

SENSE WORK: INEQUALITY AND THE LABOR OF CONNOISSEURSHIP

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the intersections of the body, senses, and labor within a Post-Fordist, consumption based economy. Data was collected via ethnographic research of specialty coffee baristas. The concepts of “sense work,” “taste frameworks,” and “minimum wage connoisseurship” are introduced for identifying the social components of sensory experience. The specialty coffee industry serves as one examples of a larger “taste economy.” This research demonstrates how sensory experience can fall under management control and aid in the development of a new, niche “consumer market” (Otis 2011), characteristic of Post-Fordism. Additionally, an examination of the boundary work and identity formation within the specialty coffee industry provides new insights into how the body and the senses are implicated in the production and reproduction of class inequality.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Literature Review.....	4
Emotion Management/Labor.....	4
Body Labor.....	6
Aesthetic Labor.....	7
Work and Skill.....	9
The Senses and Labor.....	12
Senses and Boundaries.....	15
Methodology.....	20
Gaining Entrée at Craft.....	21
Supplementary Data.....	24
Analysis.....	25
Overview of Arguments by Chapter.....	26
II. BECOMING A COFFEE CONNOISSEUR.....	31
The Sensory Consultant.....	31
The Tongue Map.....	34
Post-Tongue Map.....	36
Theorizing the Senses in Society.....	38
Becoming a Coffee Connoisseur.....	42
Former Novice: Making the Ordinary Extraordinary.....	44
From Skepticism to the “Aha” Moment.....	47

Chapter	Page
Coffee Purity and Coffee as Centerpiece	55
Expanded Purview of Sensory Experiences	60
Conclusion.....	62
III. TASTE FRAMEWORKS AND SENSE WORK.....	64
Labor of Connoisseurship.....	64
Producing Consistency with an Inconsistent Product.....	68
Taste Frameworks	71
Palate Training: Fixing the Sensory Experiences of Baristas.....	77
Linking the Sensory and Mechanical	87
Sense Work	90
The Gateway Drug and the Long Play	93
Conclusion.....	100
IV. Minimum Wage Connoisseurship	103
Coffee Waves	110
Everyday Boundary Maintenance.....	115
Hiring	124
Minimum Wage Connoisseurship	129
Conclusion.....	134
V. Conclusion: Taste Economy.....	137
Main Findings.....	137
Further Implications.....	141
Future Directions	143

Chapter	Page
REFERENCES CITED.....	147

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

After taking a sip from the logo-stamped ceramic mug I put all of my concentration into the flavor, experiencing carefully as the coffee moved around my mouth. The barista queried, “What are you tasting in it?” “I don’t know,” I said, “maybe strawberry?” The barista, smiling ear-to-ear, corrected, “What you are tasting as strawberry is *actually* stone fruit and mandarin.” As I returned to my seat I thought, a little indignantly, “how can she know what I’m tasting?”

We are all connoisseurs, claims a New York Times article, not just consumers but seekers of the “best” (Zane 2013). With this trend, jobs in restaurants, retailers, cafes, and other service sector work involves a new kind of labor that I call sense-work. This work requires guiding customers through a reformulation of their sense-experience that shapes an aesthetic scheme in line with the interests of a firm or an industry. This labor crafts shared meaning from individual sensory experience but it also creates inequality. The activity has value because it allows consumers to display status through “good taste” which has been consecrated by an industry.

The service industry is the largest employment sector in the U.S. and is projected to continue outpacing growth in other sectors for the near future. Workers in the food preparation and serving industries account for a large portion of the service sector, including nearly 13 million laborers (BLS 2016). A growing number of these laborers are required to arbitrate taste, whether it is in a clothing store (Williams and Connell 2010), a restaurant (1996), a barbershop, cocktail bar (Ocejo 2017), a winery (Jamerson 2009), or a coffee shop.

I was skeptical about taste making professions; after all, we are well practiced in determining if something tastes good, so who are connoisseurs to tell us what we *actually* taste? And yet, growing menus of edible commodities seem to have their own tastemakers. Chocolate, wine, beer, and cheese are somewhat traditional arenas of connoisseurship. Now mayonnaise, mustard, pickles, and even water have their connoisseurs and laborers who are active in discerning tastes. Martin Riese, of Germany, for example, became the first water sommelier in the U.S. in 2013 and received an O-1 visa to work in the U.S., a designation typically “awarded to individuals with extraordinary abilities...(such as) scientists and inventors” (Harris 2013). Riese develops water menus and holds water tastings for a Los Angeles restaurant group (Harris 2013).

To better identify the labor behind “discerning taste,” I studied the tastemaking world of cafés. I examine how workers arbitrate highly individual sensory experiences and how they extend individual taste into collective meaning. I also analyze how they learn what “taste” is, describe what kind of labor is entailed in making taste, and discuss who benefits.

For one year I immersed myself in the world of baristas. I attended a conference and barista competition put on by the Specialty Coffee Association of America, learned the basic skills of baristas in a one-week barista training class, witnessed a lecture and demonstration from a two-time regional barista champion, and attended many coffee cuppings (like wine tastings, but for coffee). The bulk of my research, however, is based on taking a job as a barista for six months to learn the everyday labor of these workers. I learned how to taste, prepare, and talk about coffee to the standards of the café. I also was trained to operate and interpret many instruments and machines used in the

production of coffee, including a Total Dissolved Solids monitor that displayed how much extraction we were getting out of the coffee after brewing. I observed how baristas talk with each other and to customers about taste, as well as their practices for training both new employees and customers on how to “properly” taste coffee according to their standards.

This manuscript analyzes the development of the third wave industry in its embryonic stage to examine how a new culture of taste connoisseurship develops and is legitimized. The Specialty Coffee Association of America, the main industry organization of specialty coffee, estimates that the retail value of the U.S. coffee market is \$48 billion, with specialty comprising around 55% of the total market (SCAA 2018a). The “third wave” of coffee, distinguished from “second wave” cafés such as Starbucks or Peet’s, closely resembles the wine industry, with baristas acting more like sommeliers. They prepare coffee with instruments and machines that look lifted out of a chemist’s lab, and use tasting notes to inform and guide customers through their sensory experience (Skeie 2002; Cho 2005; Pendergrast 2010). By examining the labor of third wave baristas in this developing industry, I am poised to identify the skills and labor processes involved in the labor of connoisseurs. I pay particular attention to the “body rules” involved in this work. Otis (2011:14) argues that just as there are “feeling rules” (Hochschild 1983), there are “body rules,” or “expectations for bodily presentation and displays.” I argue that the labor these workers perform relies on the “fixing” of sensory experience, or embodiment of a type of body rule, what I refer to as a “taste framework.” I demonstrate how the embodiment of taste framework is required for the successful completion of both the manual and interactive components of the labor process. Additionally, like “body rules,”

I identify that taste frameworks not only orient sensory experiences, but are also integral in signaling identities and maintaining inequalities.

Though this research focuses on the work of baristas, as Fine (1996:263) argues, “all occupations have aesthetic components, and sensory issues are a part of all work,” although “occupations vary in the consciousness and centrality” of aesthetic and sensory characteristics. I argue that the concepts developed and processes involved in the labor of third wave baristas are not only useful for understanding the work of many other laborers in similar fields, but also have implications for understanding how the senses can be implicated in everyday processes of identity formation and boundary work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of sense work serves as an extension and a complement to other characteristics of service labor, most notably emotional labor (Hochschild 1983), body labor (Lan 2003), and aesthetic labor (Warhurst et al. 2000). While sense work shares some components of these kinds of service work, it fills a void that they do not address. Sense work describes the reformulation of the senses of both workers and consumers and their naturalization in the creation of a market segment. Through an analysis of these workers, I also demonstrate that the reformulation of the senses is integral to the regulation of both the manual and interactive components of the labor process.

Emotion Management/Labor

Hochschild’s (1979) introduction of the concept of ‘feeling rules’ and ‘emotional labor’ is the first major attempt at articulating the core characteristics of interactive

service work. Prior to Hochschild (1979), much of the sociological literature viewed emotion as an involuntary response (Kemper 1978). Hochschild (1983) contends that individuals can monitor and regulate their emotional expression, aligning their display with ‘feeling rules,’ or normative expectations for emotional experience. Hochschild demonstrates that individuals can suppress or induce particular emotions in order to align with the feeling rules of particular situations. The outward display of these emotions through a smile, for example, is referred to as ‘surface acting,’ while the management of internal feelings is called ‘deep acting’.

Hochschild demonstrates that the regulation of emotions not only occurs in everyday interactions, but is also a requirement for many laborers in the form of ‘emotional labor.’ In emotional labor, emotion management has exchange value that is evident in the commoditization of emotional expressions by organizations as a form of labor power. In other words, emotional labor is appropriated by capital. Emotions fall under the control of management through specifying rules of emotional behavior, what Hochschild (1983) calls a ‘transmutation of emotional systems.’ This transmutation highlights that emotional labor is a quality that is dictated by the labor process and not simply a ‘natural’ or everyday production of emotion.

Emotional labor involves not only the creation or suppression of feelings within the employee, but also the creation of feeling within customers (Hochschild 1983; Steinberg and Figart 1999). In emotional labor, employees’ emotions are under the control of management and are manipulated to serve as a part of the product consumed by customers. Similarly, sense workers are expected to align their palate with the ‘sense rules’ expected by management in order to create a product. Sense workers not only have

to be trained to embody the desired palate, but also are expected to train customers to reformulate their sensory experience to align with the sense rules of the organization. In other words, sense rules are implicated in the regulation of both manual and interactive components of the labor process, instead of just the interactive components, as is the case with emotional labor. Sense work also involves a reformulation of customers' sensory experience by instructing customers on what sorts of qualities should be valued in the coffee in an effort to align their aesthetic frame with the organization and ensure their future business.

Body Labor

Lan (2003) introduced the concept of 'body labor' in her analysis of cosmetic shops. She identified an expanding labor market for service occupations that perform beauty-oriented maintenance on bodies, such as nail or hair salons. Workers in these settings, Lan identified, are responsible for performing body maintenance and presenting their own bodies in alignment to dominant, middle-class cultural ideals. These laborers are expected to "embody beauty images" and to interact with customers through "normalizing discourses" that reinforce the beauty expectations (Lan 2003:21). Lan argues that these laborers also perform body labor in their interactions with customers as they work on customers' bodies and reproduce beauty expectations and images of "ideal femininity" (Lan 2003:22).

Lan's (2003) conceptualization of body labor provides the first articulation of how the body is integral to the labor process of interactive service work. She argues, as does Wolkowitz (2006), that emotional labor has ignored the embodiment of workers,

stating that much of the prior literature has treated workers as “an abstract labor power that has no sexuality, emotion, or body” (Lan 2003:22). Through the introduction of body labor, the manipulation of workers’ bodies is revealed as a critical component of the interactive service labor process.

The concept of sense work is informed by Lan’s (2003) contribution and identifies another way that the body is manipulated in the creation of a product. In sense work, there is not an aligning of senses to larger cultural ideals of taste. Instead, organizations are creating ideal taste standards that are embodied by the laborers and taught to customers in the aim of creating a consumer market. Producers and consumers draw boundaries and differentiate themselves from others through their abilities to arbitrate tastes according to the standards of the industry.

Aesthetic Labor

Warhurst et al. (2000) analyzed the hiring practices of interactive service firms in their discussion of ‘aesthetic labor.’ Aesthetic labor is characterized as the hiring of employees who already embody particular capacities or cultural capital at the time of employment. These capacities are then commodified “through processes of recruitment, selection, and training, transforming them into ‘competencies’ or ‘skills’” in order to “appeal to the senses of customers” (Warhurst et al. 2000:4). Williams and Connell (2010) caution that aesthetic labor should not be treated as a skill, but should instead be viewed as an indicator of the maintenance of class boundaries through hiring practices that give preferential treatment to those individuals that embody the “appropriate” habitus, typically white and middle-class, to represent the brand.

One problem with aesthetic labor is that it does not identify other characteristics that may be integral to the hiring practice of service organizations outside of simply “looking good and sounding right” (Williams and Connell (2010). I build on the existing aesthetic labor literature by outlining characteristics of the hiring practices not previously observed. I demonstrate that potential hires are not only evaluated for having the appropriate cultural capital, but also for having a “trainable” palate. Through observing interactions about potential hires and from interviews with co-workers, I find that one key element of determining eligibility for employment is based on the perceived quality of an applicant’s ability to be trained to taste in the preferred way. One example of this involved a discussion about what two applicants had ordered when they came in for their interview. What they drank served as an indication of their ability to learn the appropriate palate needed to be a competent employee.

Aesthetic labor has also been criticized for paying too much attention to the hiring practices, or on the embodied capacities upon entry into employment, without exploring the development of bodily capacities or reproductive labor involved post-hiring (Wolkowitz 2006). Wolkowitz (2006:175) argues that the aesthetic labor literature focuses too much on the body as “naturalized” and ignores the “social body” where further “body-knowledge” is acquired through “gaining experience of the proper use of tools, the adequate perception of the quality of materials, ...and the learning and maintenance of manual dexterity.” The lack of attention to post-hiring in the aesthetic labor literature may have to do with the resistance to referring to aesthetic labor as a skill. In sense work, however, I examine how the palate is implicated in the hiring process and is then reformulated through training into a skilled practice.

Work and Skill

Skill is a concept used by labor scholars to understand “the social valuation of work” (Vallas 1990:309). While some occupations are referred to as high- or low-skilled, the standards upon which such designations are based are less clear. Defining skill has proven to be a difficult task. Attewell (1990) discusses how even the etymology of the word skill points to potential confusion for researchers as they attempt to define and measure skill in the workplace. Skill involves both “competence and proficiency,” which implies both adequacy and mastery; it also refers to knowledge as well as physical ability, although knowledge has tended to receive more of the academic focus (Attewell 1990:423). I argue that sense work involves an interaction of both knowledge and physical capacities. I show that sense workers are trained through ‘sense rules’ on how to ‘appropriately’ taste. The use of ‘sense rules’ coordinates the successful integration of individual and collective meanings, bodily sensations, and profit.

Approaches to analyzing skills in service settings are often rooted in, or compared to, our understandings of scholarship focused on manufacturing work. For example, analogies of the assembly line have been used to describe the sometimes repetitious and rule-governed interactions of face-to-face service encounters, fast food, or call center work (Ritzer 2004; Taylor and Bain 1999). These comparisons, while providing a starting point, can lead to an overreliance on previous assumptions and fail to grasp the important differences in these types of work. While the concept of skill has always been a contested concept (Attewell 1990; Vallas 1990), current debates about skills in interactive service

work are hindered by a reliance on definitions of skill adapted from the manufacturing literature.

While Hochschild (1983) and Lan (2002) describe two kinds of interactive labor skills, Korczynski (2005) argues that much of the rest of the skill literature in interactive service work suffers from a lack of attention to the intangible aspects of this work. Intangibles refer to ‘social skills’, or the coordination of “emotional, cognitive, technical, and time management skills” (Gatta, Boushley, and Appelbaum 2009:977). It is important to recognize that incorporating intangible, or social/relational skills, into new conceptualizations is beneficial not only for application in interactive work, but also for the changing dynamics of manufacturing work. With a greater emphasis on “teamwork and total quality” in manufacturing firms that incorporate lean production methods, managers are putting more weight on social skills when hiring workers (Moss and Tilly 1996:259). Similarly, I argue that instead of focusing on only intangible aspects of service work, we need to understand how both interactive and manual components of the labor process are integrated.

I anchor my understanding of sense workers’ skill in Sennett’s (2008) conception of the skill development of crafts workers. Sennett’s approach to skill, similar to a Marxian conception, focuses on the learning and development of skills in individuals over time. Sennett’s (2008) discussion of craftwork proposes that we must understand the interaction of the work of the body and the work of the mind in order to understand the development of skill over time. He argues that “all skills, even the most abstract, begin as bodily practices” and are then directed by the “imagination...by exploring language that

attempts to direct and guide bodily skill” (Sennett 2008:10). In other words, Sennett emphasizes that the development of skill involves an interaction of manual and interactive elements of the labor process.

Building from Sennett’s (2008) claim that skills begin as bodily practices, I turn to Otis’ (2011) conceptualization of ‘body rules’ and seek to link how one kind of body rule, what I refer to as ‘sense rules’ is implicated in the interaction of both manual and interactive components of sense work. The manipulation of the body in a capitalist system is a basic component of a Marxist approach to labor. Marx defined the body as a part of the labor process as well as a product in itself, where the body is manipulated in its work and is transposed into the products produced (Wolkowitz 2006:14). Otis (2011) proposes that the body is central to interactive labor and argues that the body is malleable and bodily displays are regulated by management to achieve desired ends.

Otis’ (2011) conceptualization of body rules offers a useful tool for identifying the regulation and control of service workers’ bodies. I argue that the sense work performed by baristas in the specialty coffee industry is an example of body labor that requires an alteration of the body to meet workplace expectations as a competent employee. One way that the body is altered is through the training of sense rules or an interpretative lens for “calibrating” (as one interviewee stated) the sensory experiences of a group. Expectations are placed on employees that they will learn a particular way of tasting that I demonstrate is embodied by workers and serves as a guide for the successful performance of both manual and interactive components of the labor process. As Eric, an employee at Craft Coffee stated, “the palate is the string that ties it all together.”

The Senses and Labor

Historically, studies of the senses have been the domain of the natural sciences conducted by physiologists, biologists, and chemists (Bell et al. 1999; Given & Paredes 2002; Hofman, Ho, and Pickenhagen 2004). Much of the social scientific literature has been confined to the fields of history (Jütte 2005; Smith 2007) and anthropology (Howes 1991; Sutton 2010). Although the first mention of a “sociology of the senses” dates back to 1907, when the German sociologist Georg Simmel, called for further research in this area, it has taken until recently for sociologists to answer his call into investigating “the meanings that mutually sensory perception and influencing have for the social life of human beings” (Simmel 1997:110).

Swedberg (2011) tries to further articulate and develop Simmel’s idea of a sociology of the senses by proposing that the senses might play an integral role in linking material and mental reality and may offer a new avenue for understanding economic interactions. Swedberg incorporates the Peircian (1991) concept of signs in order to link the sensory with the social. He argues that senses should be brought into social analyses as they “are not just some kind of mute biological openings to the outside world” that interact solely with the brain. In other words, there is a sensory impression that merges with a “sign” or social interpretation (Swedberg 2011:430). The sensory impression and the sign are not received separately by the interpretant, as they are received together as one. For example, certain foods might gain significance due to their use in ritual, or senses might interact with each other, as is the case with coffee (Sutton 2010). The unified experience of sensory impression and sign makes recognizing the social elements

of sensory experience especially difficult. Similar to Schutz' (1970) "natural attitude," interactants miss the social elements of experience and instead see them as natural, as the sensory impression and social sign are experienced as one.

Coffee has around five hundred volatile chemicals that slowly evaporate and produce an aroma that allows one to anticipate a particular taste before drinking the coffee (Khatchadourian 2009). When we take a sip of coffee we are unable to distinguish between what parts of that sensory experience consists of the sense of smell and what is the sense of taste; they emerge as one sensory experience in the mind. In a similar fashion, when we have any other sensory experience we have trouble distinguishing between what is the sensory perception and what is the social influence; they are one. Meaning making is sensual and the senses are experienced through meaning. The interaction of the sensory and the social and the inability to distinguish between the two upon experience demonstrate a need to understand in what other ways does the "social intervene in the biological structure of the senses...to form our experiences" (Swedberg 2011:430). To treat the body and the mind as separate establishes the body as simply physical matter. However, as Swedberg (2011) and Simmel (1997) propose, the senses are best understood by recognizing how the mind and body interact as one. This is in opposition to the Cartesian Divide which treats the mind and body as separate, as if the body is simply a physical entity subject to the laws of physical science, and the mind is "a thinking substance" wholly separate (Crossley1995:44). Recognizing the social components of the body, how it exists as one with the mind, and is central to the

impressions and expressions of social organization and identity, is to recognize the body as deeply social and therefore also the terrain of sociologists and not simply biologists.

Fine's (1995; 1996) study of chefs' "aesthetic talk" offers the clearest example of the role of the senses, especially smell and taste, in the labor process of service workers. Fine's analysis focuses on the language and interactions of chefs in the preparation of dishes for customers. He argues that sensory experience is not easily shared, in part because Western languages lack complexity in capturing the subtlety needed for translating subjective aesthetic experiences. Due to the inability to directly share aesthetic experience with others, Fine wonders how it is that chefs working together in a restaurant kitchen can judge dishes and determine quality. His analysis focuses predominantly on the usage of "metaphors of experience" that offer descriptions of other related instances that may serve as symbols or representations of the sensory characteristics of the current dish under discussion. For example, in one instance, Fine (1995:182) recounts an interaction in which two chefs discuss a fettuccini dish with one describing it as "an orange-red puke," and the other stating that it tasted like Chef Boyardee. Fine demonstrates that chefs build a dictionary of analogies that they refine through repeated interaction in the kitchen. While the analysis on language and metaphor as a mediator for sharing sensory experience provides a good starting point for my study, much of Fine's discussion focuses on the work of chefs as members of an "art world" (see Becker 1982), with specific attention to the constraints that chefs face, such as time or availability of ingredients, in producing the same product and quality that they may desire.

Fine's (1995) work on chefs, while the closest we have to articulating this kind of labor, focuses too much on the language of chefs and fails to identify how the training of their palates may be integral to their work and their aesthetic decisions. It also does not discuss how workers interact with customers in teaching an organization's sense rules. Much as emotional labor involves an adherence to feeling rules, I argue that sense work involves adherence to sense rules. Sense rules are one form of body rule (Otis 2011) that calibrates the palates, or fixes the sensory experiences of workers. I argue that the palate, while based partially on biological and physiological capacities, also involves a socialized component. The socialized palate is rendered visible through the analysis of the training of the manual and interactive components of the labor process of the third wave barista.

Overall, the literature on skills has yet to address how an industry may reformulate the bodies of its workers through the development of rules guiding sensory experience. A particular taste experience is consecrated in an industry that promises a new type of sensory experience and workers with the knowledge of creating it. In the case of third wave coffee, not only is a new type of sensory experience available for purchase, but also a culture of connoisseurship that distinguishes this market segment from other cafes. The reformulation of the body and the culture of coffee connoisseurs are commodified and available for customers to purchase and identify with.

Senses and Boundaries

I utilize the concept of boundaries to identify how workers and consumers in this market identify with each other and draw distinctions with others. One component of Bourdieu's

(1984) theory of class focuses on the joint relationship of firms and consumers in the meaning making of consumer goods and how the consumption of these goods can reproduce and normalize class difference. According to Bourdieu (1984:100), products, ranging from works of art to industrial products, do not “exist independent of the interest and taste of those who perceive them.” They do not have a “unanimously approved meaning,” but instead the consumer is an active part in the meaning construction of the products they consume. The ability to give meaning to products is differentially available depending on one’s class position. Class position is expressed through one’s habitus, or class as an “observable form of social conditioning” that is expressed through consumption and distinction practices (Bourdieu 1984:101). Dominant groups have more power as consecrators or taste-makers, and also possess a greater capacity for the exclusive appropriation of cultural products than subordinated groups. Therefore, according to Bourdieu, consumers “yield a profit in distinction, proportionate to the rarity of the means required to appropriate them, and a profit in legitimacy,” which is a feeling of justification as “being what it is right to be” (Bourdieu 1984:228).

Stemming from Bourdieu, Lamont (1992) in a discussion of the French and American upper-middle class, and Wimmer (2008:975) in a discussion of ethnic distinctions, demonstrate that ‘boundary work’ involves the classification of people in specific situations into “us” and “them,” or “better” or “worse” than one’s self or one’s group. As Lamont and Wimmer note, these boundaries can serve as references for one’s individual construction of self, or for creating the characteristics of group membership. Boundaries are either symbolic or social (Lamont and Molnár 2002). Symbolic boundaries are often porous and situational; they are conceptual tools used in a struggle

between individuals or groups to “categorize people, practices and even time and space” (Lamont and Molnár 2002:168). It is only when individuals have particular symbolic boundaries, or “ways of seeing,” that also coincide with corresponding “ways of acting” that “social boundar(ies)” are formed (Wimmer 2008:975). Because we are members of a number of groups or hold multi-faceted identities, “we are all constantly participating in the production and reenactment” of boundaries. Bourdieu offers insight into the consecration of taste, but he does not consider the routine and sensuous labor of taste making. I examine how the senses, and sense work, enter into boundary work. In order to do so, I extend previous social scientific literature on the senses and demonstrate how the senses are implicated in the boundary work of third wave coffee workers and consumers.

Simmel’s (1997) introduction of a sociology of the senses focuses predominantly on how the senses can be a tool for understanding ways of creating inequality between groups of people. He argues that senses are socially influenced openings that mediate our interaction with the material world. He believes that the senses begin as resources with little constraint that allow for a wide range of available potential experiences. With increasingly complex societal relations, an emphasis on what is liked or disliked or what is tolerable and intolerable develops and is valued (Simmel 1997). Distinctions are made between individuals based on sensory experiences and individuals are expected to have a personal taste which “inevitably brings with it a greater isolation and a sharper circumscribing of the personal sphere (Simmel 1997:119). As further evidence, Simmel offers the efforts of individuals to hold high standards for hygiene as a response to recognition of class differentiation based on the sense of smell. Such a case is found in Orwell’s description of a childhood lesson where he was taught “the lower classes smell”

(Otis 2011). The upper classes could experience the appearance of a “rightness” of social perception, a naturalizing of class differences through linking particular aromas with being of the lower class. Access to this sensory distinction was not available to the lower classes and therefore appeared as a natural difference to those of the upper classes.

