

ORIGINAL ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Acting Up and Pushing Back: A Qualitative Study Exploring Women Workers' Resistance to Gender Inequalities in the UK Craft Beer Scene

Amanda Atkinson¹ | Thomas Thurnell-Read²

¹Faculty of Health, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK | ²School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Loughborough University, Loughborough, UK

Correspondence: Thomas Thurnell-Read (t.thurnell-read@lboro.ac.uk)

Received: 16 May 2024 | **Revised:** 27 October 2025 | **Accepted:** 8 March 2026

ABSTRACT

The production, sale, and consumption of alcohol remains highly gendered, and although the craft beer sector has positioned itself as prioritizing progressive values, recent studies indicate that women are still excluded from the craft beer sector. This article presents an analysis of qualitative interviews with women working in various roles in the UK craft beer sector and explores the way in which they report experiences of gender inequality and sexism in the industry. The findings recount participants' experiences of the various ways in which women are made to feel out of place and their professional identities devalued and delegitimated, with women's taste and knowledge subordinated to that of men. However, importantly, the agency of women working in the sector is emphasized, with all interviewees engaged in the active assertion of their right to participate in the sector and to "call out" sexism and exclusionary behavior as a means of fostering more inclusive and egalitarian possibilities in the sector.

1 | Introduction

Alcohol is highly gendered, and its consumption involves the performance of feminine and masculine identities (Atkinson et al. 2012, 2021; Darwin 2017; Griffin et al. 2013; Nicholls 2019). Historically, women's drinking has been policed and stigmatized relative to men's, with women who "binge drink" to intoxication viewed as being "out of control" and of lacking femininity (Griffin et al. 2013; Lyons and Willott 2008). Given the shifting social positions of women (i.e., increased economic independence, and participation in education, work, and public space) they are now active participants in drinking and the nighttime environment as a source of leisure, pleasure, and consumption (Atkinson and Sumnall 2016; Griffin et al. 2013; Nicholls 2019). However, a number of gender expectations endure in drinking culture and in environments, such as bars and pubs, which remain highly gendered spaces (Atkinson et al. 2012; Darwin 2018; Thurnell-Read 2022a; Thody 2014). An

historical example of this is the cultural restriction of women's access to the male dominated pubs (White 2023), where women had to carefully negotiate their presence in male-dominated space (Leyshon 2008). However, more recently, pubs, bars, and clubs have attempted to become more "female friendly", and—at least in theory—women have access to participate on equal grounds to men (Atkinson et al. 2021).

2 | Gender, Work and the Craft Beer Scene

In recent years, an expanding craft beer sector has introduced new contexts of alcohol production and consumption which emphasize the quality of the product, the skill of the producer, and the discerning taste of the consumer (Thurnell-Read 2022b; Wilson 2024). Craft beers are now a prominent addition to the food, drinks, and hospitality sector locally, nationally, and globally, and a wide selection can now be found in most UK

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2026 The Author(s). *Gender, Work & Organization* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

supermarkets and venues (Thurnell-Read 2022a). Significantly, there has been much celebration of craft beers for its emphasis on authenticity and innovation (Thurnell-Read 2014), production traits that many have been eager to associate with resistance to the global capitalist beer market and standardization (Thurnell-Read 2014; Land et al. 2018). Similarly, in contrast to traditional pubs often still regarded as male-dominated, craft beer spaces such as brewery taprooms have been suggested as being more inclusive places both in terms of work (for sector staff) and leisure (for consumers).

The community ethos of the craft beer “scene” is often associated with progressive values and inclusivity (Kuehn and Parker 2021; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles 2019; Wallace 2019), and craft beer spaces such as breweries and taprooms are often seen as richly rewarding places to work and collaborate with others (Thurnell-Read 2014; Wilson 2024). Indeed, the distinctly collaborative nature of craft beer, as opposed to the aggressive corporate activity of the mainstream “macro” beer sector, is observed as a source of pride and optimism amongst entrepreneurs in the craft beer sector (Cunningham and Barclay 2020). Importantly, various new formats of drinking space beyond that of the traditional pub have emerged as a result, such as beer festivals (Ikäheimo 2020), micropubs (Hubbard 2019; Robinson and Spracklen 2019) and brewery taprooms (Wallace 2019). In such spaces, it is often suggested that the exclusionary culture of male-dominated “traditional” pubs is replaced with a more inclusive and progressive ethos.

A distinguishing feature of the craft beer scene is the significant overlap between those who consume and those who produce craft beers. Producers and individuals working in the sector often begin their journey as passionate consumers and homebrewing hobbyists (Thurnell-Read 2014; Land et al. 2018; Thurnell-Read 2014; Atkinson et al. 2012). Many consumers, although having no formal paid role in the sector, show serious commitment to a collective ethos of what is often described as a craft beer “scene,” a term adopted from subcultural communities (such as the goth “scene”—Hodkinson 2002) to describe the networks of attachment, belonging, and resources that develop around passionately shared interests in particular cultural activities. The culture of craft beer is thus formed by passionate, knowledgeable, experimental, and committed individuals (Wilson 2022a), who adopt beer appreciation as part of their identities in knowledge-intensive ways (Thurnell-Read 2018). The informal nature of the industry further reinforces consumption and participation in social events, such as beer festivals, tap takeovers, and “meet the brewer” nights, as integral features of the sector’s working culture that are often held up as examples of what makes craft beer unique, and desirable, in contrast to the more corporate and commercially minded mainstream beer sector (Land et al. 2018).

However, despite these aspirations to a progressive and egalitarian craft beer culture—and what we might think of as an optimistic reading of the nature and potential of craft beer—research has shown gender-based exclusion to be rife in the sector. Thus, a small but emerging body of research (Chapman et al. 2018; Darwin 2018; Kuehn and Parker 2021; Land et al. 2018; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles 2019; Kosonen

et al. 2025) has explored the gendered experiences of the craft beer industry and culture in a number of countries (e.g., the UK, the United States, and New Zealand). This work suggests that the “image” of craft beer as inclusive and progressive may be at odds with the lived experiences of women who participate in the scene as consumers and who work in a range of roles as employees (e.g., Land et al. 2018). Indeed, recent scholarship has identified the integral role of gender in influencing and shaping craft beer production and consumption as an exclusionary space, dominated numerically, socially, and culturally by White middle class men (Kuehn and Parker 2021; Land et al. 2018; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles 2019). Factors found to subordinate women included long standing assumptions and stereotypes of women’s drink preferences, maintenance of the association between beer and masculinity, and an assumed lack and belittling of beer knowledge among women (Thurnell-Read 2022a).

These factors could be said to “other” women within the scene, in that they are made to feel fundamentally out of place (Puwar 2004) and unwelcome in a way that perpetuates and reaffirms craft beer as a masculine space of consumption (Lennox et al. 2018; Nicholls 2015). As one of the most recent published studies of women and craft beer work, Kosonen et al. (2025) observe that despite some progress the “place” for women in craft beer is still limited, with all their participants feeling constrained by persistent stereotypes which marginalize women and diminish their role in craft beer. Research on craft beer consumption has applied the concept of cultural capital to explore how, despite the craft beer scene seemingly being characterized as a progressive cultural value system, certain tastes and preferences acquire more cultural legitimacy than others. This process of capital accumulation is classed and racialized but also gendered, with women’s practices and knowledge being assigned lower status than those of men’s (Darwin 2018; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles 2019). Notably, as Wilson (2022b) suggests, women and people of color have to carefully navigate a craft beer identity still heavily skewed toward whiteness and masculinity.

