to evoke a sense of Nordicity.

CONCEPTUALIZING NORDICITY

In varying ways and to varying extents, Scandinavia is implicitly cited as a point of reference within circles of material production that allegedly promote stylish, trendsetting and sophisticated items. Since the early 20th century, "Sweden and Scandinavia's international reputation for design is undisputed, and design has become both a marketable characteristic of Swedishness and an integral part of Sweden's cultural heritage" (Jones, 2016, p. 221).

Attempts to resemble, invoke and evoke a sense of belonging, provenance, ancestry or derivation related to this part of the world mirrors the positive connotations affixed to it. For decades, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, in particular, have asserted themselves as highly committed countries in the promotion of a better world. From gender equality to social justice, the northernmost part of Europe is often cited as a model to follow. From a historical perspective, "values identified as Nordic have ranged from rustic, courageous, heathen and violent to Protestant ethics, secularism, social egalitarianism, individualism, democratic culture and the welfare state" (Aronsson and Gradén, 2013, p. 2). Undisputed reputation and righteousness accredited to the region seems to inform the imaginary of consumers, and their perception of Nordic material culture.

Objects perceived to embody the lifestyle of Nordic citizens become derivatives and manifestations of modern, prominent, and highly praised societies. The figure of a Nordic citizen as the one who has the best quality of life, lives the happiest, acknowledges gender diversity the best, resides in some of the best cities in the world, inarguably informs how these nations are perceived. The emblematic ethnotype (ethnicity-oriented stereotype) of a Dane, Finn, Icelander, Norwegian and Swede is an amalgamation of desirable attributes. From a conceptual viewpoint, "what is specific about ethnotypes is that they single out a nation from the rest of humanity by ascribing a particular character" (Leerssen, 2016, p. 17). As Michael Booth (2015) explains in his book *The Almost Nearly Perfect People*, "coverage of all things Scandinavian" (p. 7) is adulatory, even if it is not necessarily well-founded. The title of the book summarizes some of the sensitivities that the Nordic ethnotype evokes in peoples' imaginary across the globe, and as I proceed to argue, might explain the cachet attributed to Scandinavian-designed products.

A tyranny of qualitative assessments seems to explain why certain pieces of furniture, garments, accessories, or household objects carry higher prestige than others. Almost universally, taste seems to be governed by hierarchical orders (Parkhurst Ferguson, 2004). A valid observation is that Nordic products and design are perceived as a sample of 'good taste' because they allegedly reflect the preferences of *almost perfect* societies. Hierarchies of taste seem to build on status, historicity, longevity, but also a sense of patrimony "loaded with significance" (Belfanti, 2015, p. 56), as is the case of the evolution of the Made in Italy concept. In many ways, Italian and Scandinavian design share commonalities in terms of positionality.

In addition to the evaluative sense of "unanimity and uniformity" (Blumer, 1969, p. 289) that characterizes the world of fashion, prestige is also closely related to trust. Since the 1950s, Italian brands attempting to stand out at a global scale have known that style is "constructed by skilled admen and creative communicators" (Micelli, 2014, p. 86). Perceiving Italian brands as superior to others has also a lot to do with a presumed "heady reverence for craft" (Ross, 2004, p. 216), that renders them immune from scrutiny, suspicion, or disapproval.

Whereas marketing strategies explain the creation of convincing–often discordant–narratives that promote commercial endeavors, they do not conclusively describe the evaluative dimensions attached to the concept of taste. There is nevertheless consensus that "none of us has a wholly singular taste and that, from chefs to sociologists, many of us in fact spend a good deal of time accounting for taste" (Parkhurst Ferguson 2004, p. 19). Probably induced by competition from other markets, Nordic design, for instance, in the case of Sweden has resulted in the "perception of a homogenous stylistic category fueled by an exclusive and homogenous design discourse" (Jones, 2016, p. 221). Consciously or not, the actors behind the production and promotion of Scandinavian design place emphasis on timelessness and functionality, but as I will show, on many other traits as well.