Cowan’s (1991) research on modern Greece demonstrates another way that the senses are aligned with social divisions, naturalizing the divisions and the senses simultaneously. Cowan finds that gender divisions are enforced through eating practices. Dominant notions of gender are oriented to and reproduced through the everyday practices of guest-host relations as women are expected to serve other women sweets and men are expected to enjoy “salty and pungent substances” (Cowan 1991:183). These gender differences are further reproduced through everyday interactions, as Cowan (1991:184) recounts a shopkeeper who described a dry red wine as “harsh and manly” and a sweeter varietal as “softer” and “more womanly.”

The senses have also been used as a source in defining national and cultural identity, as in the case of the French chocolate industry in the early 1990s (Terrio 2000). French chocolate was the focus of a joint effort by “Parisian craft leaders and cultural taste-makers, with support from state representatives,” to educate the public on chocolate connoisseurship to stimulate consumer demand (Terrio 2000:41). To these taste-makers, crafts people, and government officials, the French palate had been tainted by foreign chocolate (mostly milk chocolate) and was in need of reeducation through a barrage of new printed and televised guides, as well as organized tastings and specialized counter displays at boutique shops with testimonials from various experts, including doctors, and academic scholars, all preaching the “proper” flavor expectations to have for determining

the highest quality (French) chocolate. The official guide put out to inform consumers on tasting chocolate stated, “we generally prefer candies with a high proportion of cocoa solids, which corresponds to the current taste standards of chocolate connoisseurs” (Terrio 2000:50). The reeducation efforts even went as far as having a “National Taste Day” in October 1990 where chefs and chocolatiers, among others, went to grade school classrooms for presentation on “sensory alertness,” or how to identify different tastes (Terrio 2000:52). The purpose of these reeducation efforts were largely to spur the French chocolate industry; however, the methods for doing so were based on educating the public to embody an “authentic” French palate, one that reflected the dominant techniques of French chocolatiers. This example demonstrates that norms of tasting can be taught, in this case, shifting identification of different flavors, to one of judgment of right and wrong.

The use of the senses to fix status differences is evident across social locations (Kuipers 1991). For example, as Smith (2007) recounts, in 18th century France, taste in the form of fashion was a marker of sophistication, or a tool for developing class boundaries. In this case, a sign of elite status had been based on the surface level visual assessment of one’s clothing. With increased availability of cheaper and more accessible clothing, it was more difficult for people to distinguish individuals based on dress; “elites complained bitterly that laborers dressed like gentleman” (Smith 2007:82-3). In response, marks of distinction soon shifted from clothing as a kind of uniform that clearly marked class rank to a more subtle expression of fashion and style “because ruling classes understood [the sense of taste] to be more reliable in fixing identities in rapidly modernizing societies” (Smith 2007:83). The appearance of a distinguished sense of taste

is less easy to replicate than the appearance of distinction by dress because it is incorporated into the body and, in a way, becomes a part of the person.

The third wave coffee industry and other sense workers rely on a similar process of distinction. They embody a way of tasting that sets them apart from others so as to promote these habits, experiences, and modes of consumption. They help consumers reformulate their sensory experiences and their sense of quality in order to cultivate a “consumer market” (Otis 2011). There is a clear interest in reformulating customer expectations and sensory experience as it can be utilized to make profit. Sense work involves not only reformulating the senses of consumers, but also helping customers fetishize (Marx 1967) commodities by identifying not only the material product, but also the social relationship, the production by “connoisseurs,” as a status marker. The sense workers and their consumers use the body as a boundary, where they create distinctions between those with the ‘right’ palate abilities and those without; they naturalize these bodily capacities and the boundaries created by them.

METHODOLOGY

To study the specialty coffee industry I relied on ethnographic methods and an inductive analytic design. I rely on multiple sources of qualitative data to understand the intersections of the body, senses, and labor within the specialty coffee industry. The specialty coffee industry as a research site was particularly appealing as it is a relatively new industry, only starting in the U.S. during the mid-1990s (Skeie 2002). By examining the industry in its embryonic form I was best situated to identify emerging characteristics of an industry and consumer market (Otis 2011), as opposed to other related industries

such as wine or haute cuisine that have much longer, entrenched histories. Additionally, the coffee industry provided a unique opportunity to examine the development of a new market in the context of the rise of a Post-Fordist, consumption based economy reliant on rapidly changing tastes and specialized niche markets (Harvey 1990). With Starbucks' founding in 1971, this places the rise of the coffee shop directly at the beginning of the transformation out of Fordism. The split of the coffee industry into a "new wave" represents a distinct fracturing that I hoped would have wider explanatory power regarding ephemeral tastes and identity construction within Post-Fordism.

The bulk of my data comes from observations and field notes from working over 400 hours at Craft Coffee Roasters between May and December 2014 (all names are pseudonyms, including Craft Coffee Roasters). Craft is a coffee bar located in a mid-sized city in the Pacific Northwest that opened only two months prior to the start of my research. I chose Craft because they were just starting their business and I hoped it would allow me to witness their early development within a city of many coffee shops, but only one or two others that would adhere to the identity of third wave as outlined by Skeie (2002) and the Specialty Coffee Association of America. I initially developed the idea for my project soon after I had the interaction with the barista that opened this chapter, where the barista told me what I was "actually tasting." Coincidentally, this was also around the same time that Craft opened for business.

Gaining Entrée at Craft

I began spending time at Craft Coffee Roasters and getting to know some of the employees there, mainly Noah and Tim. Noah, a 30-year-old Korean-American, is the

owner and head roaster at Craft, and Tim, a white 26 year old, is the head barista and trainer. The first few times I went to Craft, it was primarily Noah and Tim who were working, along with two women, Jamie and Ellen. In mid-April 2014, I first mentioned to Noah that I was beginning a project studying the specialty coffee industry and asked him about the possibility of performing fieldwork at Craft. Noah was interested in talking with me and agreed to sit down for an interview, even offering the opportunity to participate in any cuppings (formal coffee tastings) he would hold with the staff, but said he could not let me join the staff as he was already fully staffed and too concerned about beginning a new business. I knew that working for a third wave coffee bar would be the best way to address my main questions, especially the fact that I was most interested in exploring the bodily/sensory elements of the work and did not think I could get at this information solely from interviews or observation. I began looking for other possible opportunities nearby. While I did not plan on writing about my own sensory experiences, I knew that in order to understand the role of the body in the labor of baristas, I would benefit from having the experience directly instead of indirectly through interviews or non-participant observation. However, luck would fall my way when at the end of the month I happened to go to Craft and ran into Noah. He said he was glad I stopped in because he had just learned that Jamie and Ellen were moving out of town together and he would need someone who could start training soon. I started my work a little over a week later, on May 6th at 6:30 am.

Even before working at Craft, I had many qualities that situated me in an ideal position to perform research there. I am a tall, white, male who had a middle-class upbringing and was attending graduate school. I had also spent nearly twenty years

working in a variety of different interactive service positions, including fast food, fast casual food, a specialty grocery store, a thrift store, a steakhouse, a call center, and even a lemonade shake-up and cotton candy stand at the local fair and various car and dog shows around Central Illinois. When I first mentioned to Noah that I would be interested in working for him for the sake of my research, this was the first question he asked of me: what was my service work experience? I also was conscious of the sociological literature on “aesthetic labor” (Warhurst et al. 2000; Williams and Connell 2005) and made sure to highlight similar interests in music and sport with both Noah and Tim in the hopes that they would see me as a potential colleague. However, as I cover in Chapter 4, I did not consider that they might have also been observing my drink selection, which, luckily it turns out, was black coffee. Partly by luck, but also partly because of my own cultural capital and previous service work experience (also because I was willing to work for free) I landed the opportunity to perform participant observation as a barista at Craft.

At Craft, there were usually two baristas working at a time. Noah was always present, sometimes working the espresso machine or the register, or sometimes in the back of the bar roasting coffee or doing computer work. My first month of work I primarily spent training with Noah or Tim. On average, my shifts lasted five hours, usually from 6:30-11:30 am. During each shift, I kept a small notebook in my back pocket and would take notes on interactions with customers or co-workers, or other observations whenever there was downtime or when I took breaks. After each shift, I would also immediately write notes on my computer documenting everything I could remember occurring. I also used memos throughout the data gathering process to begin to identify emergent themes. In addition to working at Craft, I also conducted interviews

with the employees, beginning in August 2014. In total I worked with seven different employees at Craft, six men and one woman. Interviewees at Craft were primarily white (4 interviewees). As stated, Noah is Korean-American, Anton identified as Filipino-American, and Michael identified as Asian American. Craft employees ranged in age from 21-30.

Supplementary Data

In addition to performing participant observation at Craft, I also obtained additional data from formal and informal interviews, attending a week-long barista training course, observing a lecture and coffee demonstration put on by a national barista competitor, attending a two-day coffee industry conference and latte art competition put on by the Specialty Coffee Association of America, and attending over thirty coffee cuppings at Craft as well as other coffee bars throughout the Pacific Northwest. I conducted 18 additional interviews (three bar owners, four head baristas responsible for hiring and training, and eleven baristas), consisting of five women and 13 men, all identifying as white. These interview participants ranged in age from 20-34. Seventeen of the interviewees were located in the Pacific Northwest, with the exception of one, Shannon, who worked as a barista trainer/head barista in Chicago. Interviews with non-Craft employees were obtained via a snowball sampling method with multiple starts. I found some interview subjects through Noah and Tim, while others I found through introducing myself to baristas at the SCAA conference, as well as through visits and emails to coffee bars. I identified specialty coffee bars based on their participation in the SCAA, where they were listed as sponsors or had representatives at the SCAA conference I attended, or

were sponsors or features on the website sprudge.net, which produces the daily stories and features of specialty coffee industry news. This website was recommended to me by Noah, as well as a number of other interviewees, as a good resource for industry news.

All in-depth interviews were semi-structured, conducted with a question guide, and ranged in length from 1 to 2 ½ hours in length. Interviews were conducted in person, except for one that was performed over the phone. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. To start each interview I asked each participant to tell me how they got into coffee, including what jobs they had held. I also asked questions about how they learned to be a barista and what sorts of skills were involved. During the interviews I probed for in-depth stories about their coffee training. I also asked questions about day-to-day barista work, about specific experiences interacting with customers, and what they saw as their role when interacting with customers. Additionally, I asked baristas about how knowledgeable they thought their customer base was about coffee and if they have any educational components or responsibilities when interacting with customers. When interviewing bar managers, or barista trainers responsible for hiring, I asked questions about what qualities they look for when hiring baristas and asked probing questions for specific examples about making those decisions, or about instances where hiring decisions were difficult.

Analysis

All interviews were coded first with line-by-line, open coding (Esterberg 2002). After identifying themes, I re-coded using focused coding (Charmaz 2006). A few of the major themes I identified were: customer profiling, sensory training, customer guiding,

and hiring. Additionally, I identified common narrative elements in stories baristas told in learning about coffee. I focused on how the stories unfolded through narrative analysis (Weiss 1994). Much of the narrative analysis makes up Chapter 2 in the manuscript. Throughout data collection and analysis I also wrote analytic memos to develop the themes and begin to connect cases across my data (Esterberg 2002). I also performed focused coding on my participant observation field notes. Using the themes developed during coding of my interviews. I paid particular attention to my field notes on interactions with co-workers and with customers to identify similarities in themes with those I found in the interviews. This was largely the case; however, the benefit of performing participant observation was that I discovered many instances of “everyday boundary maintenance” (as covered in Chapter 4), or subtle comments made between co-workers, or in some cases between baristas and customers. Additionally, I was able to observe customer behavior in a more specific way than the interviews elicited.

OVERVIEW OF ARGUMENTS BY CHAPTER

Chapter two introduces the social dimensions of taste found in the “taste biographies,” or stories that coffee connoisseurs tell about their entrée into third wave coffee. I demonstrate that taste is formed through social processes by identifying discursive strategies to describe sensory experiences, the role of authorities with institutional legitimacy who set the conditions for establishing taste expectations of connoisseurs, how baristas achieve the status and prestige of connoisseurship within the industry and across the broader “taste community” (Ferguson 1998), and finally, how direct interaction with

others contributes to the development of shared taste experiences. Further, I identify the coffee connoisseur's "way of tasting" as an embodied capacity that appears natural, but is instead a product of practice.

In Chapter three, I use Gould's (2009) analysis of emotions as a theoretical basis for understanding the process of fixing sensory experience. Gould's discussion of emotions focuses on the relationship between affect and emotion, where affect refers to the potential of bodily sensation in a nonconscious, unrealized form, and emotion refers to the "concretized," named experience (Gould 2009:20). According to Gould (2008:21), the transformation of potential into realized emotive experience "brings a vague bodily intensity or sensation into the realm of cultural meanings and normativity." Similarly, by engaging with the biological and physiological literature on flavor, I discuss how the potential for flavor experience is partly narrowed by social processes into actualized experience. In other words, I argue that there is a flavor-affect which congeals over time and through cultural processes into taste, or "flavor experience." This is a process that occurs through interaction and the training of the body through taste frameworks, where baristas learn what are considered valuable characteristics and how to identify them. I refer to this process as "palate training." I demonstrate that palate training, or palate calibration, is oriented towards developing the "right" palate, through the introduction of a "taste framework." As Noah, the owner of Craft, stated on one of my first training shifts, "the first thing we need to do is get your palate right," which refers to a process of "palate calibration," or aligning one's palate with the coffee bar's taste framework. Building from Otis' (2011) concept of "body rules," I argue that an unexplored area of body regulation occurs in the training of the barista's palate. The taste framework serves

as a guide in fixing sensory experience, but also serves as a measure of work quality for third wave baristas. What happens when people disagree with sensory interpretation reveals how boundaries form in the enforcement of rules and a critical part of the labor of sense work: making taste as a sensory experience conform to taste as a social sign. The concentrated practice of tasting is not limited to the workplace or work hours. Instead, I argue, the work of connoisseurs of taste requires an embodiment of the coffee bar's taste framework that operates in and outside of the workplace. This discussion, while focusing on the training process of baristas and the development of sense rules relevant to the labor process, represents one example among many potential applications of this process that occur in other work settings for cicerones, sommeliers, or cheese mongers for example, but also outside of work environments.

In Chapter three, I also discuss the day-to-day labor process of third wave baristas. I introduce the concept of sense work and demonstrate how taste frameworks regulate both the manual and interactive elements of the labor process. This section continues to build from Otis' (2011) concept of body rules and will integrate Sennett's (2008) theory of skill development in an analysis of the labor of baristas on the shop floor. To build from the aesthetic labor literature and to respond to Wolkowitz's (2006) critique, I demonstrate how workers develop skills post-hiring. I show how, through practice, employees use their bodies as instruments in many ways that require bodily modification or reinterpretation. While one example is the training of taste, I also discuss how employees' bodies are trained in other ways as instruments of the labor process. In Chapter four, I discuss how the palate is implicated in the identity and boundary work of baristas. This discussion will focus on everyday practices of difference making that I

argue are integral to the maintenance or construction and reconstruction of boundaries. Becker's (1963) discussion of the occupation of jazz musician and the identity work involved in defining the "authentic" versus "squares" (commercial musicians and fans) provide the background for a discussion of baristas and their ways of classifying customers and second wave coffee shops. Third wave baristas define themselves, in part, as opposed to second wave coffee shops as well as customers that have a palate more in-line with the second wave style of coffee (dark roast or with added syrups). These distinctions impact the labor process as baristas may serve drinks to those who are perceived as poor tasters that they would not serve to those they perceive have similar taste-ability as they do. The orders of customers may also be the subject of jokes between employees or with other customers in the subculture. I introduce examples of "boundary work" (Lamont and Fournier 1992) and "othering" (Schwalbe et al. 2000) to demonstrate how inequality is intertwined within this work. This distinction is also belied by "communities of taste" (Ferguson 1998; Ocejo 2017) where particular customers, often based on their occupation (such as chefs, winemakers, and sommeliers), are taken more seriously and receive a different kind of treatment or orientation than other customers. Ultimately, I argue that third wave baristas perform a kind of "minimum wage connoisseurship," where they toil for minimum wage, plus tips, but also benefit by receiving an elevated status, along with cultural and social capital that pays off both within and outside of the workplace.

In Chapter 4, I also discuss aesthetic labor and the hiring process, but depart from the extant literature and address Wolkowitz's (2006) critique of aesthetic labor as a kind of skill, acquired through middle class socialization and therefore already acquired before

the worker enters the workplace. Wolkowitz points out that, even among those who arrive at work with appropriate aesthetic socialization, the development of appropriate aesthetic socialization, the development of presentations of self continue to be refined.

Chapter five begins with a concise statement of the main arguments in the manuscript. I then discuss the main implications of the work. I conclude with a brief discussion of future directions of related research. As with all research, I feel a sense of satisfaction in seeing years of work take a recognizable, tangible form. However, this project has also illuminated new puzzles. I hope to articulate a few possible directions for future research.

CHAPTER II

BECOMING A COFFEE CONNOISSEUR

I always drank coffee like my mom drank coffee, because that's who I drank coffee with. Then I went to Starbucks and everyone was doing the same thing; so, I went, 'oh, this just must be how you do it. This is drinking coffee. This is what you do.' You take it [coffee] to the condiment bar and you dress it up and it gives you the caffeine.—Mike, Roaster and Barista at Craft Coffee Roasters

THE SENSORY CONSULTANT

Sitting amid a varied assortment of tables and chairs pushed together in a stranger's living room, I was given a cloudy plastic pillbox container and told to wait for instructions before opening. I was with 14 strangers, along with a friend and her husband who had invited me as their guest to an even held by a "sensory consultant." The consultant trains breweries in tasting and identifying particular defects in their beers. She teaches them how to blend flavors, and discusses tasting notes, or flavor descriptors that are often used to aid customers in choosing which beverage they may enjoy, as well as serve as a check-list of sorts to guide a taster's expectations and taste experience. Tasting notes may also be listed on bags of coffee to inform and guide purchasers on how the coffee bar interprets the coffee's taste. Businesses recruit her for bonding events at employee retreats. This night she was invited to give a demonstration for a small college class, along with friends of the students and professor. My new sensory adventure partners and I were directed to work our way through the pillbox sampling each morsel on command, followed by collective reflection about what we tasted. The consultant prompted us: "How does it feel in your mouth?" "How would you describe the taste?" "Does the taste or texture change while it is in your mouth?" "What about after we

swallow?” “Does it taste different than it smells?” Some of the pillbox’s contents were identifiable upon appearance, like Lemonhead candies or walnuts. But others, like three mystery Jelly Beans, or a couple of salts, were not immediately identifiable. We sought the flavor nuance of cinnamon Jelly Beans while collectively plugging and unplugging our noses. We cringed as we were later given a sample of pilsner beer that had secretly been spiked with sea salt. When tasting the lemonhead, a middle-aged professor grabbed each side of the back of her jaw with the thumb and index finger of her left hand, announcing, “I really notice it way back here. Do you get that?” There was a near uniformly collective nod, a smattering of “mmhmm” and “yeah,” as well as a few contorted faces, looking askew in concentration and slow, overly exaggerated chewing motions, attempting to determine exactly where it was in their mouths the sourness of the lemonhead was located.

Few have received lessons from a professional sensory consultant, but more and more consumers listen to experts, maybe a sommelier, cicerone (beer steward), or even a server or chef at a restaurant, a TV cook, or a sales representative distributing samples in the grocery store who guides their taste expectations. Of course it is not uncommon to discuss thoughts about a dish or meal with friends, a component of the social experience of taste. The chemical components of taste include the ingestion of a substance in the fungiform papillae, or taste buds, the experience of the combination of smell and scent, and the relaying of these sensory inputs to the brain. Conveying taste experience to one another as a form of expression is the social dimension, one that affects the very experience of flavor and may imbue it with feeling.

In this chapter, I address the following questions: How is taste fixed as an endpoint of a complex process and how does this fixing of taste occur in the face of multiple experiences of taste? I argue that the fixing of sensory experience is a product of power, organization, and profit. Prior discussions of sensory experience in the workplace have largely revolved around the use of language (Fine 1995: 1996), largely leaving the body out of the picture. A growing body of literature, notably Lan's (2003) introduction of "body labor," and Otis' (2011) "body rules," have brought the body back in as a central feature of interactive labor. However, missing from this discussion is how the senses, particularly the sense of taste, operate as a feature of the labor process. In this manuscript, I articulate how sensory experience is a profoundly social creation.

To begin, in this chapter I provide my theory of the senses in society. I rely on Gould's (2009) articulation of affect and emotion, and argue that we can understand the senses to operate in a similar way, first as unencumbered potential, but realized in interaction as sensory experience. In this way, I demonstrate the social foundations of sensory experience, or the senses as they are interpreted and expressed in socio-cultural contexts. I then spend the remainder of the chapter outlining the narrative structure of specialty coffee baristas' "taste biographies." I identify common elements to stories baristas tell about learning to taste coffee as a connoisseur, or "becoming a coffee connoisseur." Connoisseurs do not begin as connoisseurs, but instead learn to taste coffee through social processes. They learn to associate sensory experiences with social signs that alter their relationship with their own sensory experiences. Inherent in these stories are elements of a normalization process of treating behaviors previously considered unordinary as ordinary. The baristas are learning the practices associated with "becoming

a connoisseur,” in a similar way as Becker (1963) identified that people “become marijuana users,” by first learning the social components of ingesting the substance.

Our sensory experience, particularly the tasting of food or beverages, is a largely social experience that we share with others as we all ingest the same substances into our individual bodies. We attempt to bridge the individual bodily divide through a commonality of language and experience coming together as we share a meal. We may nod our heads together and raise our brows in surprise if we enjoy the first bite, or look skeptically if something did not live up to our expectations. During many of these types of tastings that I have participated in over the past four years, I have frequently heard other participants state tasting notes out loud that mimic the famous tongue map that displays clear demarcations for different parts of the tongue and their supposed heightened capacities for different tastes. This map was constructed based on the findings of D.P. Hänig, an early 20th century German scientist who asked participants to taste many items and state where they noticed the taste on their tongue. After compiling his findings, he argued that different parts of the tongue have varied sensibilities to different categories of tastes. The tongue map was not created by Hänig, but was developed based on his findings.

THE TONGUE MAP

The now famous tongue map informs us that the tip of the tongue is more highly receptive to sweet tastes, the back of the tongue for bitter, and the outsides of the tongue are attuned to sour (back) and salty (front). We know that the back of the tongue is where the tongue map shows that we taste sour flavors, so it makes sense that one would find

that a lemonhead, or other sour foods would stimulate this part of the tongue, in particular. This all seems utterly usual and benign.... except when we learn that the tongue map that many of us were taught in grade school has been thoroughly debunked by scientists for over a century and there is wide agreement that Hänig largely overstated the variations he found in tongue receptor sensitivity. It is now widely believed that each area of the tongue is sensitive to all types of taste, relatively equally (Carpuccio 2005). Regardless of the lack of scientific support, and often attributed to the map's simplicity and ease of understanding, the myth has lived on as if it were fact. The myth continues to influence how people perceive their sensory experience; it impacts our interpretation and articulation, and brings into question how we know what it is we taste.

The history of the tongue map and its continued influence is also representative of my experience in observing the labor of connoisseurs of taste. While I document the social components of sensory experience, there remains an active orientation by coffee connoisseurs to their senses, coffee, and their labor as based in empirical practices and evaluative methods. From the use of calculated measurements in brewing, technical monitoring of characteristics such as measuring the percentage of coffee extraction via a refractometer, and also in the development of a "palate memory," where coffee tasters try to create an internal catalog of tastes in order to identify precisely what tastes they experience in different coffees. I will show that these science-influenced actions serve to blur the inherently social process of taste valuation and its ties to the status and prestige of specialty coffee barista work.

Post-Tongue Map

We have come a long way from Hänig's tongue map. Since the introduction and subsequent discrediting of the map, research on taste has flourished, although mainly as a domain of study exclusive to the natural sciences (Cappuccio 2005). For example, we now know that, on average, the human tongue contains roughly 5,000 taste buds, mostly located in fungiform papillae, which account for the tongue's velvet-like appearance (Bartoshuk 2000; Cappuccio 2005; Smith and Margolskee 2006). The ingestion of a substance and subsequent stimulation of the papillae produce what is commonly referred to as "taste." In addition to the chemical reception of a substance by taste buds, a release of volatiles in the retronasal cavity stimulates the olfactory system, and is translated into a signal that is relayed to the central nervous system. This process, or how a substance is translated into an electrical signal that generates a stimulus in the brain to decipher what was ingested, is called transduction (Cappuccio 2005). In the central nervous system, taste, olfaction, and tactile sensory inputs combine to produce what we refer to as "flavor" (Cappuccio 2005; Heath 1988).

One important insight to take from the distinction of taste and flavor is the complexity involved in creating and evaluating our sensory experiences. During the training with the sensory consultant, we plugged our noses in an attempt to single out what we experience as taste and unplugged in order to identify what we experience as flavor. If you have not done this, give it a try with different items you eat. Plug your nose and begin chewing. Part-way through chewing, unplug your nose and notice the burst of flavor as the senses interact. I belabor this point to emphasize the limited view of evaluating sensory experience based solely on one's tongue, in other words, our efforts to

understand sensory experience are more expansive and complex than simply understanding tongue receptor sensitivity or capacity. Knowing what we now know about taste and flavor, identifying capacities of different parts of the tongue simply by tasting items and reflecting on where we feel we taste them, is clearly short-sighted. When the senses interact, we cannot possibly determine what components are solely from our tongue and solely from smell, feel, or sight.