Whilst commending this important body of work documenting the experiences of women participating in the craft beer sector, we note several limitations which this paper seeks to address. Specifically, there is a lack of recent UK work set within the current climate in which inequalities within the sector are being given much media attention (e.g., BBC 2021; BBC Women’s Hour 2023), meaning an analysis of how women are taking action individually and collectively to address unequal treatment (Ozkazanc-Pan 2019) is timely and necessary. Many of these sources were published around the time of the #MeToo movement (2017–2018) but based on data collected before its emergence in late 2017. They do not therefore capture the cultural watershed, including both its wave of optimism and subsequent easing. As we show, a language of activism is more pronounced now. Indeed, important studies of sectors such as construction (Hansson et al. 2024), the military (Alvinus and Holmberg 2019), and the culture and creative industries (Hansson et al. 2026) have highlighted the shift that the #MeToo movement precipitated in many sectors blighted by sexism and gender inequality. A significant feature of our following analysis

draws on this current thinking, particularly how the agency of female employees can be foregrounded and the complex mixing of frustration, anger, and hope can be channeled into activism and change.

3 | Methods

Semi structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 women who consumed craft beer and were currently working and participating in the craft beer sector in the UK (see Table 1). These women had worked in various roles including brewing and serving craft beer but also as brand, brewery, and taproom owners, in marketing and public relations, sales, administration, accounts, training, and journalism. For many, their careers into and within craft beer typified the porous and at often informal nature of craft beer work. Some worked as brewers and even owned breweries and taprooms, whereas many combined paid roles with the more informal cultural labor of developing a presence on social media and in beer writing. Although the research focused on workers, most had come through a process of becoming avid craft beer consumers prior to taking on formal employment. They therefore referred in detail to their experiences as consumers and often used examples from “both sides of the bar” interchangeably as characteristic of both the craft beer sector and the craft beer “scene” more generally.

Recruitment took place between October 2021 and July 2022 through social media (i.e., Instagram was selected as this is the main platform various women and groups participating in craft beer use to share their experiences) and subsequent snowballing. All participants were White, in their 20s–40s (age range 26–38), and the majority were heterosexual (25% [$N = 3$] defined as LGBTQ+ [i.e., queer, bi-sexual, pan-sexual]).

Participants were interviewed online through Microsoft Teams and an informed verbal consent was obtained. Ethical approval was granted by Liverpool John Moores University ethics committee, and participants received a £15 retail voucher in recompense. During the interviews, a semi-structure interview schedule was followed where participants were asked about their drinking practices and preferences, their views on the marketing of craft beer brands and the “typical” craft beer drinker, positive and negative experiences in craft beer establishments and events (e.g., festivals) both as consumers and as workers, and, importantly, their involvement in any action to respond to gender inequalities. Throughout the interviews, steps were taken to be mindful of the ethos of inclusivity, with the aim of crafting a space in which good and bad experiences, as well as ambivalence and frustrations, could be raised and discussed.

Recordings were automatically transcribed using Microsoft Teams’s transcription function. The transcript was used as a

TABLE 1 | Table of participants.

Number	Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Sexuality	Previous job roles	Current job role	Consumer of craft beer
1	Gemma	32	White	Heterosexual	Brewer	Head Brewer	Prior to employment
2	Zara	32	White	Queer	Craft beer brand ambassador/sales	Beer journalist/critic	Prior to employment
3	Chloe	33	White	Heterosexual	Head of sales	Beer educator/trainer	Prior to employment
4	Molly	29	White	Not stated	Front of house and craft beer pub manager	Administration and sales	Prior to employment
5	Rosie	26	White	Bi-sexual	Accounts manager	Accounts manager	Prior to employment
6	Kacy	28	White	Heterosexual	N/A	Front of house craft beer bar	After employment
7	Danielle	39	White	Heterosexual	Sales and marketing	Sales and marketing; craft beer influencer and brand collaborator	Prior to employment
8	Emma	32	White	Heterosexual	N/A	Craft beer influencer; brand collaborator	Prior to employment
9	Nadine	26	White	Heterosexual	N/A	Brewer; brewery, brand and tap room owner; front of house	Prior to employment
10	Lucy	30s	White	Heterosexual	Front of house	Brewer; brewery, brand and tap room owner; front of house	Prior to employment
11	Tamsin	30s	White	Heterosexual	N/A	Public relations	After employment
12	Flo	40s	White	Heterosexual	Front of house sales and marketing;	Sales and marketing	Prior to employment

guide, and recordings were listened back to and the transcription amended to provide an accurate verbatim account. This inbuilt function was useful in reducing the time burden of transcribing interviews verbatim manually. Although checking the accuracy of Microsoft Word transcripts involved listening back to interviews and amending errors and omissions (e.g., transcription of dialect and slang were corrected and discussions that the function failed to transcribe due to volume issues were added), overall the function was effective in recording interview discussions accurately. A 1-hour interview involved 1.5–2 hours of editing, relative to manual transcription which on average takes 1 hour per 10 minutes of transcription. Thus, researcher time spent transcribing was significantly reduced. Interviews lasted between 26 and 80 minutes (average length 54 minutes) and generated a total of 11 hours of recordings. To preserve the anonymity of interviewees, pseudonyms were applied at the transcription stage and any identifying details (e.g., references to specific brands and breweries) were omitted. Transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis in NVivo to develop patterns, themes, and sub-themes through inductive coding, which involved identifying commonalities and differences within and then across interviews (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2014). An integrative approach to thematic analysis was used, with new codes identified being included into the pre-determined frame and then applied to previously and yet to be coded transcripts. Interviews, coding, and initial analysis was carried out by the lead author, with the second author then collaborating in further thematic coding and conceptual development.

In the following analysis, we focus on how participants accounted for what they all saw as their subordination within the craft beer sector. To address the gaps in research identified, we highlight how, within the current media attention being given to the gender inequalities that exist in the sector, women were responding to, resisting, and taking action to address the disparity between their subordinate position as consumers within a sector that promotes itself as accepting of difference and progressiveness. This is structured around two sections, each with several sub-themes. Firstly, a section explores how participants understood the craft beer sector to be a place of both persistent structural inequality and a space in which exclusionary practices were common. This sense of craft beer being a “boys club” meant that female workers in craft beer reported feeling not just less welcome but that their corporeal presence and bodily skills were delegitimated. The second section focuses on how interviewees accounted for their agency through activism and intentional action (Martin 2003) oriented toward “pushing back” against the exclusionary forces previously identified, while also making affective strategies the locus of a progress-oriented ethos held collectively with other women in craft beer.

4 | Findings

The interviews provided a space for participants to reflect on their work in the craft beer sector, but also on the emotions and feelings bound up with the precarious and ambivalent trajectories into and within the craft beer scene. Most spoke freely

about being drawn to craft beer by the various characteristics associated with the optimistic interpretation of the rise of craft beer outlined above. They expressed a strong sense of community (“the craft beer community in general it's almost like a big family,” Emma, Beer critic/journalist) and highlighted the appeal of a culture of innovation and sociability. For instance, Danielle, who worked in beer marketing and as a craft beer Instagram influencer,¹ reflected that “For me [the appeal of craft beer is] the experimentation and it's the flavors and it's the sociability, the social aspects of being in a pub and a bar that attracts me to it.” However, despite expressing positive views and experiences, spaces of craft beer consumption were regarded and experienced as male dominated (“It's definitely still heavily male dominated,” Emma, Beer critic/brand collaborator). All interviewees also expressed frustrations and dissatisfaction with how common it was for their legitimacy as members of the craft beer sector to be questioned and, in various ways, undermined. Strikingly, then, our findings concur with the corpus of literature examined above. Our analysis therefore focuses on how the “pull” of this draw to craft beer rubbed up against multiple reinforcements that this was a “man's world” and entrance to it was contingent and often partial. However, we aim to go beyond a binary of inclusion/exclusion, which often invokes physical analogies of barriers, to consider how being a woman in the still male dominated sector felt and, in particular, how ambivalent emotions such as frustration and anger were navigated as embodied and affective processes. Women were marginalized, or at least subject to potentially marginalizing microaggressions, but many had status in the industry and a sense that their status was earned—hard fought for, even.