TAXONOMY OF TRAITS

A corpus was built in order to assess the discursive strategies deployed to promote Nordic design. It consists of two sets of data. On one hand, the corpus is made up of ten samples of advertising texts, captions and textual labels produced by 16 Scandinavian brands: Arket, Artek, Bang & Olufsen, Bo Concept, Bolia, COS, Filippa K, Fjällräven, Ganni, Gestuz, H&M, HAY, Iitala, Samsdøe & Samsøe, Selected and Weekday. These are 160 texts that complement visuals posted on Facebook and Instagram during a period of three months (September-November, 2019). The companies were chosen based on the popularity according to search criteria in Google and design-oriented blogs, websites and magazines. On the other hand, the corpus consists of 634 comments posted by online users (i.e. on Facebook and Instagram), as response to the 160 images used as promotional material. Since focus lies on the discursive strategies, the images are not used to make inferences about the series of traits the ads intend to evoke among the viewers. Aesthetic composition and construction of the images are only considered in relation to the reaction of those posting comments online.

Table 1 is an attempt to classify the set of attributes identified in the corpus of advertising texts, captions and textual labels. As marketing strategy, Scandinavian brands underline the importance of creating objects that reflect Nordic traditional values and heritage. Traits have been qualitatively divided according to the references, allusions and associations they make.

Table 1. Qualitative analysis of discursive strategies deployed in promotional and branding material of Scandinavian companies producing clothes, furniture and household objects.

Company / Country	Attributes		
	Design-related	Time/Space-related	Ethos-related
Arket		Durable products Nordic heritage	Democratic quality
Artek	Poetic simplicity		Clear / Functional
Bang & Olufsen	Simplicity Design craftmanship	Rich heritage	
Bo Concept		Excellence rooted in heritage Nordic mood	Elegant
Bolia	Simplicity Craftmanship	Heritage	
COS	Beauty in simplicity	Timeless craftmanship	Functional / Innovative
Filippa K	Minimalism	Timeless style	Ethically-sourced
Fjällräven		Timeless outdoor gear	Responsible Simple / Practical
Ganni			Progress-oriented Environmental Sustainable
Gestuz	Effortless ease	Design tradition	Discreetly innovative
H&M			Affordable Personal
HAY			Sophisticated Functional Accessible
Iitala		Timeless design	Progressive Scandinavian Functional
Samsdøe & Samsøe	Rooted in Scandinavian simplicity	Craftmanship Timeless	Functional Sophisticated
Selected	Minimalistic expression	Timeless	Sophisticated
Weekday			Youth culture-oriented Sustainable

In general terms, Nordic companies stress on the fact that they produce pieces of clothing and furniture that stand the test of time, but most noticeably, items easily recognizable for their simplicity. Promotional material also includes statements about the importance of craftmanship, heritage and functionality.

A closer look at the discursive strategies deployed by the 16 Nordic brands reveal they are committed to produce "timeless", "functional" pieces rooted in the "simplicity" that characterizes the Nordic mindset. "Simple" might make allusion to the lavish aesthetic of minimalist pieces that nevertheless seduce for their intricate, multifaceted elaboration, often complemented with carefully selected finishing features. Alternatively, the term "simplicity" might be a reference to

pieces that only slightly reformulate or adapt older models. In either case, there is nothing *simple* about the innovative fabrics, textures, and fibers used in combination with advanced processes of production, preceded by intense research and product development deployed by Scandinavian companies.

From the producers' perspective, Scandinavian style denotes simplicity, minimalism, timelessness, sophistication, elegance, functionality and craftmanship. Alternatively, at the consumption end of the spectrum, Nordic design objects are praised for their quality, coolness, chicness, but mostly for their beauty. Worthy of further consideration is the set of associations consumers make between the objects being advertised and Nordic citizens (Nordic ethnotype).

Consumers mostly comment on the "gorgeous", "proper blond" models displaying "cool" outfits in "alluring" "Scandi" landscapes, tactically complemented with "scenic" "Nordic weather". The embodiment of the Nordic ethnotype hinges on widespread tropes about ethnic groups, physiognomy, and typifications aligned with historical connotations linked to the tradition of presenting human diversity according to hierarchical taxonomies. Even if there have been associations between blond hair and the "'dumb blond' persona", in fact, "[t]hroughout most of human history, blond hair has been considered attractive and alluring, possibly because this color is associated with gold and light, two things that people consider valuable and desirable" (Sherrow, 2006, p. 149). Not surprisingly, blondness is one the elements easily identifiable in discourse about Nordic-oriented products.