But this is only part of the story. I will argue throughout this dissertation that the biological make-up of sensory experiences only tells us about bodily potential, and does not explain how we experience our senses within a world that is socially mediated. With a history of linking gender (Cowan 1991), national and cultural identity (Terrio 2000) and social class (Smith 2007) inequalities, for example, with the credibility of biological naturalization, a clear articulation of the social components of how sensory experience is socially mediated, and can fall under the purview of organizational control strategies, will allow for a more accurate articulation of the operation of the senses in society. Simply put, I aim to demonstrate the social components of sensory experience not as a counterpoint, but in the aim of offering an explanation of the senses as they operate in society.

Conventions for speaking about taste, whether a lemon conjures a sour flavor stemming from the back of the tongue, or sip of coffee suggests a “papaya-like sweetness” registered on the tongue tip, or the declaration that an espresso suggests “chocolate covered cherry,” prompts inquiry as to where in the mouth one can expect such a sensation, we often speak with a casual certainty about the geography of the mouth; allegedly flavors are more easily identifiable if only we have the knowledge of

where to think about or concentrate on tasting it on the tongue. We can only assume that the identification of tastes in correspondence with the taste map may wholly be based in expectations of where one is “supposed” to taste, as any “normal” person would.

However, most people’s interest in taste may end at these sorts of casual encounters, but others end up devoting larger portions of their lives to questions of taste. In each of these examples, whether a sensory consultant holding a training session, a colleague training a new employee on identifying tasting notes in their product, or a customer wanting to learn from their barista about what it was that they were about to taste, the sensory experience of flavor is a biological, as well as a social accomplishment. We are not born experts on taste, or with an inherent penchant for identifying or relaying sensory experience. Instead, this is a learned process, often based on years of practice and/or instruction. By working with connoisseurs of taste in the specialty coffee industry, I uncovered common stages that these individuals experienced over the years in their build-up from novice to coffee connoisseur, where they learn new strategies, or “taste frameworks,” for identifying and defining taste experiences.

THEORIZING THE SENSES IN SOCIETY

Treating biological capacities of taste as bodily potential, and actualized experience within socio-cultural contexts as interpretation, is not wholly new terrain for sociologists. Vannini et al. (2012), for example, argue that we perform “somatic work” in processing sensory potential into actualized experience. Here, they focus on an orientation to aesthetic rules that guide “olfactory impression management” (Waskul and Vannini 2008), or maintaining face through the managing of not only one’s appearance, but one’s

scent. This offers a useful, but incomplete starting point. They, as I do, look to the groundwork laid by the sociology of emotions. However, while based on Hochschild's (1979; 1983) introduction of an interactionist-sociological approach to emotions, and the subsequent work that followed (see Turner and Stets 2006), I mainly draw from Gould's (2009) distinction of affect and emotion to articulate the relationship between sensory capacity and actualized social experience. Furthermore, I argue that "aesthetic rules" are embodied, where the taste capacities of connoisseurs acquires the semblance of natural ability.

Gould distinguishes between "affect" as bodily potential, and "emotion" as actualized experience contingent on social contextual factors. As Gould (2009:19) argues, "affect" refers to the "nonconscious and unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experience of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body." Affective experiences are nonconscious and undefined, "unattached," and "free floating, mobile energy" teeming with potential, "but in no predetermined direction" (Gould 2009:20). Similarly, sensory experience involves the biological interaction of ingested substances with our body, ripe with socio-interpretative potential. This potential exists within, and is subject to, particular socio-cultural locations. However, there are clear differences to note between Gould's conceptualization of affect and emotion, and the sense of taste. Whereas with affect, Gould states that we are "aware we are experiencing something," even though it is not conscious. With taste, we are conscious of the fact that we are going to have a sensory experience. I do not take a bite or sip without any expectations, except maybe for circumstances where I am trying something I have not had before and have no expectations set out by packaging or others' preparatory

comments. On the other hand, with affective experiences, we usually do not have the ability to control others' actions and are more likely to face unanticipated affective experiences than with gustatory experiences. We most often see, touch, and smell what it is that we are about to ingest. These experiences are already conscious and interpretable, before we even ingest. This information, including even the color of what it is we are going to consume, can serve as an initial indicator of the quality of what we will taste (Francis 1995; Pangborn, Berg, and Hansen 2014).

The key similarity I wish to draw out has to do with the potential of gustatory experiences. Even though our interpretations of sensory experiences are limited to our language (Fine 1995), our likes, dislikes, comparisons across different items we ingest, associations with places, people, and events, all impact our potential interpretive frameworks. Items we ingest do not exist in a vacuum, even before we ingest them. As Gould (2009:21) states in reference to a transformation of affect into emotion, we are engaged in a “reduction of an unstructured and unrepresentable affective state...into an emotion...whose qualities are conventionally known and fixed...language and bodily gestures thus in a sense “capture” affect, or attempt to.” We fix sensory experience within our socio-cultural location. The emotional experience, as the sensory experience, is embodied within the interactant, as if it were a natural response.

The language surrounding taste is socially formed, as Fine (1995; 1996) identifies in his study of chefs and their use of metaphor to describe flavor experiences, and I will further situate in coffee connoisseurship. This is one way that taste is formed by social experience; the fixing of taste experience within the limits of language. Additionally, I demonstrate that taste experiences are socially formed by authorities who have

institutional legitimacy. In the case of specialty coffee, the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) serves as the main industry organization who wields influence over what is and is not defined as specialty coffee, and operates a standardized training program for Q-graders (scoring coffee based on set quality standards). The SCAA also sponsors regional, national, and worldwide competitions for a variety of barista related skills, including what is referred to as the Taster's Cup, where competitors attempt to identify coffees through blind tasting. The Taster's Cup highlights institutional value placed on ability to hone one's palate to identify specificities across different coffees, and as a core value of the industry. It also rewards particular palate orientations, and signifies and consecrates successful competitors with a degree of status and prestige for their palate ability. Stemming from an orientation to taste professionals, or a hierarchy of taste abilities legitimated within the industry, is the social process of tying status and prestige to taste as a means of gaining legitimacy/credibility both within the industry and within the broader "taste community" (Ferguson 1998; Ocejo 2017) of fine dining and wine, as outlined in Chapter 4. The final element I identify in the social construction of the senses, and constituting much of the remainder of this chapter, is the social formation of shared taste experience through direct interaction with others. I highlight how coffee connoisseurs construct their identities around a backstory of interactions with members of the third wave coffee community. These interactions demonstrate an interpretive progression, in stages, that constitute how one "becomes" a coffee connoisseur.

BECOMING A COFFEE CONNOISSEUR

For many who drink coffee, it starts as a vehicle for caffeine's energy lift. Maybe it began as a morning ritual for a before school or work jump-start. Or maybe, if you are of the generation of Starbucks or drive-thru coffee stands every other block, it began as a quick, first stop after leaving your home in the morning. In my home, it was always my father who woke up first to make a pot of Maxwell House on the entry-level model, Bunn Brand 12-cup coffee maker. He would take a spoon to scoop the pre-ground, freeze dried coffee into the bleached white filter, add water up to the marking on the coffee pot indicating how many cups he wanted to make, and would hit the power button to start brewing the coffee for the household. As the rest of the family woke up, those of us who drank coffee would grab a mug and drink our coffee black, walking around to top off anyone's partially empty mug. This was the morning coffee ritual at my home and it still remains largely the same when I visit there today, but replace Maxwell House with Starbucks, medium roast, Breakfast Blend. This rather mundane introduction to coffee is not unlike those who now make their living as specialty coffee baristas. But while the foundational coffee experiences of many coffee drinkers may begin similarly, those who end up in the specialty coffee industry, like Charlie, a co-worker at Craft, tend look back to their initial introduction as one where they "had no idea about coffee," and were simply mimicking the actions of those around them.

I found that each aficionado that I interviewed told a story about entrée into connoisseurship. After listening to these repeatedly I began to notice a pattern to their accounts that placed less emphasis on coffee as part of a social experience, and more on individual bodily experience, one that involved experiment and discovery of new sensory

capacities. Aficionados spoke of these as empirical rather than social, yet they were decidedly social as I will show. The connoisseur's introduction to coffee begins what I refer to as their "taste biographies," or stories that connoisseurs of taste tell about their sensory experiences and knowledge of their product, from their first introduction to connoisseurship. Specialty coffee laborers make a transition from "former novice" to connoisseur through a learning process that involves re-formulating their sensory interpretation. Although each individual had their distinct particularities of experience, the taste biographies of coffee connoisseurs largely follow distinct, broad stages. For most in the specialty coffee industry, it involves an introduction that is characterized as ordinary, or just like everyone else, where connoisseurship or even thinking of coffee differently is not yet on their radar of possibilities. This is followed by a story about their first introduction to third wave coffee, which often produced some skepticism. To advance beyond skepticism to the point where they really "got it," they experienced a breakthrough or "aha" moment, where all of a sudden they realize that coffee involves a complexity they had not imagined. This moment is also sometimes referred to as a "God cup (Weissman 2008), where the coffee was so distinct, often a naturally processed Ethiopian coffee that might taste like a blast of blueberry, or a "fruit bomb," that it changes their understanding of what coffee is or should be. This experience as Tim, a 25 year old barista trainer and bar manager at Craft, explained, might also stem from an interaction with a barista who informed him that an Ethiopian espresso was sweet like a strawberry and made his latte taste like warm, strawberry milk. This moment is a key to recognizing that coffee had not been as it had once seemed. Finally, coffee connoisseurs document how they learned to stop thinking of coffee as a caffeine vehicle and instead to

focus on understanding how to consume coffee with a concentration on “purity,” or “translating the bean to the cup,” with a focus on flavor. This final stage involves focusing on coffee as a craft, a search to learn about and taste coffee as a concentrated activity. It becomes a centerpiece of not only their labor, but even as an identity, what drives interactions with others in the coffee and wider culinary community. It even becomes a source for joy and fulfillment as they seek out further coffees, often traveling with plans of multiple stops to try out new coffee roasters or glean more knowledge about potential new brewing methods.

Former Novice: Making the Ordinary Extraordinary

Specialty coffee baristas described drinking coffee as an ordinary consumption ritual in their lives, until a moment of awakening that alerted their senses to the extraordinary features of the beverage. These conversion experiences were cast as profoundly individual, but at root were profoundly social. Mike, for example, a 24 year old, Asian American male barista and coffee roaster at Craft, stated, “I always drank coffee like my mom drank coffee, because that’s who I drank coffee with. Then I went to Starbucks and everyone was doing the same thing, so I went, “oh, this just must be how you do it. This is drinking coffee. This is what you do.”” Specialty coffee baristas do not report an immediate perception of coffee as more appealing than any other food or beverage. Their initial experiences were not anything out of the ordinary. It is their construction of these initial experiences in their taste biographies, however, where they look back as connoisseurs, where they place the initial experience of coffee in a different light, one of a bumbling former novice who, just like Charlie stated, “had no idea about coffee.” For

most coffee drinkers, I'd venture that the idea of "knowing" what one was doing when they were drinking coffee might seem like a silly concept, an unregistered thought, or one that might seem as absurd as the question, "do I *really* know what I am doing when eating peas?" But, over time, specialty coffee baristas learn new ways of thinking about how to consume and evaluate coffee. They learn a new kind of ordinary relationship with coffee, one that makes the idea of formerly not knowing what they were doing when drinking coffee, a relevant concept. Their new knowledge provides a counterpoint that shifts their coffee paradigm. Often, this transition impacts what they deem as drinkable. It is almost as unfathomable that they would select, prepare, and drink coffee as they did prior to their initiation as connoisseurs.

One persistent theme among virtually all of the connoisseurs with whom I spoke was a strong sense that before true understanding of the beverage, they enjoyed it for the wrong reason. They confessed to drinking coffee merely as a vehicle for caffeine, or for its dark roasted flavor. Mike reflected that he "grew up drinking coffee all the time. More as like a commodity style, like I just had to have some coffee." In another interview, Charlie (a white, 22 year old barista at Craft) revealed, "I had no idea about coffee. I liked going to Dutch Bros. and getting an ER 911 [a hot beverage with 6 shots of espresso, Irish cream flavoring, and their "kick me" mix]. Getting jacked up and then running around. That's what I thought coffee was; it was like a drug." For Charlie, coffee was simply a source of caffeine, the flavor of the coffee itself was of little interest. If the taste was tolerable and provided the caffeine boost, it was fine by him. However, he also qualifies his response as not knowing about coffee, as if knowledge of coffee in his mind would preclude one from enjoying coffee for its caffeine high as the driving factor. To

connoisseurs, seeking a caffeine high from coffee is a quality of a novice coffee drinker. One should drink coffee for its flavor, signifying a kind of boundary work identifying novices from connoisseurs. Their knowledge base has changed, and along with it their meaning of coffee and its purpose. Shannon (a 29 year, white, female barista and barista trainer in Chicago) furthers this view when I asked her if she ever goes to second wave coffee shops. She said “no, because I don’t like the coffee. I don’t drink coffee as a caffeine injection.” For Shannon, like Mike and Charlie, coffee was once simply a way of getting caffeine. In fact Shannon’s comment indicates that she categorizes second wave shops as serving coffee for the purpose of getting caffeinated. For connoisseurs, there is more to coffee than simply a caffeine injection, so why consume coffee from second wave coffee shops if their purpose is not about the coffee itself, but instead about the caffeine? When reflecting back to being a novice coffee drinker, other connoisseurs view coffee from a perspective that sees coffee as a caffeine injection as no longer ordinary, like it was when they first began drinking coffee, that is, as a novice would drink coffee.

Another former novice, Zach (a 25 year old, white male barista and barista trainer), admits to drinking coffee that he used to think was good, but now will not drink. I asked him if he would drink any coffee that was a dark roast (connoisseurs use dark roasts and many syrups as main characteristics of second wave shops). Zach responded “No. I don’t think it tastes very good.” I asked him if this is something that he has always felt about dark roasted coffee. “No, I used to drink coffee every morning before school, probably starting at like thirteen or fourteen. I’m sure it was really bad. I’m sure it was like Trader Joe’s brand or something.” While it comes as no major surprise that connoisseurs are not naturally born with a predilection for particular coffees, their initial

introduction to coffee as something that they now look back to as a time where they did not have the knowledge to recognize poor quality, is telling. It shows us that the connoisseurship of taste is largely a process of knowledge influencing perception instead of perception of taste as good or bad, as something fully biologically bound.

From Skepticism to the “Aha” Moment

The transition from former novice to coffee connoisseur is mediated by a period of skepticism which culminates in a breakthrough or “aha” moment of recognizing that there is more to coffee than had previously been recognized. But this is not simply a matter of recognizing previously undetected flavors. My interviews reveal that this is a distinctly social moment. The resolution of skepticism is defined by the neophyte connoisseur’s acceptance into a new “taste community” (Ferguson 1998; Ocejo 2017) of like palette-ed people. The experience is described in individual physical terms but it is fundamentally social. In some cases, this involves interacting with a barista and having coffee at a third wave coffee bar that unlocked great possibilities in coffee. In other cases, it involves receiving a job at a coffee bar without experience (more on the hiring process will be discussed Chapter 4) and then gaining knowledge through sensory training. Either way, connoisseurs describe their initial interest in third wave coffee as something that they did not intentionally seek out, but instead identify a particular moment where they realized that coffee could be more than it had seemed.

Tim had recently moved from his hometown to Portland, Oregon where he shared a home with five other people. In order to have some time to himself, he would frequently visit coffee shops to spend time alone reading and writing. During one of these trips, he went

to a coffee shop he had never been to before called Barista. “When I went to order I saw that they had three different espressos. I asked the barista, “Hey, here’s what I want to get [a latte], which one should I get?” The barista “walked me through like ‘okay, well I like this for that reason, or this reason, but I would go for this one because I think the acidity is going to cut through the milk.’ And I was like, ‘oh, thanks.’” Having never been to a coffee shop where he had a selection of espressos to choose from, each from different regions and with different tasting notes listed, Tim was uncomfortable choosing what he should get for his drink; for Tim, a latte had always been just a latte. He went with the barista’s suggestion. Tim said he “got the latte and it tasted like strawberry milk. It was awesome.” He had never had coffee that tasted anything like that before but realized that the barista was integral in the process of producing the strawberry milk-tasting latte. He was impressed because the barista’s suggestions were something “that they’re thinking about. It felt very intentional.” The barista had told him that there was more acidity, but Tim did not know what this meant and still decided to go with their suggestion. He recognized that the barista had steered him in a direction that he then trusted as he stated that “it felt very intentional,” as the barista was aware of the qualities of the espressos and produced a drink that fit their explanation. Because of this he said, “I kept going there,” always asking the baristas what their suggestions were and why.” Tim’s experience with the “strawberry milk” latte kept him going back to this coffee bar to continue to ask baristas for their recommendations so that he could try to relive the strawberry milk experience and to learn more about the coffee he was drinking. He later moved back home and found a job at a second wave coffee shop, but started experimenting on his own with different brew methods and techniques, trying to learn how to make coffee like

he had been having in Portland. It is important to know that learning about coffee and becoming a connoisseur takes resources. In this case, Tim is spending more money on coffee and related equipment, indicating that being an initiate is not equally attainable, but can require significant investment of time and money. His experience at the Portland coffee bar had inspired him to learn as much as he could, eventually leading to a job at Craft Coffee where he became head barista trainer. For Noah, the head roaster and owner of Craft Coffee, he likens this process to trying a new cuisine, like sushi. When explaining his coffee to a customer, Noah stated that when he first had lighter roasted coffee he knew he liked it right away, but also knew that he had never had coffee like it before and wanted to try to understand what was so different about it. He told the customer, “It’s like trying a new cuisine, when you try sushi for the first time and you like it, you get into it and need to learn the new flavors.” Once you realize, as Tim did, that coffee is more complex than you had thought it was, you explore coffee anew, but with a particular purpose of understanding why it tastes the way it does and how the barista, or whoever is brewing the coffee, plays a part in this production. However, the major difference between something like sushi and coffee, is that coffee is a product that they already liked, whereas sushi, in Noah’s example, was a totally new cuisine. However, the radical shift from coffee as everyday caffeine vehicle, to coffee as complex, is equated with the experience of trying an entirely new cuisine. Coffee turns out to be completely different than what they had previously thought it was. It takes a process of unlearning as much as it does learning. Or as Mike put it:

I was very much working within a sort of binary system of good coffee, bad coffee...When you’re operating within that, there’s no room for that

growth or education. But it was just because I didn't realize that there was another way to look at it.

The change from novice, to skeptic, to an “aha” moment, results in a preliminary re-classification of coffee as binary to coffee as complex product to be understood through further knowledge. It is a switch in mindset, or what I call a “taste framework,” that guides expectations for classifying or defining taste experiences. The “taste framework,” as a binary classification system is deemed insufficient once an experience falls outside the bounds of “good” or “bad” coffee. The introduction to new ways of thinking about coffee, whether as acidity influencing a latte, or learning language of describing flavors, begins the process of creating a new framework for thinking about coffee.

For Charlie, the deconstruction of his previous binary framework for evaluating coffee came through a sensory training session with a visiting coffee trainer. Charlie was just finishing high school and had never worked in the coffee industry. He was working at a diner that Noah's mother owned and spoke to Noah about trying to pick up some more hours working for him at Craft. If you recall, Charlie state that he primarily thought coffee was “getting jacked up and running around. It was like a drug.” With this foundation, Charlie was skeptical when Noah, the owner of Craft, had invited a friend who was a national competitor in coffee competitions, who had worked as a barista in Copenhagen and New York, and most recently as a head trainer for one of the original U.S. third wave coffee companies, to come in and provide a session on palate training. As Charlie puts it:

The first time I was ever trained in palate, really within coffee was with James. I think I had just started working and I had no idea. He talked about cashews and raspberries and tasting. Like, this isn't cashew! This isn't berry! This isn't anything! I had no idea what he was talking about. Like it was just another hipster from Portland or something...So, we started to sip some coffees and he's like 'yeah, I can see some cashew; I can definitely see some cashew. It's got some lemon.' This guy! Damn hipsters! Haha.

Charlie obviously had some initial skepticism of James' palate training session. For Charlie, coffee was coffee. Coffee did not have cashews or raspberries in it, so how could you possibly say that that was what he was supposed to be tasting? He attributed what he thought was absurd to his perceived identity of James, that he was just some kind of "hipster from Portland."

And then he started talking more and I started getting it. With palate, we don't have a vocabulary for it. We don't have a vocabulary for every taste or sensation....I start getting that we don't have this vocabulary. So a way to get your vocabulary is to relate it to other tastes and things. You know. It's really tart and acidic, but really sweet...maybe an overripe strawberry....So when you start relating all these different foods like caramel and chocolate in Colombians, you start being able to gain your palate. You start realizing there's ways you can describe it.

Charlie identifies that it was not until he realized that language is an incomplete translator of taste, and therefore he must rely on comparison and metaphor, that he began to "get it." He realized that maybe he needed to develop his palate to have more tools for tasting complexity in coffee. Fine (1996) identifies metaphor as a key tool for chefs to discuss taste, but for Charlie, this is only one step in changing his framework from binary to complex, opening a door to connoisseurship. Charlie recalls this experience as particularly impactful in kick-starting his transition from former novice to coffee

connoisseur. It was an experience he brought up on multiple occasions when we were working together, once within my first few weeks working at Craft as he was telling me about how to “dial in” the espresso in the morning, or change up the settings on the espresso machine and grinder each day while tasting to find the ideal flavor profile. It was a core experience for him in his taste biography that he still reflected back on as a significant turning point.

One final example of experiencing the “aha” moment and moving from a binary to a complex taste framework was relayed by Mike. Mike states that he “was always interested in culinary stuff and dealing with flavors.” He had worked in many restaurants in different capacities, including front of house manager, cook, bartender, busser, and server. Mike’s first introduction to third wave coffee, however, also began with skepticism, in fact, he explains that he “had had them (third wave coffees) before and thought ‘wow, they (baristas) messed that up.’” He had had coffee at third wave coffee bars, but thought that they were not very good, even attributing the poor taste to a mistake made by the baristas! Now, he says that it was really his fault; he did not realize that it was his palate and “value system in relation to coffee” that kept him from understanding what he tasted was ‘actually’ good. Mike befriended Noah and Tim at Craft, as they were customers at the restaurant he bartended at, and he started to stop in to Craft periodically, at first to see friends and continue to build ties in the food and beverage industry in town. However, during his visits, he also started to learn more about coffee as he chatted with Noah and Tim about the coffee they roasted. He reflects:

It was more just waking up to the fact that there are all of these different kinds of coffee and they do all taste different. And that’s how they’re supposed to taste...I was very much working within a sort of binary

system of good coffee, bad coffee. And when you're operating within that [binary system], there's no room for that growth or education. But it was just because I didn't realize that there was another way to look at it. That's where the education came in, [it] was just 'okay, these coffees all taste different to begin with, so they should all taste different in the end.' And that was the first big step for me.

For Mike, he realized that the problem was not with the coffee or with baristas who he had thought had messed up making it, but with himself, his body, his sensing, and his interpretive framework. He mentions that the coffee has not changed at all, but *he* has—a sign of training impacting our orientation to taste-experience, interpretation, and valuation. For Mike, who later decided to start working for Craft and eventually learned how to roast coffee, this initial “first step” in learning that coffee could be understood outside of a binary system of evaluation was related to his experiences he had had working in other occupations in the culinary industry. However, even with this previous background, he said he still had not put together that coffee could be thought of in the same way that he thinks of other food and beverages. After his initial “aha” moment with coffee, Mike started to spend more time on his own learning as much as he could about coffee.

It was kind of all education on my own and just reading and tasting and just getting kind of lost in it. I just needed to know that there was more to learn. And I think that's similar to a lot of people that I've talked to within the last year with coffee, is just 'oh, there's more to learn about coffee besides organic or fair trade?' You can actually start going into the flavors and why they are different and why they should be different and what you can expect from this kind of bean. I think a lot of people that gets it going.

Mike's experience of recognizing that he needed a more complex framework for coffee sparked his interest in setting out on his own, as well as with further conversation with the staff at Craft, to learn more about coffee's complexities.

Zach's experience was similar to Mike's. He had worked at a second wave coffee shop, but had learned about light roasted coffee from his boss who liked to order coffee from other roasters and bring it in to work for his employees to try. Zach soon started a similar practice of ordering coffees through a website that sent out coffee from a new specialty roaster every couple of weeks. He said he even tried new coffee brew methods, and began using a measuring cup instead of just pouring in however much coffee he thought looked right, a practice he now laughs about as he has moved on to the more precise method of using a digital scale. Zach moved out of his hometown to Chicago, where he said he went to any coffee shop near where he lived and dropped off applications. Before applying to his first coffee gig in Chicago, he stated that "I definitely thought I was really awesome at the time. Like, oh I have so much experience." But Zach quickly realized that, like Mike, he did not really know as much about coffee as he had assumed he had. He was hired to work at a nearby third wave coffee bar which he said,

I didn't really know about them or how serious they were, or any of that, so that was quite a shock to me. I quickly learned that I didn't know anything and I was ready to just sponge as much as I could.

Coffee knowledge quickly became a relevant concept, as his prior experience was not comparable to the expectations of the third wave coffee bar. From skeptic to realizing that they did not know at all what they had been doing with coffee, each of my co-workers and interviewees reported seeking out as much information as possible to develop a new framework for tasting coffee, one that surpassed the binary framework they had been working with and instead focused on developing a complex framework for discussing the palate. Obtaining new knowledge from baristas and through reading and

experimentation, notes the social characteristics of altering one's orientation to coffee. While everyone had been familiar with coffee, they had not known that they could think of it differently, and in doing so, change their taste experience.