Our following analysis is structured across three interlinked themes that shed light on women's experiences of craft beer as a space dominated by men both numerically and culturally, which at times created a sense of exclusion and difference. Importantly, though, our analysis also foregrounds the affordances and imperatives to resist and act.

4.1 | “Oh, Do You Work Here?": Exclusionary Structures and Practices

4.1.1 | The Persistence of (and Resistance to) the “Boys Club Vibe”

Despite increases in the number of women working in the craft beer sector in recent years, participants discussed the industry as remaining male dominated. Women were less likely to be employed in roles such as brewing, or to be owners of craft beer brands and breweries, and instead tended to work in areas relating to sales, marketing, and administration. Nadine reflected that female brewers were still “few and far between [and] ownership is ridiculously male orientated.” This situation was described by Molly as “like a pyramid and as you get up, the less diverse it gets.” Others acknowledged that there had been progress in recent years, with “more visibility for women” (Zara), a lack of diversity in terms of race, class, and sexuality was felt to remain. This was most frequently framed with a sense of frustration. For instance, Rosie (Accounts manager)

explained that although there were now more women numerically working in the sector, the women employed were all “very similar” (White, under 25, middle class).

The male-dominated nature of the sector was something some felt under-prepared for, if not in terms of access, then regarding the impact this would have on their day-to-day experiences. Head brewer Gemma, for instance, knew of particular brands with “a bit of reputation” but acknowledged that she “didn’t equate that with it being a problem that I would have to face.” Often this was framed as a sense of connection between the progressive ethos many craft breweries, and the sector more generally, have sought to project and the persistence of a “macho” culture. Nadine (brewer and brewery, brand and tap room owner) depicted it as being “awful for misogyny and I think there’s definitely within the scene in general a big sort of boys club vibe.” For Gemma, this experience was jarring given what she saw as:

...this thing of thinking that the craft industry is progressive and it markets itself in a way that is progressive and with all these campaigns [for inclusivity], and there’s you know pictures of women drinking beer. But fundamentally, the attitudes and the way that people conduct themselves who are founders of these companies, only perpetuates that weird attitude.

Interviewees reflected at length on the persistence of gender inequalities in the craft beer sector and, rather than being passive victims of individual acts of exclusion, offered astute critiques of the sector. This included structural factors, both within the sector and in the socioeconomic structures of wider society, which privileged middle class men with the financial means to establish businesses and run breweries. In addition, given the male and middle class-dominated nature of the industry, they were in a position to more easily acquire the social capital and networking opportunities to assist them in entering, gaining status, and doing well. For example, Molly learned from her roles in sales and administration that brewery ownership skewed toward “middle to upper middle class men” with both access to capital and “the right friends and they know the right people.”

Although critiques of the craft beer sector leadership emphasized economic privilege (access to financial resources) and social capital (knowing the “right people”), it was the cultural terrain of the craft beer “scene” (i.e., not just formal employment roles but a range of activities and interactions between consumers and staff at different levels) which interviewees spoke most vocally about. Reflecting the gendering of alcoholic beverages more generally whereby beer is considered a “man’s drink” (Atkinson et al. 2012, 2021; Lennox et al. 2018; Thurnell-Read 2022a), women discussed the persistence of a common (mis)perception that consuming craft beer is an activity predominantly enjoyed by men. They spoke of how a societal “image around beer being for men” (Molly) led to “sexist assumptions” that women consumed and preferred “ladylike” which would “always be the pales, fruity or lighter beers” (Zara, White, 30s, craft beer journalist/writer). Typically, this involved male bar staff “automatically” serving lighter and fruited beers

to female customers, with IPAs and stouts being placed in front of men. Further, male bar staff and customers frequently assuming, uninvited, the role of gatekeepers tutoring women on the beers on offer. Danielle, who worked in sales and marketing but also had growing prominence as craft beer scene influencer on social media, was vocal in contesting what she considered the “absurdity” of determining drink tastes and preferences by gender, something Zara similarly described as frustrating and “bizarre.” For example, Sara discussed how when serving in a craft beer bar, men would regularly ask “What drinks do you do for girls?” to which she would contest by replying “Oh I never realised beer had a gender (laughs).”

As has been found in numerous other studies (Chapman et al. 2018; Thurnell-Read 2022a), participants reported their own and other women’s craft beer knowledge regularly being questioned by male consumers and front-of-house staff. Women needed to “prove themselves” relative to their male colleagues, leaving many interviewees undervalued relative to men. Given the emphasis on passion and knowledge as key markers of craft beer identity (Thurnell-Read 2018), the delegitimation of women’s expertise is a prominent means of excluding them from full membership of the craft beer scene. Zara, a beer journalist and critic, illustrated this point by lamenting how often “asking about a specific beer” led to her “being mansplained for five minutes” by male serving staff who assume she has limited beer knowledge and unrefined tastes. Similarly, Danielle recalled being asked by a male bartender whether she had “heard of this brand called BrewDog?,” an interaction she described as being “literally the most patronizing thing” given it revealed he assumed her to be a novice who might need easing into craft beer through one of the, if not the most, prominent craft beer brands. Perhaps uniquely to craft beer, the informality of the sector, the blurring of consumer and worker roles, and the imperative to perform passion and knowledge (Thurnell-Read 2022b) combined to create the many occasions where women with paid roles and professional expertise were misrecognized and doubted (also see Wilson 2022a).

Although these insights largely concur with earlier research on gender discrimination in the craft beer sector, our analysis posits a more prominent sense of active resistance than earlier research. Typically, our interviewees found such treatment patronizing and exclusionary and were quite ready to label it as such. Particularly for women who worked in the industry in roles that require a high-level knowledge and skill such as brewers, men’s misplaced confidence was repositioned as a source of amusement. Indeed, head brewer Gemma noted that although her knowledge was doubted “all the time,” her common reaction was to laugh: “I presume they don’t know who I am!” A similar tone is observed in Nadine’s anecdote about ordering her own brand’s beer and having her request questioned by serving staff who assumed her lack of knowledge and taste: “I’ve been out with friends and they’ve gone, ‘Just tell them that you brew it, tell them!’ And I’ve even had someone question it in a bar when I ordered a pint of my own beer.” Such confident retorts positioned Gemma and Nadine as self-assured in their own expert positions and, conversely, willing to counter any delegitimizing interactions as a sign of their male detractors’ lower status.

An important reflection, then, is that these women are engaged in regular occasions where, rather than being passive victims, they actively push against and challenge the sexist assumptions and behavior that make gender inequality in the craft beer sector so persistent. In interviews, it was clear that although most found this saddening or, at least, annoying, many doubled down with confidence; Zara, as a craft beer writer and journalist, felt quite ready to prove herself as “knowing her shit,” and evidently took pleasure in male interlocutors quickly realizing their mistake. Her account focused on the pivotal moment when “Men are like, ‘Oh, you actually know about beer.’”