Outside the region, notions about ethnicity (e.g. blondness), and ancestry (e.g. Vikings) seem to strengthen the positionality of Scandinavia as a trendsetting region. Blondness emerges as a component in the creation of advertisement and promotional material that strengthens the connection between geographical spaces and highly-praised societies.

Along with notions about imagined or idealized physical traits that distinguish Nordic citizens, consumers of the brands also comment on the Viking heritage of the northernmost countries of Europe. It does not seem to be merely a matter of taste. After all, "popular culture has taken the Vikings to heart" (Aronsson and Gradémn, 2012, p. 3), nonetheless because Viking ancestry denotes strength, power, adventure, and explorative spirit, which are all good qualities. For many, the "idea that Viking blood and genes are still alive within current generations has a powerful allure" (p. 3). Any connection or association with ancient Nordic heritage seems to grant a certain status, even if it is not based on a contextual, tangible or traceable basis. In many ways, ideas of grandeur have permeated the collective imaginary.

PSEUDO-NORDIC-NESS

Based on the stratified sampling of comments posted by online users, it is possible to make a connection between prestige and 'good taste.' Material culture reflects practices surrounding items that materialize and solidify ideas, but also idealizations about others. The figure of idealized Nordic citizens (Nordic ethnotype) is an example of how "[o]ur way of thinking in terms of 'national characters' boils down to an ethnic-political distribution of role patterns in an imaginated anthropological landscape" (Leerssen, 2007, p. 29). Scandinavian design evokes a sense of sophistication that is entwined with the perception and assumptions linked to the region. Objects labelled as Nordic go through processes that ultimately confirm that status, just as class, "is defined as much by its *being-perceived* as by its *being*" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 483). A further review of the attributes used by the brands analyzed in this study reveals commonalities and standardizations in the way they describe their products. More importantly, focus is placed on how they are perceived. In other words, it is apparent that association with Scandinavia or any Nordic country situates an object in a favorable position along an imagined continuum that separates good from bad taste. Examples of companies passing for, or pretending to be Nordic are evidence of the presumed advantages Scandinavian identity affords.

Nølson, an Amsterdam-based Dutch brand producing shirts since 2016, or Skøvde, a line of gloves, hats and scarves distributed by the American apparel TKMaxx are valid examples of pseudo-Nordic-ness. In both cases, the Danish-Norwegian vowel [Ø, ø: /øː/] is used to convey the idea that the items are somehow related to Scandinavia. [Ø] operates as a marker of 'borrowed' linguistic ethnicity and identity. It evokes a connection between a product and a geography that consumers associate with ideas particularly useful in the promotion of fashionable goods. A *slashed O* or *O with stroke* as is also called, [Ø] confirms the functionality of Scandinavian-inspired names in terms of prestige, and by proxy, samples of 'good taste.' Even if this vowel is also present in some African languages (i.e. Lendu), it is the awareness of its Nordic usage what renders it desirable.

Attempts to fetishize Nordic languages in order to strengthen a sense of Nordic-ness has also been observed in the taxonomy of product names used by IKEA (Kristoffersson, 2014). Beyond efforts to create a dyslexic-friendly nomenclature, names of Swedish lakes (bathroom articles), Scandinavian boy's names (bookcases), Danish place names (rugs), and Norwegian place names (beds) are examples of how IKEA "uses numerous national markers" (p. 113). Meanings emerge from association, and taste is in many ways an externalization of patterns of consumption, but also of the processes behind those choices. A taste for Scandinavian goods seems to imply that the consumer/user/buyer in question wishes to associate and identify herself/himself with a highly praised ethnotype. Since "consumption is a deeply social act" (Gilady, 2018, p. 2), it is not surprising that "prestige is generated through actors' estimates of the approbative collective assessment of a third party" (p. 10). I suggest the term *Nørdic-ness* to describe the use of references deliberately deployed to stimulate consumers to link a product to the sets of ideas commonly held about the Nordic countries. A sense of prestige attached to the imagined concept of Scandinavian-ness explains why brands proudly frame themselves as brokers of *Nørdic-ness*.