Coffee Purity and Coffee as Centerpiece

Once a binary system of tasting coffee no longer matches the knowledge that coffee can be more complex, coffee connoisseurs explain that they use multiple methods to develop a complex taste framework. One part of this process is learning to focus on coffee as a beverage to be experienced on its own, without any additives like creamer or syrups. The focus on the “purity” of coffee also impacts what one is willing to consume. In order to seek out more knowledge about coffee and its newly realized complexity, previous methods of consuming coffee no longer fit the new non-binary framework. As Ben (a 28 year old, white, male barista at Craft) puts it, you cannot drink coffee with additives and claim that you are “into” coffee. Speaking about mochas (espresso, steamed milk, and chocolate), in particular, he states:

So many people say that they are into coffee, but then they order drinks, specifically mochas, that don't highlight the coffee and instead just highlight the chocolate. You are missing what the barista is in it for. Baristas aren't into coffee for the chocolate.

Because of the focus on the potential of coffee in itself, other additives are seen as disrupting what people who are “into coffee” are pursuing. Either you are trying to learn about coffee, or you are trying to learn about whatever additives you put into it. Either way, the additives interfere with the purity of coffee. Ben goes on to further state that

there is a kind of coffee purity that third wave coffee roasters and baristas are seeking. It is a purity not just in serving and tasting coffee without any additives, but in the production of coffee, as well.

At some level we have to acknowledge that there is a better, and my definition of better will be purest. There's a way to make coffee that will showcase its flavor the most...A lot of roasters go 'how do we make the best roast that we can possibly make for this coffee?' And it seems that for the majority of roasters in their approach to coffee is 'how can we make all the flavor that this bean holds available to the person tasting it?'...It's undeniable that there is a best way to do that. If you want all of the flavor to be available you don't char it, you don't under roast it. There's a money spot, that's how we do it.

Ben's belief that the best way to roast and brew coffee is to "make all the flavor that this bean holds available to the person tasting it," is one shared by every person I spoke to in the third wave coffee industry. The Specialty Coffee Association of America also presents this view as an essential quality of baristas. They state that specialty baristas are essential to preventing poor brewing, which makes it "possible that its (coffee's) true flavor potential could be lost; the Barista ensures each bean reaches its full brewed promise" (SCAA 2018b). Another way this is often stated is that the goal of third wave coffee is to "translate the bean to the cup." As Ben states, this involves not charring the bean through the roasting process, but instead understanding that there is a particular way to roast every coffee that will highlight its essential taste characteristics, something that is decided by roasters and baristas; beans obviously do not talk and tell us how they are supposed to taste.

Ben's reference to "char(ring)" beans is largely a statement about first and second wave coffee as characterized by dark roasts, compared to third wave coffee which tends

to have lighter roasted coffee. Shannon went into detail on this distinction, stating that some roasters buy higher quality beans, but that still does not mean that they will have a quality product. It has more to do with the way the coffee is roasted.

There's no reason to buy good beans and then not be able to taste them and instead, just taste roast instead of what's inherent in the bean...I feel uncomfortable saying who those people are because it's kind of a diss.

The search for purity, then, goes hand-in-hand with the development of a more complex palate. It means tasting a variety of coffees to begin to familiarize oneself with the potential and variation of coffee flavors, but not simply just other coffees, coffees that are lighter roasted to *truly* taste coffee. Alicia was the bluntest about this distinction in stating that, in fact, "most people have not actually tasted coffee. They have just tasted the roast." Given this newfound knowledge that maybe they have not actually even tasted coffee as much as they had once thought, third wave baristas report focusing intensely on tasting a wide variety of coffees to develop a knowledge base, or "sensory memory," as Shannon puts it, in order to expand their taste framework.

The first step, after recognizing the need for purity in coffee tasting to develop a new palate, is cutting out beverages that one had previously enjoyed. Charlie speaks to this:

I've changed the way in which I drink coffee. I used to get a big cup of coffee and put cream in it and drink it that way. Drink big gulps of it. I think the method that I now drink coffee is that I have it black and I sip it and try and pick out flavors within it. I just kind of appreciate what's going on within the cup. I think if I drank coffee the same way that I had it before, I probably wouldn't enjoy this coffee any more than I did then. If I was putting a bunch of cream in it and just pounding it.

Charlie identifies his previous coffee consumption as having a limit to the enjoyment it can produce. By drinking black coffee, he can spend more time concentrating on the variety of flavors that the coffee presents, which he implies is more enjoyable, or at least has greater potential for enjoyment than was possible with his prior form of drinking coffee, with cream and by taking big gulps. For the coffee connoisseur, it is essential to seek out a higher level of flavor potential, one that is congruent with a more complex framework. Instead of focusing on whether the coffee is “good” or “bad,” coffee now falls under a rubric of appreciating the complexities of each cup. With the new unlocked potential for coffee flavor experiences, connoisseurs report seeking out a variety of coffees to constantly keep tasting and comparing. For Zach, this process really jumpstarted when he began his job at the Chicago coffee bar:

It was the first time I was in an environment where people were talking about coffees together. It didn't take me too long to start jumping on that train...I just drank a lot of coffee and really tried to pay attention. One thing that helped was we had a lot of coffees. Like the most coffees I've ever worked with. I'd have like a dozen or ten or twelve at a time and they were just so different. I think a lot of that were the coffees we had, the green coffees we bought. That was great for me and I really started paying attention...Mostly I was focusing on region. That was like the first time I really started identifying specific flavors and just general ideas for regions...You know, Ethiopians are tea-like and fruity, that sort of thing. That was really the first time I started to develop that.

Paying attention to flavor subtlety was a new way of drinking coffee for Zach. The company he worked for had two locations and had just started to roast their own coffee shortly before he began working there. This provided him with the opportunity to try a lot of different coffees from different regions, roasted by the same roaster, within a short period of time. Zach's taste framework initially took shape with a regional focus,

identifying common characteristics that were associated with coffees depending on the region in which they were produced. For Zach, this is when he “really started paying attention” to variations within coffee and discussing with others what their taste experiences were. The process of learning about coffee became a collective experience, one where colleagues discussed what they thought of different coffees and how they compared with other coffees that they were all able to share together. Zach’s comment about being “in an environment where people were talking about coffee together,” points to learning to taste in new ways as a community influenced process. Entering into his new workplace, Zach entered a new “taste community” (Ferguson 1998; Ocejo 2017) that treated coffee tasting as a group activity, further altering his relationship to the beverage.

Charlie’s experience at Craft started similarly; however, during much of Craft’s first year, they were not yet roasting their own coffee and were instead featuring different third wave coffee roasters on a revolving basis, what is referred to as a “multi-roaster” coffee bar. This experience helped Charlie, and other Craft employees, to learn about not only a variety of coffees from different regions, but from different roasters, as well. Charlie’s experience was also shaped by the collective component of tasting with others and discussing their experiences.

First, we were doing Noble and Case [two coffee roasters from southern Oregon]. We would just make pots of whatever they had. Make two different pots. And when you make two different pots of coffee, two different cups, it’s like, ‘there’s a difference.’ Maybe it’s like, ‘oh this one’s more bitter.’ ‘This one’s less bitter.’ That’s how it starts. Then you start tasting more. Like, ‘this one hits you right up front.’ Okay, so there’s a timeline to it. You start getting a timeline. ‘Oh, its finish, I still taste this like five minutes later.’ This finish is smooth and there’s no repercussion, or it’s just done. There’s a timeline aspect to it. You kind of just start building, just doing side-by-sides. That just became fun. I just really liked it. “Oh, this is crazy.’ I unlocked a little door.

Charlie's first major noticing was that there were differences between two different coffees that he could mine for explanations in flavor profiles. He explains that he first started identifying other binary characteristics of "more bitter" or "less bitter." However, the comparisons developed into recognizing a timeline for identifying characteristics of the individual coffees. He noticed that coffees took on different characteristics depending on when you were paying attention to it. "It hits you right up front," refers to a concentration of flavor or other taste characteristic immediately when you take a sip, versus a focus on the "finish" of the coffee, which refers to after you swallow. Does the taste change after swallowing? Does it go away immediately, or does it linger? These components of coffee were added to Charlie's repertoire of his taste framework, as he puts it "I unlocked a little door;" he opened new characteristics of coffee that he had not previously identified and now possessed new tools in his toolkit for coffee evaluation.

Expanded Purview of Sensory Experiences

The newly learned practice of coffee evaluation did not stop with coffee for most third wave coffee practitioners, but also influenced the way they experienced other food and beverage products. Developing a new taste framework does not simply begin and end with coffee, instead the focus on the palate also expands to other sensory experiences, but often still in relation to coffee. For example, Shannon spoke about how coffee became a focal point for other sensory experiences. She was so focused on learning about complexities in coffee tasting, that she began thinking about other products as a way to help her ability to identify flavors within coffee. This is

representative of the final component of becoming a coffee connoisseur, where the purview of coffee expands beyond the beverage and into a component of everyday life, outside the coffee bar. For Shannon, when she first started working at a third wave coffee shop, she would taste coffees with a colleague who had more experience. She listened to her colleague to identify other flavors that she was not familiar with. To familiarize herself, she began purchasing fruits to try outside of work to develop a “sensory memory.”

Everything you eat becomes different. So every time I put anything in my mouth I think about how it tastes so that if I ever taste it in coffee, I’d be able to pull that note out....Because I was so serious about coffee, I would be going to Whole Foods once a week and picking up the fruits that she had named so that I was able to understand what she was talking about...Because so many coffees, it doesn’t just taste like lemon, it tastes like lemon rind or it tastes like grapefruit pith, or it tastes like a dessert...We are constantly going and buying those products so that we create that memory that we’re able to pull out of the coffee.

The complexities of coffee and the intense focus of third wave coffee practitioners led Shannon to seek out sensory experiences outside of coffee, just so that she could create a “sensory memory” to help her identify those flavors whenever she was confronted with them again in coffee. This process is more than simply developing a vocabulary, but instead is a stockpiling of the toolkit for coffee evaluation. Implicit in Shannon’s comment is that one’s palate is only as good as one’s breadth of taste experiences. You cannot identify a wide range of flavors within coffee, and with enough precision, unless you have concentrated on developing an extensive memory of taste experiences. This involves purchasing products that you have not had before for the purpose of registering the particularities of flavors to your sensory memory.

Inherent in the above descriptions is an orientation to tasting by coffee connoisseurs as an empirical instead of social practice. The belief in essential taste characteristics, along with identifying the coffee professional as translator of the bean to the cup, reflects a blurring of the lines of the social and the scientific. No more clear demonstration of third wave coffee professionals highlighting their work as that of science-based coffee translators is the prevalence of coffee bars that identify as “coffee labs” in their name. Most notable among these was relayed to me by a former roaster of a “coffee lab,” in California, who is now a roaster at another coffee bar in the same town as Craft, who, along with all of his colleagues, were required to wear white coats as part of the employee uniform. In another coffee bar, behind the counter was a large periodic table of elements displayed on the wall. The use of scientific sign vehicles (Goffman 1959), practices such as developing a sensory memory, and serving as translators of how coffee is *supposed* to taste, gives cover to the social components of interpreting flavor, making it appear as an inherently scientific venture, in turn enhancing the status and prestige of the occupation, baristas, and by association, consumers.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the past few years as I have investigated the third wave coffee industry, I have frequently been asked, “Why coffee?” In other words, why of all products are the third wave coffee connoisseurs so interested in coffee instead of anything else? The focus on coffee serves as an entrée into a wider understanding of taste experiences that transcend simply coffee. Coffee only serves as the central component, stemming from the shock that coffee can be more than simply good or bad,

or a vehicle for obtaining a jolt of caffeine, for a wider focus on variety of taste experiences, or one's bodily capacity to recognize, recall, and identify sensation. It is a concentration on one's own capacity to develop, build a stockpile of experiences, and call on those sensory memories to explain and provide meaning. It is a collective activity carried on within a community of others who challenge one another and jointly value the skills of sensory identification. The impact, as we will continue to see, extends beyond coffee, not only with other sensory experiences, but also as a source of community and a component of the connoisseur's identity and group affiliation. It is also used as a fulcrum for inequality.

The change from novice to budding coffee connoisseur involves more than an intense focus on coffee; it has wider social implications. The next chapter will examine the further development of "sensory memory" by looking at the training process within the third wave coffee industry. Up to this point, we have largely looked at the experiences of third wave coffee practitioners and their taste biographies, or how they explain their stages of becoming coffee connoisseurs. The practice of coffee connoisseurship within the third wave coffee industry, as laborers, has its own rules and expectations for carrying out the labor process. Third wave baristas perform a kind of labor that I call "sense work," which involves the guiding of customers' sensory experiences to fall in line with a company's "taste framework," something that is taught to employees through training.

CHAPTER III

TASTE FRAMEWORKS AND SENSE WORK

You were working with people who have really well trained palates. They were all calibrated together...Everybody tastes coffee differently; we all have different perceptions of taste. When you work with somebody, you want to make sure that the ideas you have about different flavors and tastes are aligned.—Shannon, bar manager, regional and national barista competitor

In the end, the palate is king.—Tim, Craft trainer and head barista

LABOR OF CONNOISSEURSHIP

On a cold, drizzling morning in late November, a typical day in this mid-sized Pacific Northwest city, I followed my routine of waking to a 5:15 am alarm, showering, and putting on a plaid shirt, gray jeans, and light brown cardigan before jogging across the street to catch the first bus headed downtown to open Craft Coffee Roasters (Craft). By this time I had worked as a barista at Craft for six months. I opened the shop alone three days a week, arriving at 6:30am and opening the doors for business at seven. On cold mornings such as this I looked forward to getting into the shop, turning on music, and purging stagnant water from the espresso machine that had accumulated overnight. Warm steam clouds billowed out of the machine's steam wands and I reveled in the warmth and early morning solitude. Before I unlocked the door, I set up the espresso machine by putting together the portafilters (what holds the espresso and detaches from the espresso machine with a handle and basket) set up my towels (one for cleaning the steam wand of milk, one for wiping down the portafilter after pulling each shot, and one in my waistband for wiping my hands), and "dialing-in" the espresso. Dialing-in espresso refers to tasting and adjusting variables that may impact the brewing process,

such as grind size, dosage of coffee, and amount of water that comes into contact with the espresso. Baristas monitor the taste of coffee throughout the day and adjust these variables in order to consistently produce espresso to the agreed upon taste standards of the coffee bar. Coffee beans, like most other agricultural products, change with time. They are impacted by many factors, including temperature change, humidity, or “off-gassing,” a process of releasing CO₂ developed during the roasting process. Due to the changing characteristics of coffee beans, the way they are brewed requires frequent monitoring and tinkering to maintain consistency in product, in this case, taste.

Just before 7am I started the drip coffee for the day, a Colombian coffee from the Isidro Trivino farm that we served for the first time that day. By 8 am, only a few regulars had stopped in to get coffee on their way to work in the surrounding restaurants, beauty salons, art and kitchenware shops, and legal and IT workers in the office spaces in the upper floors of the two and three story buildings surrounding Craft. A semi-regular customer (once or twice a week), Judy, a roughly mid-fifties, white, administrative assistant at a nearby university, stopped in. We exchanged “good morning” greetings and I asked Judy if she would have her usual cappuccino? I had served Judy since I first started working at Craft and I never once had her order anything other than a cappuccino to-go, as she usually stopped in on her way to work. She asked, “Do you have that coffee that Noah posted about over the weekend?” Judy was referring to the Colombian Isidro Trivino coffee that the owner and head roaster of Craft Coffee, Noah, posted on the business’ Instagram account. I told her we did not have it as our single-origin espresso (Craft always features two espressos, one blend and one single-origin, or a coffee that is from one farm or cooperative of farms and not blended with any other coffees), so I could

not make her cappuccino with it, but we were serving it for our drip coffee. “Could I have my regular cappuccino and just sample the new coffee?” I poured Judy a sample and told her, “I’ve been really liking it quite a bit; let me know what you think of it.” She paid for her cappuccino and sat at the bar counter facing the espresso machine, right next to the countertop where we place finished drinks. She sipped the coffee as I prepped her milk and weighed and ground the beans for her cappuccino. She looked up at me and exclaimed, “Mmm, this is really good!” I told her “I really like the sweetness in that coffee. Noah and Mike (coffee roaster) were saying it is papaya-like.” “You all have such great taste buds!” Judy said before she took another sip; “I see what you mean about the sweetness. That *is* really good.” As I finished Judy’s cappuccino, pouring the steamed milk into her to-go cup and making latte art in the shape of a tulip, another customer entered, a white-male, roughly mid-twenties, someone I had never seen before. I greeted him and asked, “what can I get started for you?” “What do you have on drip?” he asked, referring to our batch brew coffee. I told him it is a new Colombian we were serving for the first time and asked if he would like a sample. He nodded affirmatively and said “yeah” without eye contact as he looked over the menu and the bags of coffee for sale arranged on shelves, along with other coffee equipment and branded Craft merchandise, such as mugs and t-shirts. I poured him a sample in a demitasse (small ceramic cup usually used for serving espresso). As he took his first sip, Judy looked at him and said loudly, “It’s really good.” He glanced at her quickly, acknowledged her with raised eyebrows, nodded, and then looked intently at the cup as he lowered his nose to sniff the coffee before taking another sip. Judy informed him, “It’s a little sweet. Like papaya.” “It is really good,” he agreed, before ordering a cup to go.

Although customers were not usually as forward as Judy, scenes like this were commonplace at Craft. One of my co-workers or myself instructed customers on our interpretations of the flavors of the coffee, and then customers sought out those flavors. In some instances, customers would directly ask us what they *should* taste in the coffee. Just like Judy's comment that my co-workers and I "have great taste buds," customers frequently told us they were "not a connoisseur," or did not have an experienced coffee palate that my co-workers and I were assumed to have. My experience with Judy highlights a particular orientation to others based on perceived palate-ability. This orientation to specialty coffee baristas, that they have refined, specialized palates, highlights customer expectations to not only receive a material product, but to receive access to information about how to taste, or what to taste within the product. This expectation is not unique to specialty coffee. Laborers in industries from cocktail bartenders to barbers increasingly perform "service teaching" (Ocejo 2017), where laborers offer guidance on entering a "taste community" (Ferguson 1998) and in learning their respective cultural repertoires. Third wave baristas, however, not only assist customers in identifying how to properly order, or teaching what drinks consist of, but also guide customers in interpreting their own sensory experiences, namely their sense of taste. What I identify in this chapter is a particular kind of service teaching, one that I refer to as "sense work," or guiding the sensory experiences of customers to fall in line with particular ways of tasting (what I call "taste frameworks") unique to a business, but within the spectrum of the broader specialty coffee taste community.

Producing Consistency with an Inconsistent Product

One chief goal of foodservice is maintaining a consistent product or level of quality. Some over-the-counter foodservice organizations use explicit rules, similar to a Taylorist or McDonaldized (Ritzer 2004) form of production control, that dictate employee movements to most efficiently and consistently produce their product. Rules may specify employee appearance, emotional display (Hochschild 1983), the speech employee's use (Leidner 1993; Ott 2016), and/or bodily comportment (Otis 2011). Employers rely on control strategies to enforce compliance with organizational rules, whether via surveillance or workplace culture. In the third wave coffee industry consistency in product is also at the forefront of managerial concerns. However, there are a few key characteristics that make the labor of connoisseurs of taste different than many other kinds of frontline service work, and make routinization particularly challenging. Instead of serving the same menu day-in and day-out, coffee bars offer multiple coffees that frequently rotate. For example, Craft carries at least three different single-origin coffees, a blend, and a decaf, single-origin coffee. Along with having multiple kinds of coffee, Craft also rotates what coffees they use for which drinks. For example, one week might feature an Ethiopian coffee as a single-origin espresso while also rotating a Colombian and Kenyan coffee on drip, but the next week the Colombian coffee might be served as espresso and the Ethiopian may be switched to the drip coffee offering. Depending on the quantity of green coffee beans (unroasted coffee) purchased, the single-origin coffee could be very limited and only available for a few weeks, or could be in larger quantity and offered for a month or two. With so much variability, it is not unusual that at least six varieties of coffee could be offered within one month at Craft. In

addition, each of these coffees will taste different depending on how they are brewed. Factors such as water weight to coffee weight, grind size, and time of exposure of beans to water, are a few of the factors that are considered when making coffee. With so much variability, maintaining consistency of product is a persistent challenge. Like many other foodservice businesses, Craft does rely on some automation, but the automation involved requires frequent tinkering from employees throughout the day as they work with different coffees, or as coffees change due to variables such as humidity or temperature, for example, meaning that individual coffees might require different brewing variables at different times, even within the same day. In addition to each of these variables, specialty coffee labor also involves the sensory experience of taste. Sensory stimulation and interpretation inject another layer of variability, especially when part of the labor of baristas rests on their ability to make judgments on how the coffee tastes, and what adjustments need to be made to produce a “better” tasting product.

Given this uncertainty in the production process, how does Craft maintain control over the final product? In other industries technology and automation guarantee some predictability. In the coffee industry it is the human being, rather than the technology, that assures consistency. I argue that baristas’ palates are subject to standardization. As a requirement of employment, the barista’s sensory capacity is bound in a way of tasting that is standardized across employees. In other words, the palate of the coffee bar becomes the palate of the employee. I refer to ways of tasting particular to coffee bars as “taste frameworks,” as they create boundaries around what taste experiences are acceptable and unacceptable to the bar’s standards. Taste frameworks are multidimensional social creations. They involve rules, in this case, created by a firm that

outline a way of not only tasting, but of associated behaviors and language. Taste frameworks are imposed by organizations as a form of control. The taste framework is also a measurement device, or a tool for evaluating sensory experiences. The collective embodiment of a taste framework creates the appearance of objectivity, but its creation and practice are inherently social. In the next chapter, I additionally demonstrate that taste frameworks can be used as a tool in boundary creation (Lamont and Fournier 1992) or “othering” (Schwalbe et al. 2000). It offers, through its rules, practices (rituals), and collective embodiment, a frame to hang one’s identity. Additionally, through the very nature of these boundaries, they imbue particular taste experiences with value and devalue other experiences outside the frame, along with those whose bodies are untrained in the “right” way of tasting. I also identify that the palate, specifically the taste framework that all employees are required to follow, serves as a central reference for maintaining consistency, both across time and across employees. Through standardizing the palate, Craft aims to standardize the product, the coffee served. However, I demonstrate that the palate itself is also part of the product. As Judy noted, “you all have such great taste buds;” the employees themselves, their embodiment of the taste framework, and their “sense work,” are all part of the experience sold at specialty coffee bars.

In the previous chapter, I outlined how novices transform into budding coffee connoisseurs. However, last chapter’s discussion focused primarily on individuals before they worked at third wave coffee bars. Training and working at a third wave coffee bar as a barista involves a further fine-tuning of one’s palate and expectations that must be followed as a condition of employment. In this chapter, I identify how a taste framework

is embodied by baristas. Given the variability in coffee and in sensory experience, I argue that the taste framework serves as the central organizing feature of the labor of specialty coffee baristas. Learning the taste framework is a result of working on the body through palate training, which has two additional goals. First, this framework serves as the central point of reference for learning and performing the technical components of third wave barista work, or “dialing-in” coffees. Baristas taste and make adjustments to brewing variables based on their interpretation of taste, as bound by the framework. The taste framework also informs the interactive components of barista work through “sense work,” geared towards aligning customer palates with a company’s taste framework. In other words, I argue that the sensory experiences of employees come under control of management. Employees learn what types of sensory experiences adhere to the taste framework of the organization, and what sensory experiences should be avoided. However, blurring the line between production and consumption, employees not only embody the taste framework of the organization, but are actively engaged in reformulating the sensory experiences of their customers to align within the same taste framework. I identify strategies that baristas use for working on customer palates, ultimately expanding the specialty coffee taste community and consumer base, in the interest of profit.

TASTE FRAMEWORKS

Specialty coffee bars train their baristas to align their palates under the organization’s “taste framework,” or a set of guidelines that serve to align the palates of employees to the standards of the organization. A taste framework is one way of tasting,

or one lens for interpretation that through collective embodiment across employees or even within an industry, appears as natural. However, I demonstrate that the semblance of naturalness is a social production. The collective embodiment of a taste framework involves staking claim to a “right” way of tasting, creating boundaries of ways of tasting that fall within the framework and those that do not.

Taste frameworks are specific to the coffee bar, but within the larger umbrella of the standards of the specialty coffee industry. While third wave coffee bars value similar qualities (typically lighter roasted, and a focus on highlighting sweetness) each coffee bar produces their own taste framework that orients employees to favor certain kinds of taste. Taste frameworks do not wholly dictate sensory experience, but serve as a set of “sense rules” (Vannini et al. 2012) that produce bounds by which acceptable sensory experiences are contained, or as Tim shared, “for us to have a similar palate, we’re able to always keep it within this ballpark that our coffee should be.” The standardizing of palates is more flexible than other forms of frontline service work standardization, and this is necessarily so as taste experience itself is variable. The taste framework, as will be demonstrated, is a social creation, one that guides the vast potential of sensory experience through its condensing lens into a shared palate. Baristas learn, through palate training, to taste coffee within the bounds of the framework. Learning to develop a shared palate as a requirement of one’s job highlights the social foundations of sensory experience and how this influence can be utilized as a managerial control strategy.