4.1.2 | Delegitimated Embodiment

Although interviewees were willing and able to leverage their skills, knowledge, and experience to subvert and resist the persistence of assumptions about women’s lower or illegitimate status within the craft beer scene, a recurring theme in interviews was how the female body, and its assumed capacities or limitations, underpinned both formal and informal barriers to access and acceptance in the sector. Thus, job adverts for brewing posts in particular, in many cases, focused on the physical demands of the work reproducing the biologically deterministic belief that women are unable to meet the physical capabilities of the manual labor involved, which are features of craft beer labor that are often highly valorized in representations of craftwork as tough but rewarding (Thurnell-Read 2014; Wilson 2024). Zara confidently noted that recent adverts for brewing vacancies made references to “You must be able to lift X, Y and Z amount of kilos,” asserting that “you’re not allowed to specify that, it’s illegal.” This emphasis on the physical body, in particular strength, was for Gemma an initial impediment to her own sense of ambition and success. She recalled that previously “I thought I was maybe not likely to get the job just because of my physical limitations compared to most men, I’m not very tall and I thought that they’ll just pick somebody else based on the fact that their manual capacity is greater than mine.” However, she went on to reflect on production having become less physically demanding due to advances in technology, which in theory should create a more inclusive and diverse workforce. She felt that “I can’t lift a 50K keg and stack it up, but nobody should be doing that by themselves anyway, there’s machinery for that.”

To an occupational culture that venerates the “hands on” tangibility of the brewing process (Thurnell-Read 2018), assumptions about the relative physical capacities and technical proficiencies of male and female bodies persists as both a barrier to entry and, importantly, a significant factor shaping women’s experiences of craft brewing and related labor. Like Land et al. (2018), many of our interviewees felt physical aspects of the job prompted acts of “chivalric sexism,” an indirect form of discrimination whereby male colleagues offer unsolicited assistance to female colleagues based on perceived physical limitations of the female body. In this way, men offering to lift beer casks on women’s behalf was regarded as sexist and disempowering through devaluing their skills. A clear example of this is Nadine who, in spite of her proven status as a brewer and brand and a taproom owner, outlined how:

The packaging and transport side, it’s always male orientated and from my experience again within the production side of things is so full of misogyny, like so awful. For example, pretty much every single time I get on our forklift and load a lorry I get a sexist comment. So last Friday I had “Oh do you want to get off and let me do it?” or “Oh, are you sure you can drive that thing?” “Are you sure you know what you’re doing?” And “Oh, do you work here?” Just relentless comments all the time...and the amount of times they come to lift things off the van ‘cause they don’t think that I can do it. And the amount of times that it’s been like “Oh, don’t worry love just leave it there, I know you won’t be able to do this” and blah blah blah.

Although assumptions about the physical limitations of female bodies gave rise to particularly pronounced feelings of frustration, as evidenced in Nadine’s comments above, the appearance of women’s bodies more generally was felt to impact our interviewees by inviting assumptions about their relationship to craft beer. Those who expressed more “femininely” in dress and bodily comportment suggested that men interpreted their appearance as being unaligned with the stereotypical masculine esthetic of the craft beer drinker. Danielle discussed how, no matter her standing in the craft beer scene, she frequently felt other based their interactions with her on “how she dresses.” This included clear assumptions that her feminine appearance meant “she couldn’t possibly like a stout,” but also a more general feeling of being treated like “she must have come in [the bar] by accident” given she “lacked a beard and brewer look.” In contrast to the widely recognized, and often parodied, stereotype of the bearded “hipster” (male) craft beer aficionado (see Land et al. 2018; Ikäheimo 2020), her feminine appearance was felt to denote a lack of authentic interest in craft beer.

Although an integral element of the craft beer ethos is the supposed privileging of pleasure in tasting beer over pleasure taken from its intoxicating effects on the human body (Thurnell-Read 2022b), the size and strength of beer servings appeared in interview narratives as being another means by which to delegitimize embodiment of women in the craft beer scene. With a persisting assumption that “it’s a pint for the man and a half for the lady” (Lucy, a brewer, brewery, brand, and taproom owner) being common, all participants had regularly experienced the scenario whereby bar staff incorrectly served pints, ordered by and for women, to male friends and partners. Similarly, Molly recalled instances where her orders of high percentage beers had been questioned by staff, with comments such as “oh, are you sure you want that it’s 8%, you know?” This concern to “protect” the assumed weaker constitutions of female drinkers resembles the “chivalric sexism” discussed by Land et al. (2018), where offers of help served to reemphasize the marginal or incomplete status of women in the scene. For some interviewees, consuming and vocally celebrating beers that contradicted gendered expectations, such as stouts and sours, was regarded as an act of rebellion (defined by Chapman et al. (2018) as “badass”) and even a feminist action by some, where such transgression they attempted to “claim space” in otherwise male dominated spaces of craft beer.

Some participants judged and mocked men for such behavior as both an unnecessary desire to uphold a public image of masculinity but also a lack of craft beer knowledge. As noted above, and explored in more detail below, this implied an active and assertive counteraction to the delegitimizing practices still prevalent in the sector. However, interestingly, they felt saddened to see that men are also in various ways burdened by gendered expectations which may influence or direct their consumption practices. An illustration of this is how Lucy framed her advice that high strength beers such as “imperial stouts should be drunk in thirds or halves” was often by male customers who instead “always want a pint,” with many men perhaps fearful that “drinking a half as effeminate.” Nadine felt disheartened that a sector promoted as being “progressive” had not “moved on” from such societal expectations and was reproducing the “stigma [that] women don’t drink pints”, whilst men felt compelled to prove their masculinity by drinking pints of strong beers to show they can “hold” their beer.

Importantly, this hints at the fact that most interviewees felt invested in and committed to working toward there being a craft beer scene where gender played no role in shaping how, and to what extent, an individual person participates. Given that a previous research study by Thurnell-Read (2014) shows how craft brewers often construct and perform authenticity narratives about the intertwining of themselves and their work, we see here that many of our interviewees felt that their gender—or rather harmful assumptions about the limitations of their gender—had prevented them from being acknowledged as possessing an authentic(ated) craft beer identity.

4.2 | “Oh, I Never Realised Beer Had a Gender”: Agency, Action and Change

The first analytical section focused on several specific areas where women’s presence and legitimacy within craft beer were questioned or undermined. However, these women were not passive. Rather, they all spoke of their dissatisfaction with the persistence of sexism and gender inequality in the UK craft beer sector but, importantly, also reported taking action to address the assumptions placed on them as women individually and collectively, with the aim of making craft beer inclusive “for all” (Molly, Administration and sales). Therefore, these women all contributed to the assertion of agency (Ozkazanc-Pan 2019) and offered numerous examples of actions marked out their intentionality (Martin 2003) which they hoped would empower other women both working in and entering the UK craft beer sector.

In this section, we emphasize that our research participants not only resisted discriminatory acts imposed on them but also felt an evident need to “ask more of craft beer” by imagining and orienting toward a craft beer scene which actually lived up to the “progressive” ethos central to craft beer identity, though, as we and others (Darwin 2018; Kuehn and Parker 2021; Land et al. 2018; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles 2019; Thurnell-Read 2022a) have shown, this ethos is not lived up to in practice.

4.2.1 | Calling Out and Pushing Back

Although all interviewees shared their experiences of being treated differently because of their gender, most also spoke passionately about defying these “outdated” limits placed on them. As seen above, they gave examples of subverting stereotypes and actively seeking to expand and nuance both the image of craft beer and the range of practices available to women working in the sector. Although some reported “having to laugh off” such encounters (Lucy), they also pushed back against men acting as gatekeepers, by “calling out” such assumptions. For example, Zara recalled her response to the man above who questioned her expertise as a sales rep and brand ambassador. She told him “Excuse me, I work for the brewery and I know about beer and you’re wrong. Don’t try and explain my own beer back to me.” Tamsin also spoke of an instance in which she was prevented from applying her knowledge by a male customer “who wouldn’t let her recommend him a beer.” Asking her “What do you know about it?”, she had countered his assumption and upheld her expertise, claiming “I’ve definitely drunk more beer than you.” Others deliberately educated themselves to enhance their beer knowledge to assist with their efforts to break down gendered assumptions, and to create a sense of confidence when participating in the scene both as consumers and in formal working roles.