(SELF)-PERCEPTION

Paradoxically, in modern Nordic countries, "showing off" (Nelson and Shavitt 2002, p. 441) is frowned upon, and there is some indication that the Jante Law still today explains some of the behavioral traits seen in these societies. The Jante Law holds the notion that being more important than the others or standing out due to individual qualities means someone else is worth less (Gustavsson, 1995). When Danish-Norwegian writer Aksel Sandemose wrote first in 1933 about this unwritten code in his novel *En flyktning krysser sitt spor* (*A Fugitive Crosses His Track*), a set of commandments were listed as the basis of this outlook to life. In his book, ten rules constituted the law that the inhabitants of the fictional town of Jante were expected to follow in order to fit in. Sandemose aimed to describe the Nordic mindset by coining a term to label the set of conventions of the society in which he grew up (Tixier, 1996). Although there are differences in between the conventions of the Jante Law applicable to each country, it has become a marker of the Nordic ethos. Sandemose's novel constitutes a parody on a community that criticizes and discourages individual achievements. Both in academic and colloquial spheres, this term has become synonym of Scandinavian values and attitudes (Kuyper et al., 2011). Although it has gained acceptance as an acknowledged feature of Nordic societies, its connotation is often negative. Many Nordic citizens have expressed their desire to distant themselves from this mentality (Hoefler and Vejlagaard, 2011). At the same time, the strong sense of equality and social parity are seen as the reasons behind the success of the so-called Nordic model (Kvist, 2011).

Yet, a review of the items sold on the websites listed in Table 1 reveals another side of the story. Items invariably considered as samples of 'good taste' are not affordable, neither communal, or democratic in the sense that their production is limited and not accessible to everyone. In fact, besides H&M with its 4414 stores across the globe, and Ikea, most Scandinavian brands are

considered by online consumers as "expensive", "pricy", physically "unavailable" and pricewise "unattainable". In the particular case of Ikea, even if the company "claims to work with the same values, ideals and principles as Swedish welfare policies, with a focus on solidarity, justice and equality" (Kristoffersson, 2014, p. 113), its focus markets are economically advanced countries. Along the same line, whereas brands such as Arket, Bang & Olufsen, Filippa K, Iitala or Samsøe & Samsøe manufacture products that allegedly reflect societies governed by a sense of horizontality and democratic principles of uniformity, they only target specific markets. A valid conclusive observation is that Scandinavian products are not available to everyone, and consequently retain a sense of exclusivity that predictably increase their positionality and status.

CONCLUSION

An assessment of the attributes and associations mentioned by producers and consumers indicate that Scandinavian style is considered a sample of 'good taste,' based on a complex amalgamation of preconceptions, assumptions, idealizations, and expectations. Objects reflect patterns of consumption, but also provide cues about sensitivities, affiliation and identification. In varying ways and to varying extents, Scandinavia is implicitly cited as a point of reference within circles of material production that allegedly promote stylish, trendsetting and sophisticated items (e.g. clothing, furniture, *design* objects). Nordic lifestyles are materialized in products that can be bought, worn, used and displayed by those living outside the highly praised region. As expected, several brands (e.g. Arket, Bang & Olufsen, Iittala, Ikea) have profited and commercialized from the association customers make between Scandinavia and 'good taste.' This is not to say that the physical and aesthetic qualities of goods produced in the region is low, far from it. However, the use of references or connections with a specific region stems from its positionality along a hierarchical and arbitrary order where prestige and perception are the benchmarks.

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Milton Fernando Gonzalez Rodriguez is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation (University of Amsterdam). His research has mainly focused on the representation of identity in visual and material culture. He has published on indigeneity in Latin American cinema, animated series, television, sociolinguistics and material culture. He is mostly interested in visual and vocative framing, stereotypes in media, digital cultural artefacts and the nexus between visuality, imaginaries and materiality. In 2020 he was awarded the Praemium Erasmianum Research Prize from the Erasmus Prize Foundation for his PhD dissertation *Histrionic Indigeneity: Ethnotypes in Latin American Cinema*. Previous affiliations include University of Iceland and Malmö University. During his doctoral program, he was a visiting researcher at the University of Cambridge and Leiden University.