Specialty coffee bars seek to align the palates of their employees to produce a consistent product and to maintain control over the company identity. Scott, a 31 year

old, white male who is a lead barista trainer for a specialty coffee roaster in Portland, Oregon emphasizes the importance of learning the bar's taste framework.

We're training based on our style... We start doing a lot of tasting right away because that is the foundation. All of the technical stuff, the skill set to go along with that, that will come slower... The palate, we need people to have the palate starting to develop from day one... It is a process of teaching baristas to be able to judge for themselves, does it taste right? And when we say 'right,' we talk about this idea of like a collective palate. We taste coffee together a lot. And when we taste coffee together a lot we can make something complex conform to a collective idea of what tastes most delicious.

The palate is “the foundation” of specialty coffee barista work. The technical skills of making coffee and the interactive skills of serving customers stem from learning the taste framework, or what Scott referred to as a “collective palate.” Having a taste framework implies that all employees should be able to embody the organization's framework as if all employees shared a singular “collective palate.” The framework serves as a common referent for baristas.

Scott's comment points directly to a contradiction I often observed in discussions about teaching and using the framework. He identifies that individual baristas should be able to decide for themselves if the coffee tastes “right,” or “the most delicious.” He is referring to baristas working on their own at the bar and independently making decisions based on how they think the coffee tastes. However, it is clear from his statement, and the ensuing discussion on palate training, that an individual's palate is no longer their own when working for a coffee bar. Just as Hochschild (1983) demonstrates that employee emotional display comes under control of management, I argue that one's sensory experience can also be placed under organizational control as a condition of

one's employment and a part of the product sold. The body is manufactured to align with the framework of the bar. By standardizing the sensory profile of the bar, the employees' bodies are utilized to showcase a particular way of tasting. Coffee bars stake claim to a "style," as Scott stated, or identity that is embodied by the baristas. Achieving consistency in sensory presentation, whereby baristas consume the palate framework, while simultaneously producing it for consumption.

The importance of learning the taste framework was made clear on my first day of work with Noah, the owner and head roaster of Craft. Noah wanted me to spend my first shift shadowing him through his morning routine of dialing-in the espressos, one blend and one single-origin. As he was preparing the very first shot of espresso he told me "the first thing to do is get your palate right.," indicating that my palate was not currently satisfactory for the work. My palate needed to be re-shaped in the company's interest. Noah proceeded to pull a shot of espresso, taste it, and make adjustments to the grinder. While he was dialing-in the espresso he was splitting the espresso shots into two ceramic espresso cups, one for him and one for me. Noah went about making shots and tasting them seemingly without hesitation in his evaluation. He would take a sip, swish the coffee around in his mouth, swallow, and immediately return to the grinder to make an adjustment. Giving me a shot of espresso to taste alongside him seemed like a courtesy, as he would ask me what I thought about it while already making a grinder adjustment and prepping the next shot. I would learn that this first step in coffee training was normalizing tasting a lot of coffee and becoming comfortable discussing flavor. This would be an everyday component of the work at Craft and one that all employees would take part in, frequently tasting, discussing flavor, and making adjustments so that the

coffee would consistently meet the bar's standards. In informing me that I needed to "get my palate right," Noah was prioritizing taste over the mechanics of making coffee, just as Scott had also indicated. In other words, my body, specifically my palate, had to be trained to serve as a tool for performing the manual labor of a barista. Without learning the taste framework of the coffee bar, I would not be able to perform the day-to-day labor of making coffee. As Charlie stated, "If somebody doesn't want to learn about palate...they can go [work] somewhere else," meaning they can work somewhere that does not prioritize training palates as a requirement of work. Palate training as a make or break measure of employment highlights the centrality of the taste framework to barista work.

The centrality of a common palate is not only essential to making coffee to the standards of the coffee bar, but as Scott implied ("training based on *our style*"), it is essential to maintaining an identity for the company. In other words, the taste framework is treated as a sort of common identity, or trademark for the business. Mike elaborates on the importance of Craft's taste framework for maintaining a company identity:

It's really important to have a shared framework within your company...You have to be on the same page with the other people working there and have them at least be operating within that framework. [If] they [baristas] don't have the same understanding, you are going to confuse the clientele, or yourself. You're gonna start not knowing what you are tasting...It would be pretty much impossible for us to run our business without having a framework of taste that we've developed.

For Mike, the taste framework for Craft needs to be instilled in every employee, otherwise he fears it will create confusion for the customer if employees are talking about or making coffee differently than their colleagues. He attributes this to co-workers having different taste frameworks, or of a colleague not understanding the taste

framework of the organization and therefore misrepresenting the business. Tim elaborates, “We try to make it all the same because we are looking for consistency of beverage for whoever is coming in. The more we around each other, I think our palates are shaping up to be very similar.” Not only would there be confusion among baristas about what they taste, but the taste framework helps to maintain consistency in products consumed by customers. As Mike worries, without a shared framework, the customers might get confused and not know what to expect when ordering at Craft. A common framework serves the interest of the business to create standardization in product by aligning employee palates, but also in maintaining a consistent business identity.

Having a shared taste framework means that new baristas are hired, in part, for their palates. We will see in next chapter that decisions in hiring take into account the ability of potential hires to learn new ways of tasting. I argue that barista’s bodies, specifically their sensory experience, are worked on as part of a coffee bar’s product. Just as employees at other establishments might be required to fit into a company image through their dress, emotional display (Hochschild 1983), bodily comportment (Otis 2011), or use of specific speech (Leidner 1993; Ott 2016), I demonstrate that the sensory experiences of laborers are also placed on the market and made available for purchase. The fixing of sensory experience involves aligning one’s palate with the palate of the organization, a component of their identity, and a central component of both the manual and interactive aspects of this work. I next turn to explain how it is that the taste framework is instilled in the bodies of baristas through palate training.

Palate Training: Fixing the Sensory Experiences of Baristas

According to Noah, Craft's owner and head roaster, "You can't just teach someone how to dial-in coffee off of written instructions, but you need to have worked with and tasted a lot of coffee in order to learn how to do it." Noah's point is that tasting coffee and making decisions about the variables in brewing coffee, and ultimately whether it tastes "good," are skills that are acquired through practice. If there were a set of standard operating procedures there would need to be standardized variables, however when working with the senses, there is inherent variability in individual experience. In palate training, the bar controls the variables by dictating the coffees that are tasted and instructing the sensory judgments of baristas. Sensory interpretation is a social process, one that is regulated by the organization and taught through palate training. There are three main types of palate training, everyday tasting and discussion, coffee cuppings, and linking taste with the mechanical components of coffee making. Each method aims to instill the taste framework in preparation for the two major components of baristas work, making coffee and interacting with customers.

The first component of training is frequently tasting coffee and getting comfortable talking about flavor. I was instructed to taste each coffee at the beginning of every shift so that I could familiarize myself with the offerings for the day. There were typically one or two different batch brewed drip coffees, and three espressos, one blend, one single origin, and one decaf. Much of the initial training process involves tasting a lot of coffee and either listening to others' flavor interpretations, or in offering your own thoughts on what the coffee tastes like. While this practice continues no matter one's barista experience, its initial purpose is partly initiation into the everyday rituals of

concentrated tasting, a form of tasting with intent to identify sensory characteristics.

Zach recounts his first experience training in specialty coffee and learning intentional tasting when he began working at a coffee bar in Chicago:

At first it was just regurgitating what I heard, because I was very intimidated and I hadn't been in an environment where people were tasting coffees and actually saying what it tasted like... They were just so natural about the whole process. At first I was extremely intimidated and I realized that I really needed to start paying attention on really focusing my palate.

Before embodying the taste framework of the organization, Zach notes how he was simply regurgitating, or playing the part by mimicking his co-workers. Zach, as well as all employees new to specialty coffee, are able to taste the coffee but have not learned how to taste and talk about coffee oriented to an organization's taste framework. As Zach stated, and similar to the comments from the last chapter of former novices who stated that they used to not know what they were doing when drinking coffee, he felt intimidated due his perceived knowledge deficit. His colleagues possessed common tools for tasting and talking about flavor that he had not been socialized into; he had to learn the ways of a new cultural field (Ferguson 1998). Part of the intimidation also stems from status differences between those with calibrated palates who embodied the taste framework, and those without. Zach's co-workers had already embodied the framework of the coffee bar and appeared to "naturally" go about tasting and relaying flavor notes. For a barista new to the bar, Zach responded by focusing on joining the group by mimicking language and thinking intently about tasting coffee ("really focusing my palate"). While tasting a lot of coffee and getting used to talking about flavor, the new

barista is introduced to the taste framework and seeks to align their behaviors with the group, both out of group membership and as a job requirement.

Tim, the lead barista and trainer at Craft, identified how frequent tasting fits into Craft's goal of training and how he introduces the framework:

What you do is keep making coffee with that person [new trainee]. You have them try good shots [of espresso], you have them try bad shots. You have them tell you what they taste, what they notice. And then say, 'okay, yes, yes, no. I think maybe you mean this.' Then you give people better words for describing flavors for whatever is going on in their mouth.' You make it right for them and you point out things in coffee that are right.

In order to begin calibrating palates, or "fixing" the sensory experience of new employees, Tim identifies that you have to first get the trainee to talk about flavor.

Talking about flavor is seen as a point of entry to producing the taste framework and into the culture of specialty coffee. New employees are constantly tasting coffee and either listening to others describe the flavor or in offering their own interpretations. Tim integrates the taste framework into frequent tasting by referring to it as a guide in assessing a new employee's flavor interpretations. He offers positive assessments when they interpret in ways that align with Craft's framework, signaling that their interpretation is correct. When a new employee misidentifies a flavor, or provides an interpretation that is not aligned with Craft's taste framework, he offers suggestions such as "I think you mean this," as a way of "correcting" an interpretation outside of Craft's framework. Similar examples of teaching palate in this way are found in the opening example of the manuscript, where I was informed by a barista that my "strawberry" was "actually stone fruit and mandarin." This also serves as an example of how

disagreements are handled. Tim, or others who have seniority and/or are in higher-powered management positions, dictate when interpretations align and when they do not.

In another case, while tasting a new coffee at Craft, Tim asked me what I thought of it. I sipped the coffee and said the coffee reminded me of “green beans from a can.” Tim nodded, laughed, and said that I was “identifying the savory notes” of the coffee and noted that this was a better term for describing the coffee to customers. Through frequent tasting with my colleagues at Craft, I learned acceptable language, such as “bright” referring to citrus notes like lemon or orange, and “heavy,” or “tea-like” to refer to the “body” of the coffee, or the “weight of the coffee on your tongue,” as Shannon described it. Additionally, I was also instructed to think of tasting coffee as a progression across three stages, the front, the middle, and the finish. In evaluating coffee, I might hear “it’s got a bright acidity up front,” or “the sweetness dies off at the end [the finish].” Fine (1995; 1996) identifies the importance of language, particularly the use of metaphor among chefs, to relay sensory experiences. While I agree with Fine, I expand on his idea and bring the body back into the discussion by identifying how language and the body are implicated in barista work. Additionally, I build from Fine by going beyond the work of baristas communicating with one another, and explain how the senses of customers are implicated in the work, as well. I identify how language is used through the form of tasting notes to guide and “fix” the sensory experiences of both baristas and customers in accordance to a specialty coffee bar’s taste framework.

The introduction to palate training focused on entering a new cultural field (Ferguson 1998), getting used to the rituals of frequent coffee tasting and describing flavor. While discussions of language were often an entry into interpreting and aligning

palates, this was only the first step in the palate training process, getting used to tasting and talking about flavor. Outside of tasting and talking about coffee during each shift, additional palate training methods concentrate directly on instilling the taste framework, or producing a collective, calibrated palate. The main method of palate training is coffee cuppings. Coffee cuppings involve concentrated tasting of coffee in the service of developing one's coffee palate and nurturing shared sensory experiences. It is a collective activity. This is important as it bridges the individualized sensory experience into a shared experience. Each participant consumes the same items into their separate bodies, but develops a collective interpretation, as if the sensory experience was held in common.

At Craft, cuppings took place at least once a week, with additional cuppings whenever there were new coffees that would soon be introduced for sale and common tasting notes needed to be created. Before introducing new coffees, Craft holds employee cuppings to develop a shared understanding of the coffee's sensory characteristics so that they can be sure to make the coffee and describe the coffee to customers consistently across all baristas. Cupping coffee is a ritualized practice of brewing coffee in small (usually 6-8 ounce) ceramic cups. Usually there are at least two different kinds of coffee (often many more) that are cupped at one time to compare different origins or if the same origin, different roast profiles (i.e., the same coffee roasted in different ways). Ground coffee is placed in the bottom of a cup and then hot water is poured over it with a goose-neck style kettle. As the coffee is wetted and brewing commences, the coffee grounds rise to the top of the cup creating a sort of puck, or "crust" of coffee grounds. Next, someone will take two spoons to "break the crust," or sweep the coffee grounds from the

center to the outside of the cup before scooping the grounds out to be disposed of.

“Breaking the crust” not only removes the grounds to stop the brewing process, but is also an opportunity for the cupper to smell the coffee for their first sense of the coffee’s flavor qualities. Whoever is breaking the crust might bend at the waist, place their nose an inch or so above the cup, and inhale as they sweep the grounds with the spoons.

Baristas seek to control every variable in cupping that might impact the coffee’s flavor. Each component of cupping is strictly measured for consistency and quality control, from the weight of coffee, size of the grind, temperature and quantity of the water, and contact time of water with coffee. The goal is to produce each cup uniformly to ensure as close to equal comparison across coffees. I was not trusted to prepare a cupping until I was in my third month of training with Craft, but even then I made sure to ask my colleagues before each step to make sure I was doing it correctly. Once the coffee is brewed and someone has “broken the crust,” each person in the cupping uses a wide-mouthed spoon to scoop up a small amount of coffee. Cupping is not only a tasting and olfactory experience, but also an auditory one. During a cupping, a cupper does not simply sip the coffee off of their spoon, but instead gives a quick, sharp inhalation in order to spray the coffee throughout their mouth. This was often the source of nervous laughter among new employees or customers that might join a cupping. I admit, the first few times I was taking part in cuppings at Craft I quietly slurped coffee down my chin and onto my shirt. This was something that my colleagues laughed about. However, just as they anticipated, I was soon loudly slurping coffee like my experienced colleagues.

The frequent, repeated loud slurping sounds of cuppings can draw the attention of customers. On multiple instances when we cupped coffees with customers present, we

fielded questions about what we were doing and why? This served as an opportunity to teach customers about tasting coffee, even inviting them to participate, in some cases. In one instance, a customer asked what it was that we were doing. Noah informed him that we were trying new coffees that he had recently roasted in order to decide which one's we liked the best. He invited the customer to join us. The customer asked, "Do you aerate?" Noah told him that he should slurp to "spread the coffee around your mouth." As the customer tried each coffee, Noah instructed him on different characteristics within the coffees. "This one is an Ethiopian" that has "bright acidity, light bodied," "this Colombian is going to be very different, more chocolaty, heavy bodied." Cupping, although most often used to train baristas on tasting and learning the organization's framework, also provided a visual and auditory spectacle for customers, one that showcased a kind a practice that provided an opportunity for service teaching (Ocejo 2017), or introducing customers into the practices and tastes of specialty coffee connoisseurship.

While the everyday work of tasting coffee before one's shift can be a more informal individual or a collective activity, cupping is a formal collective activity of tasting and interpreting. The everyday tasting of what coffee is available for service takes place after cupping has already occurred and agreed upon tasting notes have been negotiated. The everyday tasting was to monitor if we were making the coffee to the expected standards, as well as to monitor how the coffee was changing over time. As multiple baristas told me, tasting notes listed on bags of coffee are often based on when the coffees were first cupped, but they might change slightly over time.

When I first began working at Craft they were still waiting for their final permits from the city to begin roasting their own coffees. In the meantime, they served the coffee of a specialty roaster from a nearby city that Noah said was close to the style that he would eventually roast. Noah organized a cupping for all employees after the store had closed for the day. He said he wanted to get a baseline for how the coffees should taste when made under cupping conditions, where he could carefully measure and monitor each component of the brewing process, so that we could know what to look for when making the coffee and how to talk about it. He said “this will give us an idea of what the coffee ideally tastes like.” Accordingly, one of the goals of cupping is to collectively taste under “ideal” conditions. By having already cupped the coffee, there was a point of reference from what was considered “ideal.” As coffees taste differently depending on all of the variables previously mentioned, from the type of coffee, how it is roasted, and how it is brewed, the concept of “ideal” taste is a decision of the organization. Beans cannot talk, therefore the baristas, using the taste framework, operate as if they are interpreters determining what is and is not the coffee’s ideal flavor presentation. Cupping, therefore, serves as an instance to teach what is “ideal” for the coffee bar.

Cupping is also the primary way that collective tasting notes are developed for each coffee. Tasting notes are flavor descriptors for coffees that are sometimes printed on bags, menus, or relayed to customers by baristas. Cupping involves a negotiation of what tasting notes are present in coffees, but are not necessarily negotiations where each participant has equal standing. For one, without an embodiment of the bar’s sensory scheme, a cupper’s interpretations may not serve the function of the coffee bar and may

carry less weight in the discussion. Scott identified this potential when discussing cupping with people from other coffee bars:

It's this idea of how do you taste coffee best. Everyone has their idea of how to do that. Really light roasters would think [we are] too dark and you can't taste all of the purity of the coffee. We would say well you're not actually developing the coffee to its full potential, by caramelizing all the sugars...Everyone has their own idea of what's best.

What Scott is referring to here is the idea that across different coffee bars there are varying standards of what is the “best” way to prepare and taste coffee. His example references a disagreement between different taste frameworks based on roasting style, whether a coffee’s potential is fully realized under lighter or a more developed roast. He used this example in an explanation of potential difficulties in hiring new employees who have previously been trained at other coffee bars. This will be discussed more fully in the following chapter, however, specialty coffee managers frequently told me that this was sometimes difficult due to orientations based in differing frameworks. This serves as one way that a taster’s status can limit their influence in determining taste interpretations. People with limited experience, as with new employees, and those trained in other taste frameworks, hold less sway in discussions about sensory characteristics. This is further evidence that not all sensory experiences and interpretations are held equal.

Within the same coffee bar, new employees have less influence over interpretations of flavor as they have not embodied the bar’s framework. Shannon describes how cupping worked for her when she first began work at one of the original three third wave coffee organizations.

I was going to cuppings once a week. I was working with people who have really well trained palates; they were all calibrated together...When

you are sitting around talking at a cupping and somebody pulls out a flavor note and you're like, 'I didn't get that at all.' You go back to the cup and you taste it and you're like 'oh, it's just I don't have a good enough sensory memory of that flavor note, but I can taste it now that you've reminded me.' That's how you're developing your palate... It just happens once you cup with somebody for a long time; you talk about it the same way and desire the same coffees.

Shannon identifies variation in degrees of palate training; those who have “really well trained palates” are those whose palates “were all calibrated together,” meaning that their interpretations were guided by the same framework, and their value was based on alignment. Those whose palates are aligned under the framework help guide those who have not embodied the framework. As Shannon notes, a colleague might mention a flavor note that they identify and she responds by realizing that her training had been insufficient to identify that particular flavor, however, by learning to associate certain flavors with particular language, she is not simply learning the language, but how language and sensory experience interact. As Sennett (2008) identifies, craftwork is a reflexive process of language, knowledge, and the body. If our interpretation ends at learning the language involved, we are removing the body from the equation and not recognizing that our orientation to our bodily experience is guided by language just as our language is guided by our bodily experience. Shannon identifies the mutual orientation of language and sensory experience when she states that after cupping with others for an extended period you “talk about it the same way *and* desire the same coffees.” Cupping is a training of the body to align with others into a common, collective framework of taste. Within the framework, baristas' preferences and the framework of the organization become one. The barista not only learns the framework of the organization, but also desires the style of coffee that adheres to the framework.

Shannon also notes that she did not “have a good enough sensory memory of that flavor note.” Along with Shannon, I observed other baristas keying in on their previous sensory experiences as “sensory memories,” a sort of stockpile of experiences that could be called up as referents to make sense of flavors in coffee. For Shannon, she accounted for her inability to identify a particular flavor note that a colleague found because she did not have that flavor experience available in her stockpile. Multiple baristas reported that they have, on their own time, purchased items from grocery stores that they had read on bags of coffee as tasting notes, or that they had heard others mention, in order to add that flavor to their sensory memory. Zach, for example told me that when he first got a job in specialty coffee, he would frequently go to the grocery store to purchase different fruits. In one instance, he said that a colleague had stated that they tasted kumquat, but he did not know what kumquat tasted like. After his shift he went to Whole Foods to look for kumquat and other fruits that he was not familiar with so that he could add them to his memory to have a larger stock of experiences to draw from. When the main tool for labor is the barista’s body, specifically their palate, the barista cannot turn on and off their work tools. Instead, they continue their orientation to coffee tasting by further working on their palate by creating new sensory memories, in the aim of being better at their jobs. This provides a free to the organization form of training.

Linking the Sensory and Mechanical

Another strategy of palate training on the job links the palate with the mechanical components of making espresso. Learning to taste according to the taste framework is essential to earning the trust to make coffee on one’s own for customers. According to

Tim, “If someone doesn’t taste coffee the same way (as Craft), then someone else has to go in and dial in the coffee...We go by a lot of numbers and parameters, but in the end the palate is king.” Dialing-in coffee is a frequent practice of baristas. As mentioned previously, the barista who opens the bar is responsible for making sure that the coffees taste according to the bar’s standards. To dial-in the coffee means to taste and make adjustments to the different variables involved in brewing coffee. After telling me that “the palate is the string that ties it all together,” I asked Charlie what a barista would not be able to do if they did not have the desired palate? He responds by outlining elements of dialing-in coffee, as well as reflections on his thought process throughout a day of work:

Espresso. We are always changing the grind with coffee and trying to taste where it’s at. Tasting coffee. Because when I’m working I’m jacked up on coffee because I’m constantly, throughout the day, like ‘oh, let’s adjust this again.’ ‘Oh, we just did a new bag. Adjust it; got to taste it.’ ‘Oh, this is a newer bag, same grind, same time. Let’s get a little more water in it because it’s a little sharp up front.’ They want to be able to do that... Getting a good cup of coffee, even if it’s for whoever, we will pour it two or three times to get the times good.

Across the board, baristas stated that they would not trust someone to dial-in espresso or work on the espresso machine if they did not have a trained palate. I pressed baristas on many occasions to imagine that each of the variables for making espresso had been set and written for an imaginary co-worker who did not have a trained palate. Even after asking if that employee would be trusted to work the espresso machine, I was always told “no,” because they would not know how to make adjustments when they needed to be made, or would not even know when adjustments needed to be made. As Charlie’s previous comment makes clear, throughout the day the specialty coffee barista uses their

palate as a tool to monitor whether the coffee meets the bar's taste framework. In this way, the palate is imbued in the product, which explains the lengths that coffee bar's go to maintain control of the sensory experiences of their employees.

In order to train baristas on how to see the mechanical components of making espresso in the sense of taste, baristas are taught "off" flavors that they learn to associate with certain mechanical adjustments. This is first often done in an exaggerated form, as Scott demonstrated:

We narrow on to certain things. What's a shot taste like when the grind is too fine and the extraction time is too long? We break down each piece and we try to taste it in its exaggerated form, but then we are able to taste it when it is more subtle, because it tells us how to adjust our shot...We also do other cuppings where we manipulate the grind and the dose. It's another point where people can taste them side-by-side where they can see how the coffee tastes different when the grind is too fine. They can pick that out. Then they know that flavor. They know that experience. They can start to pick that out when tasting espresso and dialing it in.

Purposefully making coffee with coffee ground "too fine" or where the dose (amount of coffee used) is too much or too little, just to teach the flavors that result, are attempts to train the senses to serve as indicators of mechanical adjustments, as well as to further establish acceptable and unacceptable flavors according to the organization. The baristas are trained to use their senses as diagnostic tools for recognizing how to keep coffee within the acceptable bounds of the bar. Scott's comment that after training in this way, baristas will "know that flavor," points to an example of training the sensory memory of baristas while on the job. If they have that flavor experience, where the trainer purposefully makes something outside of the organization's acceptable bounds, then it is expected that they will know that flavor's characteristics, associate it with a particular

kind of mechanical flaw in the production of coffee, and be able to make the necessary adjustment to maintain the expected standards of the product. The body, in this case, is treated as a repository of sensory experiences that are usable by the organization. By calibrating the palates of their employees to their taste framework, specialty coffee bars utilize the bodies of baristas as both consumers and producers of the organization's framework. As a consumer and producer of the product, the barista exists as an embodied representation of specialty coffee connoisseurship, appearing to naturally possess a way of tasting that is put on the market and sold in both the material product of the coffee and the immaterial experience of customer-teaching to enter the taste framework.