Participants also expressed bewilderment that beer was still being promoted and consumed in gendered ways. Although some, such as Zara, felt a need for more (gender) minority group representation in craft beer marketing to enhance inclusion and a sense of “being seen,”² most did not want to see brands targeting women. Compared to the many misguided attempts by various drinks brands to position beer as being “for women,” often through derivative “feminine” symbolic and material references (see Thurnell-Read 2015), a de-gendering of marketing was felt to be needed to lessen the influence of gender as a structuring force in the sector. Lucy (a Brewer, brewery, brand, and taproom owner) explained this when asking “Why do they have to make it specifically targeted at us? Why can’t we just market it to ‘everyone?’” A distaste for marketing that targeted women was also expressed by Molly (Administration and sales), who stressed that although brands should be “making women feel accepted and safe, it doesn’t mean offering them a pink beer, or a label with a woman on it.” Rather, the attitudes generally reflected a stance best summarized by Molly’s comment that “no drink should have a gender or sexual orientation.” They attempted to “de-gender” craft beers and their consumption by promoting the notion that “beer has no gender” (Chloe) and that “every drink is for everyone” (Nadine)—sentiments integral to the rationale of initiatives such as “Everyone is Welcome,”³ which aims to create inclusive beer venues and events for everyone regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, health, religion, age or disability.

Women not only resisted products and marketing that were felt to reinforce sexist and hierarchical views on taste, knowledge and preference, but some also turned to social media to draw attention to what was regarded as the “pointless” targeting of women. For example, Chloe discussed a “hilarious” experience of receiving a delivery of beer samples to try which were infused

with coconut flour. Having been interested in the product given the novel ingredient, she later expressed frustration and a reluctance to try and promote the product within her beer training and tasting sessions, upon realizing that the product was “branded as ‘beer for women.’” Questioning whether she should try the product (“Do I now want to try the product?”), she instead used social media to “call out” the product as an example of craft beer unnecessarily gendering products, and to assert instead that “beer has no gender.” Many described their reasons for deliberately choosing not to draw on gendered connotations when marketing their own brands, to address what was regarded as the unnecessary targeting of women based on gender. For instance, Lucy felt that “gender has no role in our marketing” and stated that gender “honestly wouldn’t even cross my mind because fundamentally we just wouldn’t use anything that would be considered gendered.” Through deliberate transgression and awareness raising, and creating gender neutral marketing, women thus attempted to defy and address the societal expectations of gendered drink choice upheld through marketing that were felt to other them within the sector.

Social media provided an important and crucial opportunity for women to contest and challenge such gendered treatment and hierarchies of knowledge. Many documented their beer preferences, passion, and knowledge online by reviewing beers and events, providing recommendations and contributing to debates. Therefore, social media platforms, such as Instagram, have come to offer new means of communicating an authentic craft beer identity (Thurnell-Read 2014). Although this allowed them to communicate and perform their craft beer knowledge and created more female representation in the craft drinks sector, at times they experienced the same male dominance online as they did in the physical spaces of the craft beer scene. It was the women who were perhaps more vocal in calling out the gendered hierarchies of knowledge and status on social media that received the most negative treatment from men online. Tamsin summed this up as “taking an unbelievable amount of shit” for daring to have an outspoken presence online, an experience that resonates with Goodacre’s (2023) study of the toxic culture of online craft beer communities policed by an at times aggressive territoriality. Despite regularly being “trolled,” Danielle was determined to continue to create content that not only documented their knowledge and challenged gendered assumptions and hierarchies, but provided a space in which women felt included and their passion and interest in craft beer encouraged. They reflected that:

I was in Manchester the other week, and this really young girl came up to me and she was like, “I follow you on Instagram, your content is really sick, I love it, especially all this stuff with misogyny and beer.” And it kind of makes it worth it, when that happens.

Thus, despite online spaces reinforcing the craft beer scene as a male dominated space, resonating with Maaranen and Tienari’s (2020) call to examine the interlinking of hyper-masculine work cultures with emerging online social spaces, social media offered women a certain degree of control in performing their knowledge and in contesting engrained gendered hierarchies.

However, with regard to existing brand action to enhance female representation, a degree of “tokenism” was felt to be at play in some brand attempts at appearing inclusive, and these organizations were perceived as employing and promoting the presence of women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ people as a marketing strategy to improve their brand image—“It’s to look good...they wheel us out and it’s ‘Look, this is what beer looks like now’” (Molly). Brand, venue, and event marketing that was considered as constructed to promote an inclusive and progressive ethos was labeled as a form of “performative” “showmanship,” and a contradiction and unalignment was felt to exist between this shift to inclusive marketing, and the actual day-to-day experiences of women working in the industry. Inclusive content produced by men was regarded as particularly problematic, and they felt that marketing campaigns promoting inclusivity should be led by the minority groups they aim to champion—“You let that it be black lead, you let women’s issues be female led. That’s appropriate whereas if you’re coming from a place of privilege or you’re a man, is it probably more inappropriate because it’s not your fight. He can support it, but it’s not your fight” (Lucy).

The “tokenistic” employment of women for PR reasons also angered participants and was felt to negatively impact the confidence of women in their own abilities. For instance, Zara recalled how she had “had conversations with women where they’ve said ‘Oh, I feel like I’ve got this job to be the token woman,’” and when discussing her recent appointment Rosie expressed how she “hoped that I got the job because of my merit, not because they wanted a woman on the team, but you do question it in your mind a little bit.” A leading brand was also criticized and mocked by Flo for having repeatedly tried to (unsuccessfully) recruit her for what she perceived as brand image purposes—“they used to keep repeatedly hitting me up on LinkedIn because they wanted a ‘prominent girl hire’ [laughs].” She went on to provide a further example of what she regarded as tokenism by a brand who responded to accusations of lacking female representation by “hiring a queer woman to put it all over their socials,” for the sole purposes of giving the impression that “they’re not racist, sexist or homophobic.” Accordingly, although all felt that enhancing women’s representation and contribution in the section was essential in making women feel more included and valued, current attempts by many brands to do so were regarded as mere strategies to enhance brand image. For participants, the reality of continuing to experience and witness gender inequality as a regular feature of the industry rendered the progression and inclusive ethos often attached to the industry illusory, and a marketing and PR creation.

4.2.2 | Pulling in, Pulling Together

At first glance, the assertive acts might be seen as individual moments of resistance. However, further consideration reveals responses to gender inequality in the UK craft beer sector reflect a strong sense of community. Chloe, for instance, provided beer education and training courses designed to “help other women get some knowledge and help with their confidence to allow them to walk into a bar or brewery or taproom and feel that

people can't speak down to them." Although she also felt unease with women having to perform this extra labor relative to men, when in an ideal world "they shouldn't have to," she also recognized that such actions were informed by feminist practice rooted in collective action (Hansson et al. 2026). Some recalled positive experiences of working in breweries with a more equal ratio of male to female brewers, in which assumptions regarding physical strength had been deliberately addressed by management through instilling a sense of "teamwork." For Gemma, this created a more inclusive and positive workplace culture in which women felt valued and included, and she was aiming to reinforce this sense of teamwork and inclusivity within her role as head brewer. She observed that:

My current employee was deliberately looking for women to fill those roles, it's good. And the way that that place is different [from my previous workplace that was male dominated], is that there isn't any "Oh, you have to be able to do this physical thing and you have to be able to do it super fast". If you can't do something, then somebody will always come and help you with it, and there's a lot more teamwork and a lot more cooperation than I've seen in pretty much any other brewery, which is a positive thing and it's mainly what I want to keep pushing for.

In a similar fashion, Sara sought to emphasize that she had "been quite fortunate to have worked with people who will point to the nearest female member of staff and say 'She knows what she's talking about just as much as we do'." Although such "allyship" was appreciated and acknowledged, they also discussed examples of male colleagues "who definitely think they knew a lot more" (Kacy, front of house), and felt that the need for a man to confirm a women held an appropriate level of knowledge reinforced men as experts and gatekeepers. Similarly, Lucy made a distinction between her experience of working in traditional pubs, other noncraft venues, and craft beer establishments, stating that "working in craft beer you do tend to get quite supportive men." She explained how over time men "start to see how customers treat women [and] realise, 'Oh, this is actually how you get it, this is what your day to day life is', and they become quite supportive."

Women discussed an urgent need for action to address the general under-representation of women and other minority groups in the sector ("there's an issue with under representation in the industry," Flo; "there is not racial diversity by any stretch of the imagination, but at least now there's more diversity in terms of women," Tamsin). Optimistically there was consensus that the industry as a whole was aiming to "do better" in this regard, as expressed by Zara's observation that:

...as an industry we are all collectively trying to get better and there's some outliers obviously, but all the good people recognize that there needs to be more diversity in terms of women like LGBT Plus, all this kind of thing like, it is very much recognized and we're all trying to work out how to best do that.

They recalled examples of events and policies (e.g., panel discussions, brewing schemes for people of color, and job adverts specifically targeting minority groups, groups, and events specifically targeted at women (e.g., Women on Tap and Crafty Beer Girls)) that they engaged in and promoted to raise the profile of those who were "not cis White men" within the industry. For example, Gemma discussed a women-led initiative that aimed to address the discriminatory practice of excluding women from brewing by emphasizing the need of physical capabilities in job adverts, by providing support to brands in writing advertisements and specifications "to make them more appealing to women" and prevent "putting women off" through a focus on strength. They also created their own media to raise the profile of women in the industry and a sense of inclusion. Chloe, for example, produced zines and podcasts that broadcasted "interviews with women who work in all different kinds of roles" to ensure women "are seen." In these instances, progress in the sector was measured not just in terms of the decline in the types of delegitimizing behavior examined in the first analyzed section but in a more holistic sense of collective entitlement to create and occupy space for women in craft beer. Those who brewed and owned their own products also spoke of aiming to create welcoming environments for diverse consumers. Nadine, for example, spoke of "the amount of diversity that we get in the taproom, the amount of trans customers that we have is just incredible" as tangible evidence of the potential for her and others, collectively, to bring about change and progress.

5 | Discussion

The article presents findings from qualitative research with women craft beer consumers that explored their experiences of the craft beer scene in the UK. It supports previous research (Darwin 2017; Land et al. 2018; Thurnell-Read 2022a) that frames craft beer consumption as a highly gendered practice and a male dominated cultural space, where "beer drinking and knowledge of beer is a masculine domain, controlled by men" (Chapman et al. 2018, 307). As suggested by Thurnell-Read (2022a), although craft beer culture is often associated with progressive values and inclusivity, many of the gendered issues present in more mainstream industrial beer consumption, and drinking culture more generally, were replicated in the craft beer scene. In combination with women continuing to be outnumbered by men, gender inequalities remain persistent and are articulated through the questioning of women's knowledge and embodied competency.

Reflecting long standing misperceptions around women's alcohol use, drink choice and respectability (Atkinson et al. 2021; Griffin et al. 2013), all participants had experienced first-hand an engrained assumption that women prefer lighter, paler, fruity, and lower ABV products, in half pint measures. This delegitimized women consumers as uninformed, uninterested, and limited in the beer flavors they are willing to consume and enjoy (Darwin 2018, 224), leaving women in a position where they must "prove" their cultural legitimacy through the consumption of masculine products that are considered more legitimate. Men were discussed as taking on the role of uninvited gatekeepers,

presuming they held more knowledge, offering suggestions on what women should drink (Chapman et al. 2018) and questioning women's knowledge when serving in front of house roles. Although such actions were often innocuous and unintentional, they led to some women fearing their knowledge being questioned, and tastes judged, and many had invested in formal education and self-learning to gain legitimacy and acceptance in the scene (Chapman et al. 2018).

Therefore, we concur with Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles's (2019) assertion that embodied identity is a primary site for experience of dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in craft beer. Gender-based assumptions continue to produce behavior that made it impossible for some women to occupy the space of craft beer consumption on equal grounds to men, despite their passion for craft beer, knowledge and expertise (Wilson 2022a). Women's feminine appearance challenged the male hipster stereotype of the craft beer drinker that pervades craft beer spaces such as tap rooms and beer festivals (Ikäheimo 2020) and is reinforced by marketing (Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles 2019), but also worked to other women in the scene. However, rather than attempting to fit in, these women resisted and continued to express femininely with the aim of re-defining the image of the craft beer consumer and producer.

The research has identified various ways in which the women working in the UK craft beer sectors are made to feel "out of place" (Puwar 2004) by both male staff and male customers whose actions and attitudes repeatedly reinforce the assumed male domination of the sector. We have sought to move away from solely identifying exclusionary practices in craft beer that have, and evidently still do, serve to mark women's presence as contingent. Instead, our analysis has sought to foreground how it *feels* to experience these recurring delegitimizing acts and how this affective charge (often combining frustration, anger and hope) might be channeled into both individual and collective action. Participants combined structural critiques (for instance, highlighting the material privilege of male brewers and brewery owners with "money behind them") with embodied and affective responses rooted in ambivalent emotional states navigating hope, frustration and care for self and others. Therefore, many appeared to be using the very same aspects of craft beer that have long proved exclusionary—like the use of humor to put down those who "get craft beer wrong" (Goodacre 2023)—to their own advantage as a means to exercise agency through an assertiveness used to parry and counter efforts to delegitimize not only their labor in the sector but their right to be present and to belong. In such instances, an emphasis is clearly placed on answering back, and often getting the last word, in a way that was presented as being characterized by assertiveness and intentionality (Martin 2003).

Throughout the discussions, women considered the marketing of (craft) beer in creating and reinforcing the gendered dynamics at play in the scene. The masculinization and feminization of beer marketing more generally (Atkinson et al. 2019), and craft beer specifically (Thurnell-Read 2015), was felt to restrict and constrain the expectations placed on women with regards drink preference and acceptability. Marketing was felt to be a very visible projection of the values of the sector, and

one that needed to be held to account and worked on as part of efforts to make craft beer less exclusionary. Similarly to Kuehn and Parker (2021) who interviewed women craft beer brewers in New Zealand, most participants preferred beer to be marketed in a gender-neutral manner and did not want to be targeted as "women drinkers," for example, through fruity products and the pinking of products. Some attempted to "de-gender" (Chapman et al. 2018) craft beer consumption and its marketing, yet this contradicted the views of some, that women should be "seen" in craft beer including in marketing to enhance representation.

The findings thus confirm those of past research that highlights how the craft beer sector reinforces the long-standing gendered issues existent in wider drinking culture that other and exclude women within a hierarchical male dominated sector (Puwar 2004). It goes further, however, by providing insight into women's views on the role of brand marketing in this process, and is particularly unique in foregrounding how women were individually and collectively challenging the subjugated positions they were assigned by men within the hierarchy of taste and knowledge (Hansson et al. 2026). These women are remarkable in that they demonstrated a high degree of awareness of and reflexivity toward the nuances of the craft beer culture, and found capacities for action (Ahearn 2001) in their daily social and corporeal engagements and interactions. They pushed back not only through their consumption practices but also through "calling out" what they regarded as out of date and sexist judgments in the physical and online context of craft beer consumption, and when they were able, by de-gendering craft beer marketing, and drawing attention to and rejecting what they regarded as the "unnecessary" gendered targeting of women consumers. These women were all engaged with recent (social) media attention to the inequalities within the sector (Maaranen and Tienari 2020), and considered their actions part of a wider *collective* movement to change how women's place in craft beer is perceived and experienced.