SENSE WORK

So far, the discussion has largely focused on how the bodies of specialty coffee baristas are the subject of management fixing to align within a calibrated taste framework. Additionally, I identified how the taste framework guides the day-to-day work of making coffee where the palate serves as a tool for translating coffee flavor to mechanical adjustments. I now turn to introduce a kind of body labor that I refer to as “sense work,” where baristas work on the bodies of customers by guiding their sensory experiences to align with the bar's framework. Just as baristas are trained to embody the bar's style of tasting, it is also a component of the everyday labor of baristas to teach customers how to enter the cultural field (Ferguson 1998) of coffee connoisseurs, resulting in return customers and revenue for the business. Sense work is not simply telling customers what they should or should not taste, or what they should or should not

like. Just as Noah stated that you could not teach someone how to make coffee off of written instructions, but that you first needed to “get your palate right,” baristas work on modifying the palates of their customers. Because customers are not monetarily paid for their time, however, they are under no obligation to learn an organization’s taste framework, as a barista would be. Therefore, how do baristas instill the bar’s framework? Mike identifies this difficulty, but explains how specialty coffee organizations create interactions oriented around building “trust” with customers, as if they were outside of a sales environment, as a way to gain entrée into fixing their sensory experience to align with the bar:

You can try and give one on one education to a customer as they come in. You can kind of convince them; give them some knowledge about what you’re bringing to the table...But, they’re looking at you at that point over the counter as someone with a real intention to sell something...I’m trying to sell you coffee or beans and you’re looking to buy coffee or beans. So, that weird business side of it. If I can convince you that our stuff’s good then you’ll buy it. I think it’s really important to build an understanding within your target market or your client base of what you’re bringing to the table as far as flavor and tasting. Have them start to operate in the same framework. I think that’s extremely important. But, I think it’s not as simple as just presenting the information to someone one-on-one...It’s important not to be aggressive educationally. Once you can build that confidence with a customer that you’ve presented them a product they enjoyed, they feel like maybe you know them, or know what they like, or you’re friends, but that feeling whether it’s true or not, I think is really important to you to build the trust to impart knowledge...Because there are those people you run into that have had a bad experience with a friend or with a co-worker or with anyone that they think ‘okay, if you’re one of these people that is going to try and tell me what I should taste and what I shouldn’t taste, and tell me how to enjoy my coffee,’ you know, they instantly tune out. I think first you have to build trust and then you can do all the education you want.

In order to teach a taste framework to customers, specialty coffee baristas perform a kind of emotional labor (Hochschild 1983) geared towards creating a “genuine” interaction,

one where the sales component is overshadowed by a sense of trust between the organization and customer. If the organization can demonstrate to the customer that their primary interest is not making a sale, but instead to impart free knowledge, then the situation is primed for sense work and for teaching the customer to “start to work in the same framework.” Mike, as well as a number of other baristas I spoke with, identified that specialty coffee baristas face difficulty with some customers who expect them to be snooty or an embodiment of the Portland hipster stereotype, as made famous in the TV show *Portlandia*, of a know-it-all who balks at others without their knowledge or appreciation for the minutiae of taste or product sourcing. In order to avoid or mitigate potential concerns of customers that baristas might just be trying to tell them how to taste, baristas do not over-explain how to taste to customers. Instead, baristas try to seek common ground to create opportunities to educate customers and to either introduce them to a new way of tasting, or to fix their palate over a period of time with frequent customers. Charlie identifies that some customers might be uncomfortable if they do not know how to “talk about palate,” but he instead tries to demonstrate that this is a skill that we are all capable of:

[Baristas] should be able to talk palate, that’s what we’re supposed to be good at. Therefore, we should be able to talk about palate with people and that is a way that we can connect with them. We can all taste things and they [customers] can talk about what they think something tastes like or can ask us and we should be able to explain it based on our palates.

Charlie believes, just as new baristas are initially trained, that customers can taste and should be able to talk about palate to some capacity. If not, the barista should be able to provide them with this information. By identifying the capacity to taste as a common ground, Charlie is trying to emphasize an opening for the barista to begin a discussion

about palate. New baristas are first introduced to tasting and talking about coffee as a normalized everyday practice. Baristas also seek to begin transforming the palates of customers in a similar manner. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate how employees decide which customers they decide to bring into the framework and when they decide it might not be worth their effort. After identifying a common ground and preparing an environment that feels “genuine,” like friends chatting, or a non-sales environment, I found that baristas use multiple strategies to perform sense work in their day-to-day labor.

The Gateway Drug and the Long Play

The first method that baristas use for performing sense work is the “gateway drug.” By this, I refer to the initial introduction to the framework by creating situations where customers ask questions or by directing customers to new drinks to expand their coffee experiences. I refer to this as the gateway drug because the barista’s goal is to initiate an interest in the customer to alter their palate or to seek more information based on one exceptional experience. Leanne, a white, 34 year old, bar manager and barista explains that the menus in specialty coffee bars are often written to induce questions about the coffee and the different coffee drinks. Differing from coffee shops that offer large menus with customizable drink options, specialty coffee bars offer slimmed down menus, often with fewer than ten drink options offering no description of their contents.

I’m very into small menus. I want people to ask me questions, you know, and make it hard for people. At [my coffee bar] it’s a very streamlined, small menu. It has espresso and alternate espresso and everyone goes, ‘what’s alternate espresso?’ And then ‘I will tell you what it is.’ So, that’s like the start, right there, making people ask questions about it.

Specialty coffee bars make small menus that feature coffee, as opposed to syrups. As mentioned last chapter, they focus on the “purity” of coffee. It may sound counter to the doctrine of more McDonaldized (Ritzer 2004) service settings, but specialty coffee shops may purposefully make ordering difficult for customers who are not already socialized into the world of third wave coffee. Leanne demonstrates that small menus are purposeful because they force customers to ask questions, which gives baristas opportunities to educate. For example, she says that, like many coffee bars, there are two different espresso options, “espresso” and “alternate espresso.” By provoking a question about the espresso from a customer, the barista now has an opportunity to provide education about the coffee options, including how they each taste and how they might vary depending on whether they ordered a drink with milk, or a drink without. The limited menu lets baristas provide information without being forceful, as Mike had previously identified was something to avoid. The situation becomes one of education, attempting to mask the sales environment. By provoking questions about the coffee, baristas have an opportunity to introduce the taste framework of the organization and to provide taste notes to customers.

Outside of menus, baristas have additional ways of providing information to customers and imparting the taste framework. Zach demonstrates how he creates these kinds of experiences:

I think one of the ideas here is that it’s approachable for everyone, and then you can get everyone in the door and then use that to draw people to the coffee. I think one of the ideas behind having house made sauces is that someone will come in and order something they get at Starbucks, you know, and [I’ll] be like ‘hey, you should order this cappuccino. It’s gonna be delicious; it has this coffee in it, you should really taste it.’ And like, kind of force them into that. It’s kind of a gateway drug, basically.

Starbucks is the largest coffee chain in the world. It is widely recognizable and baristas often have customers order drinks that are specific to the Starbucks menu. To specialty coffee baristas, this serves as an indicator that a customer might prefer drinks with additives, as many of Starbucks' drinks have added syrups or sugars. Zach tries to steer, or "force them into" ordering drinks that stray from the Starbucks menu and showcase the coffees that his bar serves, drinks that have no additives and are more coffee centric.

When customers order a drink from Starbucks' menu, baristas see this as another opportunity where they can introduce a new beverage and describe the coffee that will be used. This approach introduces the customer to a new kind of experience where the barista gets the opportunity to explain the components of the drink and how it will be different from what the customer might be used to. Introducing a new drink to a customer allows the barista to showcase their knowledge and to guide the customer on their taste experience. If the customer enjoys the experience, they may return to order the drink again, which would provide further opportunity to the barista to initiate the customer into the framework. As mentioned in the first chapter, purity of coffee, or tasting coffee without any additives such as caramel or vanilla, is one of the characteristics of the specialty coffee industry. However, as Zach noted, his bar uses "house made" syrups as a way of trying to make their different style of coffee more approachable. While customers who are used to coffee shops like Starbucks might be used to having additives to their coffee, specialty coffee baristas often try to steer customers away from using additives as a way to lay a path for trying new, coffee focused, beverages. Zach's comment that this approach is like a "gateway drug," means

that he tries to initiate an interest in his bar's style of coffee in the hope that the customer returns. The "gateway drug" approach assumes that by introducing customers, by providing a taste of what specialty coffee is, then customers will want to return for more, just like many of the specialty coffee baristas experienced and described in their own taste biographies.

Tim provides more detail on how he handles customers who enter Craft and might not be familiar with specialty coffee. He begins by trying to start a dialogue with customers about the kinds of drinks they usually order and then offers suggestions for related drinks, or to alter the way they may usually consume their drink of choice. By doing so, he is leading them further into Craft's taste framework.

I talk to people about flavor and I'll ask people what they like in coffee and try to point them in the right direction of what I think would fit what they're looking for. If they want something with milk; if they don't want something with milk. If they want more or less acidity, or punch, or whatever words they like to use. Try to meet them and find that out. Some people I'll suggest an Americano, and some people I'll suggest 'okay, try not adding cream and look for sweetness to come out in like a minute.' And they'll go 'oh, wow! That really changed!' You know, with the house coffee, 'wow, that is really good,' but they needed someone to say 'just look for this. See what you think about it.'

Similar to the other two gateway drug strategies, Tim initiates a conversation with customers about the sorts of coffee drinks that they usually order. He asks specific questions about if they prefer milk, or if they like sweetness in their coffee. In a sense, he is providing an experience that seems tailored to each customer, but is done with a singular goal in mind, to direct the customer towards Craft's way of tasting. Tim encourages customers to try drinks without additives and then provides instruction on how to taste the beverage "properly." In this example, he says to wait "like a minute" so

that they can identify sweetness in the coffee. Tim assumes that the customer cannot be left on their own to drink the coffee, as they will not have the tools to recognize when the coffee is at its “best.” By telling the customer what to look for and when in tasting the drink, Tim is providing palate training, or sense work, in altering the focus of a customer’s sensory experience.

These everyday practices of gateway drug strategies sometimes lead to payoffs with customers altering their orders on subsequent visits, or asking further questions about what the baristas think their coffees taste like. After about one month of working at Craft, I had interacted with a customer a couple of times, Gary, a white, roughly mid-forties man who recently started working for a nearby IT business. The first few times he came in he ordered a 16 oz. latte. One time he came in and after exchanging greetings he ordered a drip coffee, to-go. He paid and set the coffee down on the counter and used the restroom. When he came out he grabbed the coffee and brought it up to his mouth, but just before drinking it, Gary hesitated and said “I guess I should ask you what I should taste before drinking this.” I laughed lightly and told him that he should take a drink and then let me know what he thought. He took a drink and looked off as he thought about it. “I think it is sort of floral. I like it.” I nodded my head for a moment as he paused and then asked me “am I right?” I told him that I too really liked that coffee and I thought it tasted a bit “like chocolate covered cherries,” which was a tasting note that we had come up with during a cupping of the coffee. From then on, every time Gary would come in he would ask us what we thought of the coffee, or what it tasted like?

I heard similar stories from multiple baristas of customer transitions. Each one mimicked a pattern similar to the version Scott reported, “*I’ve had countless examples*

where I've had people say 'I used to drink mochas. And one barista was like, 'you should try a cappuccino. It's so awesome.'” Charlie, for example, often told a story about an older retired woman who he had served for several months at another coffee bar who used to always order 16 oz. mochas, extra hot. He was signifying that the order did not focus on coffee, and might be derided for its size (a lot of milk to a little coffee), the use of an additive, and the fact that it was “extra hot,” meaning that the milk was steamed to a point that specialty coffee baristas would consider burnt, or not ideal. Charlie explained that over time, after making this customer a small latte and describing what he thought the coffee tasted like and how this drink showcased the coffee more, she changed her order and came in multiple times a week to order a cappuccino, even sometimes ordering straight espresso. This sort of a story was told like a story of great triumph, like hooking the elusive fish. Beginning with a gateway drug experience, baristas seek to hook customers into specialty coffee where they continue to return, providing a point of pride for the barista in sharing something they love, and in providing return business for the organization.

Once customers regularly come in and baristas become familiar with them, the barista might initiate the “long play” on training the customer to align their sensory expectations with the bar. They know that the customer comes in either regularly, or semi-regularly enough that the baristas recognize them and maybe even what they order. The long play involves holding more in-depth conversations on flavor over multiple visits, and can also even involve discussions on how different mechanics of making coffee might influence coffee’s flavor. In this way, I was surprised to find that the palate

training methods of the organization in fixing the sensory experiences of new baristas are similar to those of training customers. This became more evidenced through the descriptions of the long play, where customers are not making the coffee, but where training customers to taste the mechanics of making coffee is still a component of the sense work that baristas perform.

One tactic of the long play is to introduce new drinks to customers that might be first offered for free. As Peter, a 28 year old, white, male barista and national barista competitor described, he likes to identify customers who frequently come in and order the exact same drink. Reflecting on one particular customer, he tells a story about how the customer would come in every morning and order a coffee to-go. He said he did not have much of an opportunity to talk to the customer as they were usually in a hurry, but still wanted to engage with them. One day the customer came in and Peter made him coffee using a different method than the customer usually ordered, a pour over style coffee instead of a drip coffee. “I told him [the customer], this one’s on me. I used a different method that I’ve been working on. Come back next time and let me know what you think of it.” Peter explained that he purposefully gives a free coffee to customers who frequently come in, but explains to them what is different about the way he produced the coffee. He wants the customer to compare the free coffee with the coffee that they usually order and then come back and have a conversation about it. When the customer returned, Peter reported that they thought it was different than their usual coffee, but then asked for more information about what he did differently. Peter knew that this customer already came in frequently, but now wanted to further educate the customer on thinking about flavor, encouraging them to make comparisons across different coffees, just like

baristas are trained to do when cupping coffee, or when trying coffee during each shift. By teaching the customer how to recognize differences in taste based on brew method, Peter is training the sensory experience of the customer by providing them with more tools for evaluation, tools that are useful for specialty coffee where these different methods are utilized.

In one final example of sense work, Noah greeted two women, roughly in their mid-twenties who had come into Craft and said that they were interested in trying Craft's coffees to possibly purchase a small order of whole beans each week for their church. Noah told them that he would put together a tasting for them to give an idea of the kind of coffees that Craft serves. He had them sit at the bar counter while instructing me to weigh out coffee beans for the four different kinds of coffees we currently had available, one blend and three single origin coffees. As he made the coffees in front of the customers, he prepped them on tasting notes, giving them an idea of how each coffee would be different. He was providing them with initial tools for sensory evaluation, or what sorts of flavors to search for within the coffees when they drink them. When he presented each of the customers with a cup of a new Guatemalan coffee that we were serving he said "we think this is really approachable" and tastes "almost buttery, like a milky way," and had a bit of fruitiness which "we think is cantaloupe-like." Noah, as well as other colleagues, frequently used the pronoun "we," further emphasizing the collective palate under a common framework. After sipping the coffees, one of the customers turned to the other and said, "I do taste butter. Do you get that?" After a couple of coffees and descriptions from Noah about what to expect, Noah grabbed the dishes and went to the sink. While I was still standing near the register waiting to greet

any new customers that might enter, I heard the two customers talking. One of them said to the other, “I didn’t think I’d be able to taste any difference before we started. I was worried, but I definitely do!” After taking another sip, the other customer responded, “This one tastes more-. I don’t know the word for it...*specialty*, than the last one?”

CONCLUSION

The labor of specialty coffee baristas offers a new way of thinking about our relationship with our own sensory experiences, as well as the role of the senses in the production and consumption of workers’ and customers’ bodies. Baristas obtain jobs for coffee bars where their own palates are made available for the use of the organization. Through palate training, the barista’s palate aligns with their colleagues under the bar’s taste framework. They consume the framework to produce consistency in product (both material and immaterial) and the bar’s identity. Taste frameworks not only organize the interactive and manual components of barista work, but they are also implicated in the creation of boundaries that produce inequalities (this will be the focus of chapter 4). The taste framework prioritizes a particular way of tasting, but also the rules, behaviors, and language that accompany it. In this way, taste frameworks are a new kind of “bodily labor” (Lan 2003; Otis 2011) where workers embody the framework of the coffee bar. The bodies of laborers convey images of distinction that appear as natural bodily dispositions, but are inherently social.

Previous scholars have identified how emotions (Hochschild 1983) come under control of management for the purpose of influencing customer feelings, how cultural capital and aesthetic style is used to represent an aesthetic scheme of an organization

(Warhurst et al. 2000), how work is done on customer's bodies (Kang 2003), or how workers' bodily expression and comportment are implicated in emotional and aesthetic display through body labor (Lan 2003; Otis 2011). I identify another kind of body labor, where baristas perform "sense work" by fixing the sensory experiences of their customers to align with the organization's taste framework. In doing so, I additionally attempt to bring the body back into the discussion of language and the senses in labor. I build on Fine's (1995; 1996) use of language and metaphor to understand how chefs communicate "aesthetic" experiences. I expand the focus to not only looking at the use of language, but how language and the body interact to create shared, calibrated, or collective sensory experiences that can appear natural, but are deeply social.

CHAPTER IV

MINIMUM WAGE CONNOISSEURSHIP

Thinking in terms of cultural fields modifies our understanding of cultural enterprises. Against the functional divisions that tend to be drawn for such activity, a field constructs a social universe in which all participants are at once producers and consumers caught in a complex web of social, political, economic, and cultural relations that they themselves have in part woven and continue to weave. (Ferguson 1998:598)

When I began working as a barista there were elements of the job I anticipated. I knew I would be drinking a lot of coffee. I knew I would be challenged in learning the espresso machine, brewing espresso, steaming milk, and making latte art, as well as keeping a fast enough pace to keep up during rush periods. I have spent the majority of my life working in the service industry, beginning at a bar owned by a family friend when I was 14. This was my first time, however, working in any kind of a coffee business. What I did not foresee was how I would be treated by many of the customers. Already in my first week I had an experience with a customer I had never had in nearly twenty years of service work experience. A roughly late 30s, early 40s, white woman entered Craft. I smiled and said “Hello, welcome. What can I get started for you?” She returned my smile, gave a slight wave, said “Hi,” and then hesitated a second as she looked at the menu printed on thin cardboard paper attached to a small clipboard next to the cash register. She asked, “What do you recommend?” and then offered, “I’m not really a connoisseur,” ending with a rising intonation as if asking a question. This was the first of many instances where customers self-identified as “not a connoisseur,” or a similar marking of their identity as novice. In another similar instance, a white family of four came in one morning, a mother and father along with their two children, a man and a

woman each roughly in their early twenties. They were visiting town for a college graduation and stopped in to get coffee to take to the ceremony. Glancing over the menu the father looked up and told me he was going to wait to see what his son ordered, because “he works in a coffee shop.” A few moments later, the mother asked her son, “What do you think?” As he considered the menu she turned to me and confessed, “I’m not really a connoisseur. But he (her son) works in a coffee shop,” tipping her head in her son’s direction.

Although these interactions unfolded differently, they performed a similar function. Each directly implied that I, the barista, was a connoisseur. They automatically oriented to me, the sociologist turned barista, as if I had expert knowledge of coffee. This experience was utterly new to me. When I worked at a Chicago style hotdog restaurant, no one had ever expected me to be a hotdog connoisseur, nor did anyone announce they or anyone else they knew, worked at a hotdog joint. However, within my first week working at Craft, I was elevated to a position of coffee authority, one that either produced distance with customers, or was used as a point of alignment when customers considered themselves to also be members of some community of connoisseurs. I would soon find that the boundary work (Lamont and Fournier 1992) did not end at these types of interactions, but would permeate the industry.

I argue that “minimum wage connoisseurship,” referring to workers who toil for minimum wage (in this case, in addition to tips), but receive additional payment in cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977) that elevates their status as well as manufacture’s consent (Burawoy 1979) for dedicating their time, in and outside of work, and their bodies to the organization.

Creating boundaries related to labor, food, and the senses has a long history, but the current incarnation provides a new context, one that is situated in what David Harvey (1990) refers to as a period of “Post-Fordism,” or a consumption oriented economy. With the advent of industrialization, in both England and the U.S., dramatically expanded production capacities allowed consumers to access mass produced goods. Prior to industrialization, elite classes easily distinguished themselves from the commoners through visual cues, largely based on clothing and accessories. However, with wider access to clothing across class lines due to advancements in production, “the truth of another person’s social standing was no longer obvious at first glance;” in fact, “elites complained bitterly that laborers dressed like gentlemen” (Smith 2007:82-3). Elites had to look for other ways to distinguish their social standing from others. In response, taste, as in the sensory experience, and cuisine rose as new indicators that elites relied on to deny the leveling of class and to fix the boundaries of class distinction. Because the sense of taste is largely subjective, it allowed upper classes to mark their sensory experiences as elite, making it inaccessible for others to emulate (Smith 2007). The display of distinguished taste necessitated new cultural forms that could translate the individualized, ephemeral quality of food consumption into a public display. This was largely achieved through the creation of the “gastronomic field,” and the culinary arts, moving from individual or private experience into the public sphere via restaurants, cook books, and food reviews or publications (Ferguson 1998). The rise of the restaurant provided a “semi-public venue” where diners could display their status as restaurant customers, differentiated from non-diners who were marked as non-elite (Ferguson 1998:606). This period was characterized by the display of class distinctions based on

accumulation and ostentatious higher sensibilities, or a kind of “conspicuous consumption” (Veblen 1899). The boundaries here were partly economic via access and accumulation, but also partly sensory, involving the public consumption of foods accessible along classed divisions.

As elites, they created the very distinctions they benefitted from, thus producing their own legitimacy. However, exclusive access to restaurants or gastronomic texts would not be exclusive indefinitely. What industrialization had accomplished with visual class cues, the development of a stronger middle-class with more expendable income in the U.S. achieved in a later era: distinctions between diners and non-diners no longer reliably codified elite and non-elite status. The response was more fine-tuned methods of locating class standing. Bourdieu (1977) argues that “conspicuous consumption” does not accurately depict the organization of class boundaries, and misses what he terms “habitus,” or classed, embodied dispositions, mannerisms, attitudes, and behaviors. Habitus is less understood as “habit,” as in a mechanical, stimulus-response reflex, than it is as “competence and know-how,” qualities that are clearly social but ingrained in the body *as if* natural (Crossley 2013:139). Baristas’ embodiment of taste frameworks, I argue is a form of cultural capital, or an element of habitus. Transitioning from a period of accumulation and outward display of one’s class standing, Bourdieu’s conceptualization introduces an ingrained disposition to class status that is simultaneously structured by existing boundaries, while reproducing boundaries in the moment-to-moment behaviors of interactants.

Bourdieu’s conceptualization of class is useful in understanding the impact of the structural transformation in production and consumption during the transition from

Fordism to Post-Fordism in the U.S. With the decline of mass-produced coffee like Folgers and Maxwell House cities witnessed the rise of specialty coffee shops beginning with Peet's in 1966 and Starbucks in 1971. Post-Fordism, beginning in the 1970s, is characterized by an increase in product innovation, pace of production, and highly specialized and small, niche markets, specialty coffee serving as just one example. This style of production resulted in a corresponding shift in consumption practices, now focused on "quick-changing fashions and the mobilization of all artifices of need inducement and cultural transformation that this implies" (Harvey 1990:156). Moving from a Fordist period of production and consumption, with mass production and fewer, slower changing products, flexible accumulation characterizes a period of post-modernity that "celebrates difference, ephemerality, spectacle, fashion, and the commodification of cultural forms" (Harvey 1990:156). The commodification of taste frameworks, varying across coffee bars, represents hyper-distinctions within one industry. Taste frameworks, or the ways of tasting dictated by an industry or firm, along with the associated behaviors, rituals, language, and related distinction/boundary work, are available for purchase at different coffee shops. The rise of industrialization produced the rise of the "gastronomic field" where class distinction is found in one's knowledge of and display of participation in the culinary arts, not to mention ability to engage in them through both leisure and money. The decline of Fordism and the rise of Post-Fordism produced a period of distinction fitted to the new market, one of small-scale, fast changing fashions where consumers are "cultural omnivores" who locate their class position in their ability to stay up-to-date on a variety of niche cultural fronts (Peterson and Kern 1996). Social distinctions in post-Fordism emphasize individualism over commercialism, or the ability

to navigate small markets instead of large, mass-market firms, producing the feeling of individuality. The transition from Fordism to Post-Fordism in relation to foodservice is captured in Mennell's (1991:142) description of the change of quantity to quality in food-based distinction practices; "when the possibilities of quantitative consumption for the expression of social superiority had been exhausted, the qualitative possibilities were inexhaustible." The inexhaustible qualitative possibilities of small-niche markets, as opposed to giant commercial enterprises, produces fast changing tastes and increases outlets for anchoring identities. I argue that the rise of the third wave coffee industry is emblematic of the shift from a Fordist to a Post-Fordist economy. It relies on a qualitative shift in the coffee industry, one that produces a new, and niche market and consumer base that commoditizes sensory experiences as embodied class dispositions. The introduction of specialty coffee into the market represents a fracturing of the existing coffee market, resulting in further fine-tuned distinction opportunities for producers and consumers. However, within the specialty coffee market there are further opportunities for minute distinctions between coffee bar's based on their own individual styles, as represented by "taste frameworks" that are introduced to consumers through "sense work." Third wave bars and baristas serve as arbiters of taste. Under the legitimizing umbrella of the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA), they represent and act as cultural authorities on coffee tasting, establishing self-fulfilling standards of taste. Just as the elite of old legitimized their own claim to culinary arts, restricting access to laborers, the third wave coffee industry sets the rules that they ultimately fulfill, separating themselves from other coffee laborers and consumers. The third wave coffee industry relies on a restructuring of the palate of customers as central to its own

existence. In this way, building from Otis (2011), I argue that the third wave coffee industry not only regulates baristas' interactive/bodily labor through taste frameworks, but also institutionalize a "consumer market" via sense work.

The specialty coffee industry produces and reproduces identities of coffee connoisseurship through boundary work (Lamont and Fournier 1992; Wimmer 2008). By analyzing the rise of the "third wave" of coffee in its embryonic state, I identify the creation of a new niche market, characteristic of flexible production and accumulation (Harvey 1990). I explain how a new market segment, third wave coffee bars, distinguish themselves from other coffee businesses through the creation of "waves," self-identifying their ascendance as the elite form of coffee production and in turn, signaling status among their consumers. Next, I discuss how "everyday distinctions" take place in the coffee bar, producing and reproducing boundaries of connoisseurship. I argue that the boundary creation of different "waves" of coffee, as well as the distinctions produced everyday within the bar, contribute to the reproduction and legitimizing of the specialty coffee industry, the identity of connoisseurship, and institutionalizes the third wave coffee "consumer market" (Otis 2011).