Indeed, there are many (online) groups and events that could be defined as examples of feminist activism within the scene (see e.g., Fem.Ale, Smash the Pintriarchy, Punks with Purpose, Crafty Beer Girls) that connect women and other underrepresented groups (e.g., LGBTQ+, women of color) of craft beer consumers, producers, and employees (Thurnell-Read 2022a). They further provide an opportunity to share experiences of inequality, and discuss suitable actions for change, and many of the women we interviewed spoke positively and partook in these. Thus, although many of the examples we draw on of women pushing back against unequal treatment were individualized, they were underpinned by a shared and collective awareness and want for change across the sector that resulted from the abilities of social media to connect women consumers. Most identified as feminists or, at least, with feminist politics and many appeared to draw on the repertoires of fourth-wave feminism, in which social media provides a means of collective consciousness and is used to "call out" sexism and foster empowerment through collaboration and allyship (Peroni and Rodak 2020). Most were confident in their assertion that craft beer culture was *their* space, not solely that of men, and were

active agents in resisting the many efforts to undermine their claim to legitimate presence in the scene.

The experience of having pushed against barriers to entry does not dissipate having gained access, and participants clearly felt they remained forever watchful of the next challenge to their presence. All participants combined elements of the optimistic and pessimistic reading of craft beer to outline something more akin to a pragmatic idealism in a way that agentic practices could be attuned to the sociocultural realities of working in the sector (Ahearn 2001). In this sense, progress was determined as much by the affective qualities of *feeling* a right to take up space in the craft beer sector as by more simplistic numerical measures of the number of women working in the sector, not least given the healthy skepticism of tokenistic efforts to push *some* women into prominent public-facing roles as “good PR.” Rather, we see the value placed on emotive encounters such as Danielle being approached by a young woman praising her for her social media activism (“it kind of makes it worth it, when that happens”), Gemma’s gratitude for working in a space in which an ethos of care and community predominate (“somebody will always come and help you with it, and there’s a lot more teamwork and a lot more cooperation than I’ve seen in pretty much any other brewery”), and Nadine’s evident satisfaction taken in “the amount of diversity that we get in the taproom”.

6 | Conclusion

Craft beer is often promoted and considered as a liberal and progressive culture of beer consumption, and in recent years attempts have been made to challenge gender stereotypes and foster a more gender equal ethos amongst craft beer producers and consumers (Thurnell-Read 2022a). Although the women we interviewed were passionate consumers of craft beers and reported positive experiences of participating in the scene, the research highlights how they continued to feel excluded and othered in the male dominated space of craft beer consumption. Many gendered issues that exist in mainstream drinking culture, such as the expectations that women drink more feminine and “ladylike” drinks, and avoid products and measures that may lead to intoxication relative to men, were reproduced. Craft beers took on gendered associations, with some holding masculine, and others feminine, symbolic value, and these were felt to be underpinned by the history of gendered marketing (Chapman et al. 2018; Darwin 2018; Land et al. 2018). This created a hierarchical space of taste and knowledge in which products that were defined as sitting within the territory of male taste gained higher hierarchical status, and in which men gained status and power through the role of the knowledgeable gatekeeper. It was service interactions that gave rise to numerous instances of women’s tastes, preferences, and knowledge being doubted. Indeed, it appears that many men in the scene used the subordination of women and women’s craft beer consumption as a means to buttress their own claims to be legitimate occupiers of a social and cultural space evidently still assumed by many to be a “man’s world” to which women gain access and occupy with difficulty (Puwar 2004). This necessitated careful, often selective (Wilson 2022b), action which at

times was overtly gendered and in other cases intended to be gender-neutral.

However, women were actively working to push back against such sexist and discriminatory expectations, judgments and treatment, both individually and collectively, to create a more inclusive, equal and diverse culture for all. As the craft beer scene develops, matures, and—equally possible—stagnates, further research might trace women’s experiences longitudinally. Such an approach would mean both tracking change over time to see whether or not the progressive aspiration to inclusivity are born out with real change and a reduction in such exclusionary practices, as detailed in this article, and in terms of the careers of women now establishing themselves as legitimate and influential voices in the field who may, in turn, inspire a new generation of female craft beer consumers, workers, and scene participants.

Funding

The data this article draws on was produced as part of a wider project funded by the Economics and Social Research Council (Ref: ES/T007443/1).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Research data are not shared.

Endnotes

¹ Individuals with a social media presence who document their everyday lives, collaborate with brands, and interact with a specific target audience to stimulate online engagement (e.g., number of followers and post engagement) with the aim of selling ideas, products, services, or brands (Joshi et al. 2023).

² We also noted that attempts to be “on trend” with gender identity politics by brands with suspect progressive credentials were often met with skepticism. An example of this is BrewDog’s much criticized “No Label” beer launch in 2015 which proclaimed the world’s first “nonbinary, postgender beer.”

³ <https://everyonewelcomeinitiative.com>.

References

- Ahearn, L. M. 2001. “Language and Agency.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30, no. 1: 109–137. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.30.1.109>.
- Alvinus, A., and A. Holmberg. 2019. “Silence-Breaking Butterfly Effect: Resistance Towards the Military Within #MeToo.” *Gender, Work and Organization* 26, no. 9: 1255–1270. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12349>.
- Atkinson, A. M., A. W. Kirton, and H. R. Sumnall. 2012. “The Gendering of Alcohol in Consumer Magazines: An Analysis of Male and Female Targeted Publications.” *Journal of Gender Studies* 21, no. 4: 365–386. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2012.681180>.
- Atkinson, A. M., B. R. Meadows, C. Emslie, A. Lyons, and H. R. Sumnall. 2021. “Pretty in Pink’ and ‘Girl Power’: An Analysis of the Targeting and Representation of Women in Alcohol Brand Marketing on

- Facebook and Instagram." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 101: 103547. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2021.103547>.
- Atkinson, A. M., and H. R. Sumnall. 2016. "If I Don't Look Good, It Just Doesn't Go Up": A Qualitative Study of Young Women's Drinking Cultures and Practices on Social Network Site." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 38: 50–62. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2016.10.019>.
- Atkinson, A. M., H. R. Sumnall, E. Begley, and L. Jones. 2019. *A Rapid Narrative Review of Literature on Gendered Alcohol Marketing and Its Effects: Exploring the Targeting and Representation of Women*. Public Health Institute, LJMU; Institute of Alcohol Studies.
- BBC. 2021. Craft Beer Industry Accused of Being 'Sexist Boys' Club'. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-57719831>.
- BBC Women's Hour. 2023. Does Craft Beer Have a Problem With Women? Women Have Been Sharing Their Experiences of Sexism in the Craft Beer Industry. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000w9td?at_campaign=64&at_custom3=%40BBCWomansHour&at_custom1=%5Bpost+type%5D&at_custom2=twitter&at_custom4=DED59B9A-BCB6-11EB-9184-933F0EDC252D&at_medium=custom7.
- Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2: 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>.
- Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2014. "Thematic Analysis." In *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology*, edited by T. Teo, 1947–1952. Springer.
- Chapman, N. G., M. Nanney, J. Slade Lellock, and J. Mikles-Schluterman. 2018. "Bottling Gender: Accomplishing Gender Through Craft Beer Consumption." *Food, Culture and Society* 21, no. 3: 296–313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2018.1451038>.
- Cunningham, J., and S. Barclay. 2020. "Craft Beer Sector Collaboration in North East Scotland: The Role of Individual Success." *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation* 21, no. 4: 263–274. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1465750320921296>.
- Darwin, H. 2017. "You Are What You Drink: Gender Stereotypes and Craft Beer Preferences Within the Craft Beer Scene in New York City in Chapman." In *Untapped: Exploring the Cultural Dimensions of Craft Beer*, edited by J. Slade Lellock and C. D. Lippard, 222–235. West Virginia University Press.
- Darwin, H. 2018. "Omnivorous Masculinity: Gender Capital and Cultural Legitimacy in Craft Beer Culture." *Social Currents* 5, no. 3: 301–316. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2329496517748336>.
- Goodacre, T. 2023. *Exploring Meaning in Craft Beer Communities: What Is Craft Beer and Who Is It For?* Doctoral dissertation. Anglia Ruskin University.
- Griffin, C., I. Szmigin, A. Bengry-Howell, C. Hackley, and W. Mistral. 2013. "Inhabiting the Contradictions: Hypersexual Femininity and the Culture of Intoxication Among Young Women in the UK." *Feminism & Psychology* 23, no. 2: 184–206. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353512468860>.
- Hansson, K., H. Ganetz, and M. Sveningsson. 2024. "The Significance of Feminist Infrastructure: #MeToo in the Construction Industry and the Green Industry in Sweden." *Gender, Work and Organization* 31, no. 3: 1092–1112. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12994>.
- Hansson, K., H. Ganetz, and M. Sveningsson. 2026. "Sexual Harassment as Reification: #MeToo in the Cultural and Creative Industries in Sweden." *Gender, Work and Organization* 33, no. 1: 67–79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.70028>.
- Hodkinson, P. 2002. *Goth. Identity, Style and Subculture*. Berg Publishers.
- Hubbard, P. 2019. "Enthusiasm, Craft and Authenticity on the High Street: Micropubs as 'Community Fixers'." *Social & Cultural Geography* 20, no. 6: 763–784. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2017.1380221>.
- Ikäheimo, J. 2020. "Exclusive Craft Beer Events: Liminoid Spaces of Performative Craft Consumption." *Food, Culture and Society* 23, no. 3: 296–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2020.1741065>.
- Joshi, Y., M. W. Lim, K. Jagani, and S. Jumar. 2023. "Social Media Influencer Marketing: Foundations, Trends, and Ways Forward." *Electronic Commerce Research* 25, no. 2: 1199–1253. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10660-023-09719-z>.
- Kosonen, I., S. Barnard, and D. Sage. 2025. "Craft Beer Lacks Space for Women as Beer Professionals." *Journal of Marketing Management* 41, no. 7–8: 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2025.2500572>.
- Kuehn, K. M., and S. Parker. 2021. "One of the Bloses: Brewsters, Branding and Gender (In)visibility in New Zealand's Craft Beer Industry." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 21, no. 3: 519–538. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540518806956>.
- Land, C., N. Sutherland, and S. Taylor. 2018. "Back to the Brewster: Craft Brewing, Gender and the Dialectical Interplay of Retraditionalisation and Innovation." In *The Organization of Craft Work: Identities, Meanings, and Materialities*, edited by E. Bell, G. Mangia, S. Taylor, and M. L. Toraldo, 150–168. Routledge.
- Lennox, J., C. Emslie, H. Sweeting, and A. Lyons. 2018. "The Role of Alcohol in Constructing Gender & Class Identities Among Young Women in the Age of Social Media." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 58: 13–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2018.04.009>.
- Leyshon, M. 2008. "'We're Stuck in the Corner': Young Women, Embodiment and Drinking in the Countryside." *Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy* 15, no. 3: 267–289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687630801920286>.
- Lyons, A. C., and S. A. Willott. 2008. "Alcohol Consumption, Gender Identities and Women's Changing Social Positions." *Sex Roles* 59, no. 9: 694–712. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9475-6>.
- Maaranen, A., and J. Tienari. 2020. "Social Media and Hyper-Masculine Work Cultures." *Gender, Work and Organization* 27, no. 6: 1127–1144. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12450>.
- Martin, P. Y. 2003. "'Said and Done' Versus 'Saying and Doing' Gendering Practices, Practicing Gender at Work." *Gender & Society* 17, no. 3: 342–366. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243203017003002>.
- Nicholls, E. 2015. "'Never, Ever Go down the Bigg Market': Classed and Spatialised Processes of Othering on the 'Girls' Night Out'." In *Drinking Dilemmas: Space, Culture and Identity*. BSA Sociological Futures Series, edited by T. Thurnell-Read, 114–131. Routledge.
- Nicholls, E. 2019. *Negotiating Femininities in the Neoliberal Night-Time Economy: Too Much of a Girl?* Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ozkazanc-Pan, B. 2019. "On Agency and Empowerment in a #MeToo World." *Gender, Work and Organization* 26, no. 8: 1212–1220. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12311>.
- Peroni, C., and L. Rodak. 2020. "Introduction. The Fourth Wave of Feminism: From Social Networking and Self-Determination to Sisterhood." Supplement, *Onati Socio-Legal Series* 10, no. 1S: 1S–9S. <https://doi.org/10.35295/osls.iisl/0000-0000-0000-1160>.
- Puwar, N. 2004. *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place*. Berg.
- Robinson, D., and K. Spracklen. 2019. "Music, Beer and Performativity in New Local Leisure Spaces: Case Study of a Yorkshire Dales Market Town." *International Journal of the Sociology of Leisure* 2, no. 4: 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41978-018-00029-5>.
- Rydzik, A., and V. Ellis-Vowles. 2019. "Don't Use 'The Weak Word': Women Brewers, Identities and Gendered Territories of Embodied Work." *Work, Employment & Society* 33, no. 3: 483–499. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017018789553>.

- Thody, L. 2014. "From Working Class to Hipster Flash: Locating Newcastle City in Newcastle Brown Ale." *Visual Culture in Britain* 15, no. 2: 173–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14714787.2014.930624>.
- Thurnell-Read, T. 2014. "Craft, Tangibility and Affect at Work in the Microbrewery." *Emotion, Space and Society* 13: 46–54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2014.03.001>.
- Thurnell-Read, T. 2015. "Beer and Belonging: Real Ale Consumption, Place and Identity." In *Drinking Dilemmas: Space, Culture and Identity*, edited by T. Thurnell-Read. Routledge.
- Thurnell-Read, T. 2018. "The Embourgeoisement of Beer: Changing Practices of 'Real Ale' Consumption." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 18, no. 4: 539–557. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540516684189>.
- Thurnell-Read, T. 2022a. "Gender and Craft Drinks." *Sociology Compass* 16, no. 9: e13018. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.13018>.
- Thurnell-Read, T. 2022b. "Craft Drinks, Connoisseurship and Intoxication." In *Routledge Handbook of Intoxicants and Intoxication*, 113–126. Routledge.
- Wallace, A. 2019. "'Brewing the Truth': Craft Beer, Class and Place in Contemporary London." *Sociology* 53, no. 5: 951–966. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038519833913>.
- White, K. 2023. *From Drunken Woman to Female Inebriate? Drinking as Vice, Crime, Sin or Disease in Victorian and Edwardian London: A Thesis Submitted to Te Herenga Waka/Victoria University of Wellington in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in History*. Victoria University of Wellington.
- Wilson, E. R. 2022a. "Privileging Passion: How the Cultural Logic of Work Perpetuates Social Inequality in the Craft Beer Industry." *Socius* 8: 23780231221121064. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231221121064>.
- Wilson, E. R. 2022b. "It Could Never Be Just About Beer': Race, Gender, and Marked Professional Identity in the US Craft Beer Industry." *Journal of Professions and Organization* 9, no. 2: 232–245. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/joac010>.
- Wilson, E. R. 2024. *Handcrafted Careers: Working the Artisan Economy of Craft Beer*. University of California Press.