After outlining the boundary work of baristas and customers, I analyze the hiring process of baristas in specialty coffee. I identify that hiring decisions revolve partly around the judgments of an applicant's ability to learn the bar's taste framework; in other words, they are judged on their anticipated sensory abilities. Counter-intuitively, I demonstrate that baristas with more experience working in specialty coffee may face difficulty getting hired at a new coffee bar compared to a non-experienced barista who fits with the style or aesthetic of the bar. I note how components of "aesthetic labor"

(Warhurst et al. 2000; Williams and Connell 2005) are present in this work, but also address Wolkowitz' (2006) critique of prior aesthetic labor literature and demonstrate how class-based aesthetic dispositions are cultivated post-employment through the training and embodiment of a taste framework. Through examining the hiring process, I further identify an orientation to the palate as the central organizing feature of specialty coffee barista work. Finally, I argue that specialty coffee baristas perform a kind of labor that I refer to as “minimum wage connoisseurship,” where baristas receive minimum wage (plus tips) as well as cultural capital in place of higher wages. This capital pays off in multiple ways, via including membership in a broader community of taste (Ferguson 1998).

COFFEE WAVES

As outlined in the introduction, the coffee industry has been described as having three distinct stages of development, or “waves.” Trish Rothgeb (formerly Skeie) coined the concept of coffee “waves” (Skeie 2002). Rothgeb is recognized as an influential voice in the specialty coffee community. She is a coffee bar owner and head roaster, with over thirty years of experience in the coffee industry. She is also an active member of the SCAA, serving on the Executive Council, and as a founding member of the Barista Guild, a subsection of the SCAA (Wrecking Ball 2018). Rothgeb introduced the concept of coffee waves in a 2002 edition of *The Flamekeeper*, a publication of the Roasters Guild of America (a subsection of the Specialty Coffee Association). She characterizes the first wave by the introduction of mass-market, pre-ground coffee sold in tin cans or pre-portioned plastic packs with brands like Folger's or Maxwell House. The second

wave refers to a shift in focus for coffee companies to serving coffee with specific origins, such as Kenyan or Nicaraguan coffees. Second wave shops also refer to the introduction of roasting coffee in-house. Skeie (2002) introduces Starbucks as “an example of a hyper-Second Wave company” that introduced coffee drinks such as the latte or cappuccino to U.S. consumers. Starbucks opened in 1971, right during the decline of Fordism and the rise of a flexible, Post-Fordism economy, also marking the start of the second wave. Starbucks and other second wave shops are responsible for introducing the coffee shop as a daily destination, or a “third place” (Oldenburg 1989) outside of home and work where, ideally, people can gather to unwind and develop a sense of community.

The third wave of coffee is a reaction to the first and the second, and it started first in Norway and then in the U.S. in the 1990s. As Rothgeb (Skeie 2002) describes third wave coffee:

For every outlet that opens with a semi-automatic espresso system there is a Third Waver, working overtime, staining her hands brown with coffee as she handcrafts the perfect shot. The Third Wave is a reaction to those who want to automate and homogenize Specialty Coffee.

The third wave distinguishes itself from the previous waves by highlighting manual production methods opposed to using “semi-automatic” machines to produce coffee. This distinction is reflective of a Post-Fordist economy as it denigrates commercial forms of mass production and prioritizes small-batch, artisan-oriented craftwork. Additionally, Tim described second wave coffee shops to me as “old school,” and their work as “button pushers,” highlighting the reliance on automatic machines to make coffee instead of the manual, handcrafted methods of third wavers. Third wave baristas self-characterize as

performing craftwork, as indicated in Rothgeb's comment about staining hands with coffee, crafting the perfect shot of espresso. The staining of hands in this description brings to mind the gritty work typically attributed to blue-collar, manual laborers, such as that of car mechanics with grease stained hands. This is an association that is integral to the construction of the specialty coffee barista's identity, a point I further articulate below.

Each barista I spoke with knew the concepts of "waves" of coffee, with some stating that they use the terminology, while others stated that they prefer "specialty coffee." Regardless of the terminology (I use specialty coffee and third wave interchangeably), I found that specialty coffee baristas actively differentiate their work from coffee shops, or second wave coffee, in the exact ways that Rothgeb outlined in her introduction of the concept, indicating that no matter the terminology, the self-distinguishing characteristics still predominate in producing the specialty coffee connoisseur. Similar to Becker's (1963) description of "real" jazz musicians and "commercial" musicians, third wave baristas establish symbolic boundaries by marking the work of "real" baristas as manual, and craft focused, while other baristas simply press buttons and lack the "true" characteristics of baristas. Scott, for example, described second wave coffee shops, specifically referring to Starbucks, and how the third wave compares:

I think Starbucks started specialty coffee, but I don't think they are a specialty coffee shop now. I think third wave...tends to talk about this new idea of craft. To me Starbucks isn't craft. The craft of being a barista. Making really good drinks. An obvious difference between places like Starbucks-. We do things manually. We make drinks to order, not like Starbucks, they don't treat each drink the way we do. They don't dial-in the espresso. They don't have the palate to taste coffee. Like, they

haven't developed palates and tasting coffee and making adjustments based on those [palates].

Scott's comparison of second and third wave coffee and their baristas follows Rothgeb's original conceptualization and also mimics the exact description I heard repeatedly from other specialty coffee baristas. Third wave baristas identify differences between the coffees served, but also those who produce and consume different kinds of coffee. The emphasis on the boundary of production method indicates a prioritization of manual labor over automation. The focus on the craft components of the labor, using one's body as a tool for production instead of a machine, draws a symbolic link to traditionally blue-collar, manual labor. While industrial labor has faced steep declines with the fall of Fordism, in part due to the introduction of new technologies, there is a kind of nostalgia expressed here for a "back to the roots," glorification of craft labor in the distinction that third wave baristas make between their work and those who make coffee with automatic machines. Intermingling with the manual versus automatic distinction, however, is also a focus on palate sensibilities, a characteristic that has historically been aligned with elite status distinction than with blue-collar labor or working class status. In the context of industrial decline and the rise of flexible production, the specialty coffee industry has appropriated manual, craft labor as a point of distinction, while relegating automation to the work of baristas without the manual skills, in this case the palate. As seen in last chapter, the palate is central to training third wave baristas, as well as their customers. The third wave distinguishes itself as having skills of the body, ingrained dispositions that are missing from second wavers. The palate not only serves as centerpiece in organizing the labor of third wave baristas, but is also central to their self-identification

and boundary creation. It is used as a way of denigrating second wave baristas and, in turn, their customers.

Specialty coffee baristas make an additional distinction between the second and third wave, involving the kinds of products that are served and consumed. As Charlie stated:

Starbucks made the culture of the drink. It's definitely a culture of making the drink versus the coffee...A Frappuccino versus this is a Guatemalan espresso that we are using. It's kind of this drink versus the coffee...I think we do it better. I like the fact that we don't put so much sugar. We try to bring it back to the basics and I think that's nicer.

Charlie's statement relegates second wave baristas to "drink makers," who do not make "real" coffee. Ben, a 28-year old white barista at Craft, elaborates further on this distinction when he said that "baristas aren't into coffee for the chocolate...you could put a cup of coffee in front of a (second wave) person and they may not recognize it." Ben was clearly being sarcastic when claiming that baristas and customers in the second wave may not even recognize coffee, but his point was the same as Charlie's, you cannot be a "real" barista if you do not manually produce drinks that are centered on coffee. The boundaries created by third wave baristas to distinguish and elevate their own status mimic the social distinctions made during industrialization, where the elite classes also defined and legitimized their own behaviors. In this case, third wave baristas are defining their work as "real" barista work and all others are imposters.

A Post-Fordist, consumption based economy relies on fast changing, niche markets. The third wave coffee industry is an example of just one industry that relies on a fracturing of a market into niche-segments where producers and consumers alike can

anchor part of their identity. Third wave baristas' use of taste frameworks and sense work focuses on reproducing boundaries. The self-benefitting creation of "waves" of coffee are a form of "othering" (Schwalbe et al. 2000), or "collective identity work," whereby one group seeks an advantageous position "by defining another group as...inferior" (Schwalbe et al. 2000:422-23). Additionally, Schwalbe et al. (2000:423) indicate othering involves "patterns of interaction that reaffirm a dominant groups ideology of difference." This is precisely what occurs on a day-to-day basis, as I now turn, in the everyday forms of reproduction, or maintenance work of coffee connoisseurs on the shop floor.

EVERYDAY BOUNDARY MAINTENANCE

While specialty coffee baristas self-identify as craftspeople, focused on manual production methods guided by experienced palates, I found that these distinctions were reproduced on the shop floor through interactions with co-workers and customers. The "boundary work" (Lamont 1992; Wimmer 2008) I identified in the day-to-day labor of third wave baristas adhered to the main distinctions between the second and third wave, but there were also additional social distinctions based on a customer's perceived cultural capital. I also observed customers who orient towards coffee wave boundaries when interacting with baristas, as a way of marking one's self in alignment with the barista, and as a sign of a coalescing "consumer market" (Otis 2011). These strategies represent the daily maintenance of the boundaries of coffee connoisseurship and the third wave coffee industry. The policing of boundaries of what and who represents the third wave reaffirms the specialty coffee barista's identity as connoisseur. Additionally, it is legitimized as a

collective activity in alignment with colleagues and with like-minded customers. Importantly, these boundaries are oriented towards the perceived capacity of other individuals' capacities to taste coffee according to the taste framework of the third wave coffee bar.

In the last chapter, I introduced the concept of “sense work,” where baristas work on the palates of customers to align with the organization's taste framework. Baristas do this by trying to create opportunities to teach customers about how to taste coffee according to the bar's standards, either by sparking their curiosity in a single visit, or converting customers over a period of visits. However, I discovered not all customers are treated equally in this regard, preserving some of the exclusivity and elevating the status of connoisseurship. As Tim stated, “honestly, I judge every single person who comes in here.” Tim was not the only one. On multiple occasions, customers entered the bar and baristas would make subtle comments to one another about whether a customer would like, or be capable of tasting properly, the coffee that Craft served. Additionally, I frequently observed comments made about customer orders, especially if they were not drinks that highlighted coffee, or were ordered using Starbucks' language (tall, grande, or venti for coffee sizes, and “skinny” for skim milk, for example). While some of these situations reproduced boundaries marking specialty coffee baristas as legitimately occupying a position of authority, in some cases these judgments actually impacted the quality of product customers received.

During my espresso machine training I was told to make judgments about customers to decide which of the espressos to serve them, the blend or the single-origin espresso. Both espressos adhere to Craft's style, but the blend was made with coffees

that were less limited in supply and cheaper than the single-origin. The blend was viewed at Craft as lower quality than the purity of the single-origin. The blend was also presented to me as not being as “complex” as the single-origins, which required a “finer” palate to appreciate. For example, I was instructed to make drinks that had a lot of milk (large lattes, for example) or had any additives, like chocolate or caramel, with the blend, while making smaller drinks, like a cappuccino, Americano, or straight espresso, with the single origin coffee. These were the base standards for which espresso to use for which drinks. However, I was also instructed to use my own judgment about “how much they (customers) will like our coffee,” and to use the blend for smaller drinks during times when I judged the customer to not have the appropriate palate-potential. Even though the aim was to serve customers what we thought they would prefer, I learned that these decisions were based on the appearance of customers, primarily if they looked like they preferred second wave style coffee. Along with appearance, I learned that part of this calculation involved monitoring how customers ordered. If they used language that represented the taste framework associated with second wave coffee, largely Starbucks’ language, then I should not serve them single origin espresso as it was assumed they would not have the “appropriate” palate.

One of these instances occurred one morning with Noah when two customers entered, both white females who appeared to be mother and daughter. They were wearing matching camouflage sweatshirts with a bright pink ‘Cabela’s’ logo across the chest, a chain hunting, fishing, boating, and camping equipment retailer. I was working the register and Noah was at the espresso machine. When the customers entered I was in the back of the store packaging coffee into Craft labeled coffee bags. On my way to the

register to greet and take their order, Noah turned his back to the customers and whispered to me, “they’re not going to like our coffee.” As far as I could tell, these customers had never been in Craft before; they did not know where the menu was and they told me they were passing through town on their way to Washington. Noah’s insistence that they would not like the coffee at Craft was based purely on appearance, as if appearance alone could indicate one’s sensory preferences. In this instance, the customers’ clothing symbolized to Noah a lack of relevant cultural capital. The camouflage and the retail chain brand of Cabela’s, associated with activities of hunting and fishing, marked these customers as outside the bounds of a third wave coffee drinker. It attributes one’s bodily capacity as a function of their class position and assumed cultural capital. This interaction represents a form of “othering” whereby the appearance of the customers fell outside of the bounds of third wave aesthetics. The customers’ appearance did not adhere to the “identity codes, or the “symbolic tool,” including language, actions, and dress that “elicit the imputation of possessing” the identity of coffee connoisseurship (Schwalbe et al. 2000:424).

Customers’ sensory preferences were also attributed to the way they ordered. I was working with Ben when three women entered and all ordered drinks using the word “tall” to denote the size, which is common Starbucks’ parlance. They each ordered “tall” lattes, one “skinny” with honey, one with caramel, and one made with Craft’s alternative nutmilk. Ben was working the register while I was responsible for making espresso drinks. After he took their order he assisted me by steaming milk while I prepared the espresso. He leaned in within a foot of me and with a mock-serious face asked in an artificially deep voice, “Those were *talls*, right?” He let out a knowing smirk and an airy

laugh as I responded “Yeah, talls,” even though I had already set up three twelve ounce ceramic cups ready to be used for the order, indicating that there was no real confusion over the size of the drinks. Instead, Ben was reaffirming the collective identity of the third wave baristas in contrast to Starbucks and its representation of lower-skilled, second wavers. “Talls” is the language of the novice; the customers were used to support the identities of the coffee connoisseur. In this interaction, Ben invoked a kind of “interactive boundary” (Schwalbe et al. 2000). Together we reproduced the primacy of Craft’s taste framework and its corresponding language as a component of collective identity.

Boundaries between baristas and customers could also impact the quality of drink that a customer received. To be clear, I am not referring to baristas purposely tampering with or doing anything nefarious with drinks, I never witnessed such action. Although only occurring at times when coffees needed to be re-dialed in or if a barista had made a mistake in brewing, baristas reported that they may still serve coffee that does not meet the bar’s standards if they think a customer would not be able to notice the difference. This is not an everyday occurrence, but easily occurred once or twice a week during my time working at Craft. Anton, a 22 year old, Filipino-American barista at Craft explained:

I try not to change how I make coffee for different people, but I know I do. I know that sometimes, if somebody orders a big cup of coffee, a big latte with caramel or something like that, I won’t focus on the espresso much. I really always try to focus on it, but I know there’s sometimes where it’s busy and ‘that works, they’re not going to taste it.’ And that’s a pity. But you also get people that come in and, you know, ‘what have you guys got for single origin?’ Okay, well let’s talk. I’ll tell you.

Anton states that he orients to orders differently based on his belief that someone who orders a “single-origin” espresso will know more about taste than someone who orders a large “latte with caramel” or another additive. He admits that he does not focus as much on the preparation of the drink as he thinks that the customer must not appreciate espresso the same way as he does, or as is expected by the rules of the bar.

I encountered similar instances during my work. In one case, I had only been working solo on the espresso machine for a little over a week when two semi-regular customers entered and ordered small lattes, one regular and one with vanilla. As I was making the espresso, I realized that one of the espresso shots brewed much faster than I expected it to based on how I had dialed-it in, while the other espresso shot brewed exactly as I had expected. Each of the espressos would taste different, with the first shot I interpreted as not tasting to the standards of the bar. Tim was serving drinks to customers outside on the patio. When he returned he looked at the timer on the espresso machine and saw that one of the shots was quicker than expected. He asked, “What did you do with that one?” pointing at the time of the faster shot. I pointed to the cup and told him I had used it for “the vanilla.” He said “Good. You know.” I had already been instructed to use “ideal” espresso for more valued drinks, according to the bar’s standards, if this case ever arose.

I include these examples as I see them as situations where customers are assumed to not know how to taste coffee based on their order. I never witnessed a customer come back to complain, but I cannot say if the coffee was ever recognized as poorly made. Regardless, these instances serve as examples of linking identity with palate. It is like the distinction between waves where third wave baristas think that second wave baristas are

simply “drink makers,” instead of craftspeople who make coffee. Customers who are assumed to like “drinks,” instead of coffee, are not even given the opportunity, in such cases, to have coffee that is brewed to the bar’s standards, they receive espresso that would not be served to customers who are perceived to be included in third wave coffee culture. While each of the previous examples represented situations where boundaries were drawn between customers and baristas, there were other situations where baristas aligned themselves with other customers or where customers aligned themselves with baristas and in opposition to second wave coffee.

In the final two examples of everyday boundary maintenance, I focus on situations where customers seek alignment with baristas. Lamont and Fournier (1992:5) identify that “individuals, groups, and social classes cannot escape” the logic of distinction, “which brings them together while separating them from one another.” As I just demonstrated, all customers are not treated equally, preserving the exclusivity and boundaries of coffee connoisseurship. In addition to separation from others, I witnessed other cases where customers directly sought alignment with baristas. These situations took different forms, but predominately featured direct distancing from the second wave, or indicated understanding of the common language and ritual behaviors of the bar’s taste framework.

I frequently had customers make comments indicating their dislike of Starbucks. In one case, two college-aged customers, a woman and man, entered Craft with Starbucks’ cups in their hands. The man sat down at a table while the woman came up to the register, set her cup down and said “This is just water. He got their coffee,” while gesturing to her friend with her thumb. She continued, “Starbucks makes me sick; I only

get water there.” In another instance a customer asked if we do pour-over coffee (a manual brewing method)? I told her, “We do.” She then offered, “I can’t do Starbucks anymore, they have no flavor; their coffee tastes like cardboard.” Unprovoked instances such as these align the customer and the barista into a collective identity, one opposed to the second wave. It indicates Starbucks as a representation of lower quality, as making one “sick” or not having any taste, while elevating the status of third wave, and subsequently the consumer, and the barista.

In the final example of everyday reproduction of boundaries, is a situation where a customer sought alignment with the barista in opposition to another customer. A white man, roughly in his late forties or early fifties, came in and walked up to the part of the bar where we place finished drinks. Ben asked what we could get started for him. The customer loudly proclaimed, “There’s terrible coffee over there,” while gesturing with his thumb over his shoulder (he was staying at a hotel down the block). “I need a good strong cup of coffee, uh, a large, dark, French roast, please.” Ben said, “okay, we can do that.” Ben knows Craft does not sell dark roasted coffee, but he assumes that the customer would not be able to tell the difference. He looked back at me and I nodded to him to signify I would get the coffee while he finished the transaction at the register. As I turned to get the coffee, a semi-frequent customer was sitting at a table a few feet from me and I noticed she was looking at me. I glanced at her; she smiled, shook her head, raised her eyebrows while rolling her eyes, and tilted her head in the customer’s direction. I knew immediately what she was indicating. The customer was ordering a dark, French roast, which is something that we should all know is not good according to the taste framework. I knew this based on my own socialization into the culture of third

wave coffee, and she knew this, I assume, from her frequent patronage of Craft and socialization, via sense work, into the taste framework.

Each of these instances of everyday boundary maintenance reproduce the scaffolding to hang the shared identity of coffee connoisseurship, as well as, in some cases, reinforcing the taste framework as natural. It is subtly accomplished, as opposed to outright declarations of the rights and wrongs of connoisseurship, through day-to-day interactions. Taken alone, they may appear as insignificant, but together, these everyday distinctions provide the production and reproduction of the boundaries of the third wave coffee identity, the identity of the coffee connoisseur. I argue that the boundary reproducing interactions are a kind of collective “identity work” (Snow and Anderson 1987; Schwalbe et al. 2000), not only establishing group boundaries, but also signaling the production of baristas’ own self-conceptions as coffee connoisseurs. Through daily interactions, specialty coffee baristas and their customers distance themselves from symbols of non-connoisseurship and express alignment in a shared sense of connoisseurship. Inherent in these cases of identity work is the construction of boundaries separating members and non-members. Therefore, beyond simply creating the identity of connoisseur through “identity work,” these everyday interactions are active forms of “othering,” indicating not simply difference, but inequality across insiders and outsiders. Unequal treatment across customers, and therefore access to sense work, based on judgments of cultural capital, maintains exclusivity. It also acts as self-legitimizing as the insiders themselves create the boundaries that they fulfill.

HIRING

Craft was looking to hire a new barista to replace Ted, a white, 21 year old who had worked for Craft for a few months but had another job opportunity out of town. Noah had brought in a couple of applicants, two women in their early twenties who had responded to an advertisement posted on Craigslist. Noah, Ted, and I were all at Craft working during an afternoon lull when Noah asked us for our impression of the two applicants. He told us that one applicant, Beth, had limited availability due to simultaneously going to school, while the other applicant, Rachel, had open availability. Noah said he liked Beth's personality and thought she would fit in perfectly; "she'd be great with customers," he said. Rachel, however, had full availability, but Noah only had a brief conversation with her and did not yet have a good idea of her personality. I had not seen either of the applicants and said I could not offer any insight. Ted, however, was there when Rachel had stopped in to drop off an application and sit for a quick interview. When Noah asked what he thought, Ted shook his head. I asked, "You didn't like her?" "No, she seems like a vanilla latte type," he said. We all laughed. Ted's noticing that she was "a vanilla latte type," signifies a palate not in alignment with Craft's taste framework, a drink with additives like vanilla is a characteristic of the second wave style, at least for those trained in the third wave. Ted asked what Beth had to drink when Noah interviewed her the day prior? "She had drip (coffee), but she put cream in it," Noah responded. A regular customer was sitting at the bar and overheard our conversation. She started laughing, "That's hilarious," she said. "She ordered drip, *but* she put cream in it." We all laughed. Noah said "Well," while shrugging his shoulders and turning up both palms as if to reemphasize that cream in the coffee was important information to

consider. The customer then made a joke about how applicants do not realize, but “it doesn’t matter what they say, you are really watching what they drink.”

The hiring process at specialty coffee bars in many ways mimics the hiring practices of organizations that rely on “aesthetic labor,” in that judgment of one’s class position, their cultural capital, is integral to deciding who gets hired (Warhurst et al. 2000; Williams and Connell 2005). New employees are not typically hired off of the shop floor, as Williams and Connell (2005) note in their study of retail fashion, but customers may apply for barista jobs and be judged based on what they typically order. While this is one component of hiring, the judgment of a new hire’s ability to learn the taste framework, new hires were also monitored for their ability to fit the aesthetic of the bar, largely based on perceived habitus. As already alluded to in the introductory example, Noah was interested in hiring Beth because her personality would fit in well at the bar. This was a common factor for hire ability, as Scott, the head barista trainer for a large specialty coffee bar in the Pacific Northwest, also identified personality as the first characteristics he looks for when hiring a new barista:

There’s lots of people who have experience, but when we’re looking to hire a barista, first of all we’re looking for what’s their personality. And will they fit within our culture?...We like people who do other things, too. If they just like coffee, that’s a red flag for us. Isn’t there anything else cool that you like to do? That they are passionate about? ...You know, if someone just wants a job, we don’t need to hire someone that just wants a job, we can hire people that really want to work for us.

Scott’s interest in an applicant’s personality is focused on how well they will fit in with the culture of his coffee bar, or how well they will represent the identity of the business. They have the ability to be picky as they are not interested in someone “that just wants a

job.” Instead, they can wait for someone who is “passionate,” and has “cool” hobbies. This approach to hiring can leave out people who are desperately in need of a job. As Williams and Connell (2005) uncover, applicants that desperately need a job are easily weeded out by extending the hiring process over the span of multiple weeks, or through assigning tasks that engage applicants’ cultural capital in artistic-focused store arrangement tasks. These practices ensure that those applicants that desperately need work will most likely not wait around as they may need to take the first job that they receive an offer from. The luxury of hiring employees that do not urgently need work benefits those who are already more financially stable, those who do not urgently need a paycheck. Coffee bars benefit from an applicant pool where they have discretion over hiring those who already represent the aesthetic or culture of the organization. This ensures that less training will be necessary on personality characteristics, or on how to interact with customers. The business can save on some training costs by relying on workers with “appropriately” classed dispositions, characterized as already representing the business’ demographic profile.

Given that employees are also required to perform sense work, I also discovered a new component of aesthetic labor, hiring based on how much work it will take to train an applicant into the taste framework. Counter-intuitively, experience in the field of specialty coffee could negatively impact one’s opportunities to receive employment. In these cases, bar managers expressed concern that an applicant who had already received palate training at a different bar, under a different taste framework, might be too difficult to train as they would have to unlearn the previous bar’s taste framework. Third wave bars prioritize applicants with an “untrained” palate, but with the appropriate aesthetics,

over one with a palate trained into a framework deemed too different from the bar. Tim, the head barista and trainer at Craft discussed this with me one day, as I was at the end of my shift. I mentioned that I was going to be meeting a friend for happy hour at another coffee bar in town that also served beer. I was going there for my first time, but a friend of mine had told me that she knew a barista there who she wanted me to meet, Jayla, who had a lot of experience working in California at a large coffee bar. Tim said he knew of Jayla and told me she tried to get a job at Craft but they ended up not hiring her. I asked, “Why not?” Tim said he and Noah really liked Jayla’s personality and thought she would fit in well at Craft, but they were concerned she might be too difficult to train because she already worked so long at a different coffee bar. He was concerned that someone who had already been trained in the style of another coffee bar, in their taste framework, would be more difficult to train into Craft’s style. I heard similar comments from multiple bar managers, expressing concern that someone who had already been trained heavily in another bar’s taste framework might be difficult to retrain from that framework to taste to the standards of their coffee bar. Instead, coffee bars prefer hiring people with the “right” aesthetic who they believe have more moldable palates.

Avoiding applicants who have trained coffee palates that are different from the hiring coffee bar adds a new wrinkle to aesthetic labor. Wolkowitz (2006) argues that other articulations of aesthetic labor incorrectly assume that aesthetic dispositions are acquired through middle-class socialization and therefore already present before the worker enters the workplace. Instead, she indicates that the employer continually shapes aesthetic dispositions after employment. I find evidence of this, as third wave baristas are hired with class-based aesthetic dispositions that are only the foundation for further

training, namely the fixing of sensory experience to a bar's taste framework. It also demonstrates that applicants might fit the aesthetic profile, but can be denied an opportunity because they have embodied a taste framework of another organization.

In situations where applicants are regular customers, meeting the aesthetic profile of the bar, they may still be judged on their palate based on what baristas have witnessed that they usually order. In an interview about what Craft looks for when hiring new baristas and if he would hire regular customers, Tim told me:

I look for personality. I'm focusing on if someone's going to have a good palate. It is something I think about...Maybe they drink cappuccinos. I mean maybe they drink lattes sometimes, but if that's what someone drinks every day, I just don't think they have good discernment like, with their palate.

Tim states, as is consistent with aesthetic labor, that he looks for personalities that will fit the style of Craft. These components are viewed as less trainable than one's palate. However, if they have the right aesthetic style of the organization, they then are judged on how their palate aligns with Craft. Tim is referring to customers who drink coffee drinks that are made with milk, mainly cappuccinos and lattes. He states that if a customer only drinks milk-based drinks every day, then he would worry about their ability to discern the nuances of coffee flavors that are necessary for performing sense work. He later says that he would have to be convinced that they would be open to drinking straight coffee drinks at work, for the sake of training and dialing-in coffees. As outlined in the last chapter, the taste framework of a specialty coffee bar serves as the central organizing feature of the day-to-day labor. It is also a component of a bar's identity. If an applicant "looks good and sounds right" (Williams and Connell 2005), they still may not "taste right" and, therefore, may not get a job offer.

MINIMUM WAGE CONNOISSEURSHIP

I asked Noah, “What did you envision for Craft when you started the business?” He explained that they are trying to bridge “a fine line between specialty and something similar to diner style service.” He explained that coffee is something that people consume on a daily basis, which is different than most fine dining restaurants where people may go “once a month.” His expectation that people go to fine dining restaurants once a month already indicates an expected clientele, one who can afford this lifestyle and has an interest in fine dining. Noah hopes that customers come to his specialty coffee bar for a kind of fine dining experience, but every day. According to the SCAA (2018), based on data derived from the National Coffee Association Annual Drinking Trends Report, in 2001, 14% of coffee drinkers reported drinking specialty coffee daily, by 2017 that number had spiked to 41%, indicating that a significant market exists for specialty coffee bars.

I argue that the orientation to specialty coffee as a combination of fine dining quality and diner-like service produces a kind of “everyday connoisseurship,” a characteristic of a Post-Fordist, consumption oriented economy (Harvey 1990). Correspondingly, I also argue that third wave baristas represent a kind of “minimum wage connoisseurship,” where they work for minimum wage (plus tips) but also receive beneficial cultural capital and entrée into a broader “taste community,” a form of social capital (Ferguson 1998). I will demonstrate that specialty coffee baristas benefit from an increase in status, due to their trained palate, that pays off in ways even outside of the coffee bar.

I witnessed everyday connoisseurship in different forms, including customers who stated that the baristas were connoisseurs, but also in observing the actions and interactions of customers who came to Craft. Baristas and customers, as previously identified, may produce boundaries to establish their membership in the specialty coffee community, but to what end? Customers who frequently come to specialty coffee outlets seek a sort of magical experience, one where they fetishize the product as transformative, producing brand new sensory experiences that specialty coffee baristas know how to produce and have the tools to unlock. One customer who was visiting from Chicago told me “this was the best coffee experience I’ve had while here (in town).” Specialty coffee is treated like an “experience” to be had, not simply a coffee to be consumed.

In one case, I was working the espresso machine when two customers came in, one who knew Noah and told him she had brought a friend who was visiting from out of state. They ordered a cappuccino and an Americano and I began making the drinks as Noah and the customers continued to chat. I finished the cappuccino by pouring the milk in the design of a tulip. I delivered the drinks and one of the customers looked at me and said, “Oh, nice looking foam.” I thanked them and said, “I hope you enjoy it.” I walked back behind the counter and took the pitcher I had steamed the milk in and began to rinse it out. As I was rinsing, I looked over at the couple and saw them, in unison, raising their drinks to their noses, closing their eyes and intensely concentrated sniffing faces. They tasted their drinks with a small slurp, swished the contents around in their mouths for a couple of seconds, and smacked their tongues on the roof of their mouths multiple times like they were trying to get peanut butter unstuck from the roof of their mouths. They nodded at each other with one of them asking the other, “What do you think?” with raised

eyebrows that seemed to already convey their own clear enjoyment. The other said, “So good,” elongating the “so.” They then exchanged drinks and repeated the same sniffing, slurping, exaggerated chewing motions before one of them looked up and simply mouthed, “Wow.” In these experiences, the barista was the purveyor of an experience that is treated as transformative, where the customers engaged with their coffee as if an intellectual exercise, or a piece of art. I see this as evidence of a kind of fetishism of commodities (Marx 1967). The material product takes on symbolic meanings. The customer is convinced that the experience is like a form of magic where the barista has skills that transform the coffee into a unique, specialized experience that customers are willing to pay to access. The treatment of baristas as connoisseurs, I argue is one case where baristas are afforded an elevated status in the form of cultural capital, in addition to their wages. The customers treat the experience as one of fine dining, a kind of “everyday connoisseurship,” and the baristas their medium, as minimum wage connoisseurs. This is distinct from other minimum wage worker, such as those who work in fast food or fast casual, or even in coffee shops like Starbucks, for example, who work for minimum wage and are often subject to strict, routinized managerial control. In the case of specialty coffee, however, baristas also receive an elevated status, that of connoisseur.

The embodiment of a taste framework means that baristas take their work tools with them, in a sense. Recall from last chapter where I described how Zach would shop at Whole Foods to purchase fruits that he had not tasted before simply to expand his palate memory to aid in his ability to taste coffee. This is a case where the body is additionally worked out for the purpose of the job. If the palate is a tool for work that is

fixed to the taste framework, employees continue working on their palates outside of work. The tools go with them, even when they are off the clock. This additional work is another characteristic of minimum wage connoisseurship. They work on this tool, hone it even when they are off of the clock, using their own funds, which benefits the business as a form of additional training. Baristas, however, also encounter situations outside of work where their cultural capital pays off in ways that other minimum wage workers might not benefit.

Mike told me that there is a “hierarchy of service employees based on the development of taste” and that “people are judged on their ability to taste.” For example, he stated that he can go to restaurants in town and he might be offered a drink or food for free and asked what he thinks of it. He attributed this to his training at Craft and what he assumed that others in foodservice took to be his trained palate. I only experienced this one time when I went to another coffee shop. I ordered and received a drink, but after about fifteen minutes the barista came out to my table and brought me a different drink and said that they had been working on something new that they wanted me to try to let them know what I thought about it. As another member of the “taste community” (Ferguson 1998), I was granted an opinion that carried more weight and was used as a resource for other baristas in the community.

Situations like this occurred at Craft, as well. For example, Anton said he usually pays attention to the sommelier from a nearby restaurant, often voted as one of the best restaurants in the area in the local newspaper. He said that the sommelier comes in semi-frequently and he likes chatting with him about flavors; he said that he usually listens to him, as well as others in the community who focus on palate, like chefs and bartenders,

as well as others in the wine industry. He said that he trusts them more than the “regular” customers that we have, when they say things about the quality of our product. He said he also likes to see them as customers, to know that they come in and to serve them, because then he knows that we must be doing something right. This is further evidence that sense workers look to other sense workers, or those in the “taste community,” as having more valuable taste skills than the general republic, “regulars.” The elevated statuses of third wave baristas, their treatment by others in the taste community are characteristics of minimum wage connoisseurship.

In another instance, Tim reported that he frequently gets special treatment outside of work:

People will slow down for my drink. They’ll redo my drink before I even get to it. They’ll ask me about things. They’ll say, oh, I’m sorry that was, I don’t know. ‘I just got on bar.’ Things like that will come out really quickly. I get lots of free stuff.

Tim is explaining that he receives different treatment when he goes to other coffee bars. He also stated that he will get free or discounted food at restaurants or bartenders will ask him to try drinks they are creating. In his example of going to coffee bars, he relays that he is treated as an expert where other baristas may remake his drink, seek guidance about barista skills, and even offer excuses (‘I just got on bar’) if they think that he receives a drink that they do not think are up to his standards. Specialty coffee baristas may receive special treatment in these instances. Even though they may work a minimum wage job, they are paid in cultural capital and a perceived elevated status between other restaurant and beverage-based service employees. The concept of minimum wage connoisseurship is used to highlight the variation within minimum wage foodservice labor. It is hard to

imagine a fast food employee entering another fast food restaurant and receiving specialized treatment, but in the specialty coffee industry, this is a common occurrence. While not having sufficient data, I heard on a few occasions about former specialty coffee baristas who developed relationships with others in the taste community, which led to jobs at fine dining restaurants or in other related industries such as wine or craft beer.

CONCLUSION

The third wave coffee industry stakes claim to the identity of connoisseurship. In breaking up the market into distinct waves, they create overt boundaries signifying a hierarchy of organizations and consumers. In doing so, third wave coffee bars play an active role in inserting a social relationship into their product. I have identified how some customers treat the material product of coffee in these bars as more than just a beverage, but also an experience that I referred to as everyday connoisseurship. I situate these experiences, and the bars that produce them, within Harvey's (1990) conceptualization of a Post-Fordist, consumer economy. The third wave coffee industry provides an example of how Post-Fordist firms rely on the construction and reconstruction of niche markets, often based on finely focused sets of boundaries.

Bourdieu (1984:230) argues that distinctions require exclusivity, otherwise "the profits of distinction would wither away if the field of production of cultural goods...did not endlessly supply new goods or new ways of using the same goods." The creation of the third wave of coffee offers a new kind of exclusive experience with a product that has a long history. The new experience, one that the third wave coffee industry promises to produce, solidifies the profit of distinction for those with access. I further argue that third

wave baristas make judgments of customers based on perceived economic and cultural capital that either prohibit or allow access to membership. These judgments further reinforce boundaries and maintain exclusivity. In the previous chapter I introduced the concept of “taste frameworks.” I argued that these frameworks are not only central to palate training and the manual and interactive components of barista work, but that they are also integral in the creation of boundaries. Third wave coffee bars provide access to the material good, but are complicit in the reproduction of boundaries that limit access to the taste framework, the tool for unlocking membership in the “taste community” (Ferguson 1998), including the rules, behaviors, language associated with this way of tasting. In this chapter, I have tried to outline the various boundaries present within the third wave coffee industry. The everyday maintenance of these boundaries, based on the taste framework, are also integral in maintaining profits of distinction. Baristas embody the framework, producing the semblance of naturalness. Baristas and consumers orient to taste frameworks as natural, although I have demonstrated that they are inherently social.

The production and reproduction of a status hierarchy creates inequalities that benefit insiders by producing membership, largely through collective “identity work” (Snow and Anderson 1987; Schwalbe 2000). The creation of experiences of everyday connoisseurship benefit the business by ensuring continued revenue. However, I also demonstrate that third wave baristas experience an extra benefit not inherent in all minimum wage work, they profit in social and cultural capital. In the case of specialty coffee baristas, I demonstrate how some baristas report receiving special treatment at other restaurants and coffee bars in their community. The taste framework, as embodied, is a tool for labor that these laborers take with them outside of work. Therefore, the

distinction they receive within work continues to pay off even when they are off the clock.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: TASTE ECONOMY

In the preceding chapters I have examined various components of the interaction of the senses and frontline service labor. I have predominately relied on interactionist perspectives to guide my analysis of the senses and embodiment. I have tried to articulate the connection of everyday frontline service interactions and macro-level social structures, largely through the creation of “consumer markets” (Otis 2011) and in positioning the rise of the specialty coffee industry within a Post-Fordist, consumption based economic context (Harvey 1990). My findings contribute to a growing body of literature that seeks to articulate the role of laborers and consumers in frontline service labor, while acknowledging the centrality of the body as a site of constructing and reconstructing identities and inequalities. More broadly, this manuscript contributes to our sociological understanding of interactive service work, the body and the senses, and inequality in contemporary American society.

MAIN FINDINGS

In the first analytical chapter (Chapter 2) of the manuscript, I argued that our understanding of the senses is incomplete if we do not first identify how the social world mitigates our interpretation of sensory experience. I am by no means the first to make this argument, but instead build off of previous literature within sociology (Simmel 1997; Swedberg 2011; Vannini 2012), and the rich history of anthropological (Cowan 1991; Howes 1991; Sutton 2010) and historical (Jütte 2005; Smith 2007; Terrio 2000) research

on food and the senses. However, I train my focus on a new terrain for the sociology of the senses, the work and identities of connoisseurs of taste. I rely heavily on Gould's (2009) articulation of the relationship of affect and emotion to identify that, similarly, our senses first exist as nonconscious and undefined potential. However, it is only through the interaction of this potential with socio-cultural contexts that we achieve actualized sensory experience. To demonstrate how sensory experiences rely on socio-cultural contexts for their realization, I analyzed the social construction of sensory experience of specialty coffee connoisseurs. I articulate how coffee connoisseurs construct their identities around a backstory of interactions with members of the third wave coffee community. I also find that these stories are a reflexive exercise in making sense of their current orientation to coffee, by identifying previous taste experiences as integral to forming their current self as coffee connoisseur. Specialty coffee baristas structure their taste biographies around three main stages, "former novice," "from skepticism to 'aha' moment," and "coffee purity" or "coffee as centerpiece." By identifying the common descriptive techniques of their taste biographies, I demonstrate how sensory experiences are integral to understanding shared identity within "communities of taste" (Ferguson 1998). Finally, I note how even though specialty coffee baristas talk about coffee tasting as an empirical practice and coffee as possessing essential taste characteristics, I argue that this serves as cover over the inherently social components of sensory experience. However, treating coffee production and tasting as if it were purely scientific serves the specialty coffee industry and barista in that it provides legitimacy to their status as an industry of connoisseurship.

In the third chapter, I focus on the interaction of the body, senses, and the interactive service work performed by specialty coffee baristas. I ask, given the inherent subjectivity of sensory experience, how do specialty coffee organizations maintain control over their final product? Other interactive service based organizations rely on routinization (Leidner 1993) or McDonaldization (Ritzer 2004) to maintain control over final products. Instead of using either of these methods, I introduce a new method of labor and product control involving the fixing of sensory experience. I argue that the specialty coffee organizations work on the bodies of their laborers using “taste frameworks.” As Hochschild (1983) demonstrates that the emotional dispositions of interactive service laborers fall under the control of management in emotional labor, I argue that the sensory experiences of laborers are also subject to managerial control in what I call “sense work.” Specialty coffee bars rely on different methods of “palate training” to calibrate the palates of their employees to the taste framework. In doing so, I argue that these baristas embody the taste framework of the bar and use their bodies as tools for performing both the manual labor of making coffee, as well as the interactive components which involve, in part, “fixing” the sensory experiences of customers to fall within the taste framework. Taste frameworks are dynamic in that they establish sets of rules that guide baristas on how to taste according to the bar’s standards, but they also have broader implications. Taste frameworks are central to establishing the identity of the third wave coffee industry, and in turn its laborers and customers, as practitioners of coffee connoisseurship. In other words, taste frameworks are central to the organization of social distinction (Bourdieu 1984). Taste frameworks establish rules regarding acceptable sensory experience, social practices, rituals, and uses of language that signify

one's membership in the specialty coffee community. The taste framework is an organization of boundaries that signify connoisseurship.

In Chapter 4, I further articulate the role of taste frameworks in practices of social distinction by primarily focusing on practices of “boundary work” (Lamont and Fournier 1992; Lamont and Molnár 2002; Wimmer 2008) and “othering” (Schwalbe et al. 2000). I first argue that the segmentation of the coffee industry into “waves,” serves the interest of the third wave community as they define their own status, creating exclusivity by limiting the access of others. Coffee waves are an explicit construction of a status hierarchy whereby its practitioners are deemed the only “real” baristas who hold the key to “authentic” experiences of coffee connoisseurship. I next identify forms of everyday boundary maintenance, including the production and reproduction of the connoisseurship identity through subtle interactions between baristas, and in situations of alignment of baristas and customers. I demonstrate that while these baristas perform sense work, not all customers are treated equally or given the same opportunities for access to membership. In some cases, baristas make judgments about customers based on their perceived class standing or cultural capital as identified in the language used when ordering or their knowledge of coffee. These everyday practices of social distinction are how boundaries are maintained and solidified, a form of “collective identity work” (Snow and Anderson 1987; Schwalbe et al. 2000).

In Chapter 4, I also identify that specialty coffee businesses hire based on perceived fit of applicants within the existing culture and aesthetic of the organization, largely based on class disposition, or cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977). Wolkowitz' (2006) argues that the existing literature on aesthetic labor treats it as a kind of skill that

is acquired through middle class socialization, but fails to acknowledge further development of aesthetic presentations of self after employment. I find that the use of taste frameworks and palate training are a clear example of continued training of class-based aesthetic dispositions, additionally challenging prior conceptualizations that imply that aesthetic labor socialization begins and ends prior to employment. Finally, I argue that specialty coffee baristas perform what I call “minimum wage connoisseurship.” These baristas typically work for minimum wage, plus tips, but I demonstrate that they also receive beneficial cultural and social capital (Bourdieu 1977) that pays off within and outside of the workplace. As specialty coffee baristas embody the taste framework, they take their work tools with them wherever they go, even sometimes receiving special treatment at other coffee bars or related industries such as fine dining restaurants, for example.

FURTHER IMPLICATIONS

The primary focus in this research is the fracturing of the coffee industry, with particular attention to coffee connoisseurship, or the “third wave” of coffee. The coffee industry, however, is only one example of a broader taste economy where industries seek to accomplish the sensual bonding of human and product. At the beginning of the manuscript I highlighted the rise of connoisseurship across many industries. We might be familiar with historic industries of connoisseurship, such as in wine or haute cuisine, for example. However, there is a larger movement afoot. We now have connoisseurs of meat butchering, cocktails, barbering (Ocejo 2017), pipe tobacco, olive oil, chocolate, and even water (Harris 2013), to name just a few. Coffee is one of many industries

impacted by and contributing to a rising taste economy driven by specialists who embody and disseminate taste frameworks through sense work.

The taste economy is a feature of a Post-Fordist, consumer based economy. Harvey (1990) conceptualizes Post-Fordism, or “flexible accumulation,” as characterized by fast changing fashions and niche markets. He emphasizes the increased role of “staged spectacles,” such as community festivals or fairs, as an example of post-modernist forms of stimulating capital circulation. Harvey (1990:91) also focuses on the “architecture of spectacle” across urban spaces in the U.S. that focused on creating a “sense of surface glitter and transitory participatory pleasure.” These examples emphasize one component of the transition from Modernism to Post-Modernism, where aesthetic difference is highlighted and mined for its profit potential. The focus on “spectacle” suggests a primacy of the visual. I extend Harvey’s conceptualization of Post-Fordism by demonstrating how each of the senses (most notable the sense of taste and smell, in this case) can be implicated in the creation and recreation of ephemeral, Post-Fordist niche markets.

The third wave coffee industry and, I presume, most others in the taste economy, rely on producing feelings of status anxiety, largely rooted in class and cultural knowledge (Delhey, Schneickert, and Steckermeier 2017; Ridgeway 2014). Just as current baristas acknowledged that they used to not know what they were doing when they were drinking coffee, in their current jobs as baristas they are integral in producing similar feelings in customers. Highlighting a knowledge deficit creates a form of status anxiety where consumers may feel ill equipped. However, this is not simply a case of knowledge deficit, but, in the case of specialty coffee, relies on evaluations of bodily

potential. The fracturing of the coffee industry into waves serves as one component of boundary making, producing a disdain for other methods of coffee production and consumption. As I have demonstrated, these differences can build on and reproducing existing class boundaries. I argue that the drawing of boundaries between “waves” of coffee produces a form of class anxiety (Ridgeway 2014) where consumption of a bar’s or industry’s taste framework provides the fix. This opens the door for sense work to fill the gap and bring new customers into the fold.

Future Directions

In analyzing the labor of specialty coffee baristas I have tried to situate attempts by management to control the barista’s sensory orientation within broader discussions of control in interactive service work. While borrowing from many others along the way, I still have not discovered a situation quite like this one. Some scholars point to the use of McDonalized (Ritzer 2004) or routinized (Leidner 1993) managerial control strategies. Even within the coffee industry, evidence has been found for managing employee behavior through Taylorized management systems, as was found at Starbucks (Walker and Debusk 2008). Others highlight the control of emotions through “emotional labor” (Hochschild 1983), or reliance on class based dispositions of employees as in “aesthetic labor” (Warhurst et al. 2000; Williams and Connell 2010). While each of these analyses have been beneficial in my research, I did not find that any of them adequately explained what I was finding in my data.

The literature that has laid the terrain where I see sense work located is where the body is the central feature of production and consumption, as demonstrated in Lan’s

(2003) research on “body labor” at cosmetic sales counters, and in Otis’ (2011) research on “body rules” of Chinese luxury hotels. What has set each of these pieces of scholarship apart from others is that the body is central to the organization of labor. It was evident to me from the first interaction that sparked this project that work was being done on the bodies of consumers, in directing sensory experience, but at that time I did not quite understand how. Lan and Otis each identify that the body is utilized by organizations as a part of the product, but also in naturalizing social inequalities. As Otis (2011:167) states:

Understanding how economic activity roots in the body, particular in the senses, provides a more complex model of economic life than one based on the rational decision making of individuals. The senses are not simply conduits for a natural world that individuals experience in unmediated fashion. Social process mediates sense perceptions. Shared assessments of sense experience are used to draw social boundaries. Senses are a resource through which groups define their own identity...Therefore, acts of consumption form communal boundaries and hierarchies. And these sensibilities anchor material inequalities in physicality.

Sense work represents one kind of body rule where the senses, in the case of specialty coffee the sense of taste, come under control of organizations for multiple purposes. The specialty coffee industry relies on constructing “shared assessments of sense experience” through the use of taste frameworks. However, taste frameworks serve not only as guides for palate calibration in order to carry out the manual labor tasks of making coffee, but as is the case with body rules, can also be utilized for the creation and naturalization of inequalities. Lan and Otis both focus on how body rules are implicated in the naturalization of predominately gender and class based inequalities. I contribute to this research by

demonstrating how hierarchies of taste (as in the sensory experience) are produced within the context of a Post-Fordist, consumer oriented economy (Harvey 1990). My main focus is on the construction and reproduction of class based inequalities, including the development of the connoisseurship identity as a form of collective “identity work” (Snow and Anderson 1987). Furthermore, by examining an industry in its embryonic form, I demonstrate how these inequalities take shape and are regulated through everyday forms of boundary maintenance. Finally, I demonstrate how the rise of niche, specialty markets seek to develop corresponding consumer markets (Otis 2011) to maintain exclusivity as well as to generate revenue and legitimacy.

This research was mostly organized around identifying issues of class and of taste connoisseurship. Within the specialty coffee industry, I would like to identify how sense work and taste frameworks are implicated in reproducing gender inequalities. I have some data indicating perceptions that the rise of the connoisseurship identity and elevated status of specialty baristas has tracked with a decline in female representation. This would make sense according to historic shifts in occupations that have gained in status and pay as more men enter the occupation, but I do not have enough data to accurately articulate if and how this has occurred. Similarly, I have heard stories of how women have been left out of the most prestigious positions in the coffee industry. I do not have the data to support this, but it would be useful to understand how gender is intertwined with this work.

Finally, I think the concepts of sense work and taste frameworks would be useful for understanding a variety of industries in the current Post-Fordist economy. As this economy relies on frequent, fast changing fashions, these concepts can be useful for understanding the institutionalization of new fashions, including the creation of new cultures of connoisseurship. Fast changing fashions require laborers and consumers who can keep up; the use of sense work and the training of customers assure continued revenue for businesses. Fast changing fashions also quickly make workers obsolete when they age out of an industry or cannot keep up with changing trends because their bodily dispositions have been trained in a prior trend world. I would like to see in what ways the lessons from the specialty coffee industry could be recognized or reconfigured in other industries. Additionally, the concept of minimum wage connoisseurship could also be a characteristic of Post-Fordism. This concept needs further development. It would be useful in understanding what further implications are possible in a profit of social and cultural capital. Again, I have heard stories of specialty coffee laborers landing higher status jobs at fine dining restaurants or within the wine industry because of their experience in specialty coffee, but more work needs to be done to fully understand how to what degree the minimum wage labor market is classed.

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