Serving people: Consumer economies, classed bodies and the disciplining of female labor

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Abstract

In this article, we explore the imbrication of service work with consumer markets and larger structures of inequality, including gender and class divides as well as social and economic differences. In line with current sociolinguistic scholarship on language and work, we are interested in the activity of serving people — both in the sense of being or becoming people who serve as well as in the practice of providing services to people. To do so, we offer an ethnographic account of the regime of labor surveillance as well as the daily work practices of female workers at a Starbucks coffeehouse in London, UK. We wonder about how employers organize the bodies of workers into signs, codes and messages that appeal to customers' class expectations of this type of consumption. By documenting the regimentation and surveillance of labor at Starbucks, we inquire into the prescribed rules that guide 'proper' presentations of physicality; further, we ask questions about the mechanism through which the body at Starbucks is made to express its positioning within a structure of labor and its relationality to others, especially customers.

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1. **Introduction**

The articulation of labor, the worker's body and processes of social control has been at the core of post-Marxist and feminist critiques of capitalism. It was Antonio Gramsci who first explained that Fordism organizes more than just economic and political institutions and practices (Gramsci, 1971). Fordism, according to Gramsci, targets the affective capacities of citizens, including their deepest desires, longings, and feelings. Similarly, Foucault (1975) notes that in the large factories of the 18th and 19th centuries, the rationalization of labor involved the articulation of workers' individuality within a complex machinery of production; it coordinated workers with each other, disposed them in space and time, measured and corrected their gestures, and imposed a specific rhythm to their laboring bodies. He adds that these techniques of discipline are not only anchored in histories of industrial production; they are also inherited from older practices of control in monastic communities that were then spread to other domains of social life, and to labor in particular. More recently, Sennett (1998) and Fraser (2003) explain that even if in the last few decades capitalism has radically changed, the discipline of society has not become passé. Laboring bodies continue to be subject to capitalist rationalization and coercion as well as to dispossession and exploitation.

Current scholarship on language and work relies on both recent and earlier critics of Fordist and post-Fordist labor, claiming that language, as both ideology and praxis, plays a fundamental role in the regulation of labor (Boutet, 2001; Duchêne, 2009; Urciuoli & LaDousa, 2012). Sociolinguists point to, among other issues, the coercive effects that a changing capitalism has on laboring subjects (Allan & McElhinny, 2017). Feminist scholars in particular place focus on the behavioral schemes that workers, especially those that female workers, are asked to align with. Cameron (2000) for example argues that in customer service contexts, workers' interactions with customers are scripted and that this scripting involves not only the stylization and standardization of speech, but also contributes to the deskilling of their labor and the devaluation of their labor power. In the context of the Philippines, Lorente (2017) adds that scripts are anchored in larger histories of colonialism and female exploitation, and that these texts ask individuals to adopt a specific stance towards themselves and others—a stance that reproduces colonial hierarchies between men and women as well as between master (employer) and servant (domestic worker).

Inspired by this sociolinguistic literature, we seek to expand our sociolinguistic understanding of the regulation of service labor. Specifically, we aim to shift our analytical focus from service work understood as an activity pertaining to the domain of feelings and language (this approach draws on Hochschild's influential work (1983) and has been adopted by many studies in sociolinguistics), to service work as first and foremost physical labor. This stance allows us to emphasize the physical and material dimension of service. In particular, we offer an ethnographic account of the daily work practices of a group of female workers and of the regimes of surveillance that they are subjected to. Our analysis draws on ethnographic data collected between spring 2018 and spring 2019 in a Starbucks café located in central London, UK.[1] The data includes observations of labor practices and of the surveillance of laborers, as well as formal and informal conversations with workers, managers, customers and other stakeholders. It further includes semiotic material such as training materials, guidelines, and service templates produced by Starbucks to regulate labor in its stores, as well as brochures, videos, and pictures produced for marketing purposes.

We have chosen Starbucks as the main site for our ethnographic analysis because this coffeehouse is emblematic of a consumer economy that creates and supports social spaces where customers come to work individually and collaboratively, and where service suppliers design novel

ways for customers to display, cultivate and experience social status. Starbucks is emblematic of growing profit in the consumer economy. It is the (often female) workers in coffeehouses, hotels, karaoke bars, restaurants and tea shops that facilitate the development of this market growth and allow customers to pursue a sense of class distinction (Bookman, 2003). Indeed, scholars have argued that coffeehouses such as Starbucks cater to a segment of middle-class consumers usually imagined to be professional, college-educated, and ideologically moderate—people that understand Starbucks as a 'safe space' to practice a sense of global cosmopolitanism (Gaudio, 2003). At the same time, Starbucks in London is also emblematic of a type of economy that segregates women, especially racialized women from lower social and economic backgrounds, into work that is temporary, low-wage and low-prestige. In this way, it can be seen to be contributing to the reproduction of longstanding histories of inequality organized along gendered, racialized and classed structures of difference (Dyer, McDowell and Batnitzky, 2010).

In other words, choosing to look at Starbucks is a way for us to further explore the imbrication of service work with consumer markets and larger structures of inequality, including gender, racial and class divides as well as social and economic differences. In line with current sociolinguistic scholarship (Lorente, 2010, 2012, 2017), we are interested in the activity of serving people — in the double sense of being or becoming people who serve as well as in the practice of providing services to people; we focus especially on the means through which the body becomes the medium of the practice of serving. We particularly wonder about how employers organize the bodies of workers as signs, codes and messages that appeal to the class expectations and sense of cosmopolitanism that customers associate with consuming Starbucks. By documenting the regimentation and surveillance of labor at Starbucks, we ask about the prescribed rules that guide 'proper' presentations of physicality and raise questions regarding the bodies' plasticity—that is, about the mechanism through which the body at Starbucks is made to express both its positioning within a structure of labor and its relationality to others, namely, to customers.

We anchor our work in a feminist scholarship assuming that bodies are semiotic, i.e. that they carry meaning and are linked to social hierarchies and class divides (Bucholtz and Hall, 2016). We also hold the view that bodies are political because they reflect both incorporated gender and racial norms as well as histories of class experience and labor exploitation (McElhinny, 2008). We are inspired by the work of Michel Foucault (1975) and his analysis of the effects of organizational power mechanisms on bodies and on individuals' own sense of self. However, while Foucault understands the techniques of discipline documented in workshops, hospitals, prisons, and poor houses as a means of improving the efficiency and productivity of laboring bodies, we claim that the stylization of bodies documented here has more to do with a corporate objective of shaping bodies into extensions of their values, messages and images. Borrowing Otis (2012)'s concept of 'market-embodied labor'— a concept that points to the relationship between alterations of employees' bodies at work and struggles for status distinction among customers (Bourdieu, 1984)—we argue that more than enhancing efficiency and productivity, workers' physical adjustments at Starbucks are a means of creating and naturalizing signs of status and of forming relations of domination and subordination in the workplace.

Our paper unfolds as follows: we first provide insight into the structure of Starbucks as a transnational corporation, presenting the women we have met at Starbucks and elaborating on the place occupied by laborers' bodies in the company's branding strategy. Second, we analyze the service templates that Starbucks uses to shape workers' bodily appearances and document how these texts ensure that workers become used to exerting control over their own bodies. Third, we document the complex system of surveillance that is put in place in order to ensure workers'

compliance with these templates. Fourth, we show that female workers' degree of compliance with institutional body standards, and with service protocols in particular, is used as a benchmark in the evaluation of performance and in the regulation of access to promotion.

2. **Starbucks and 'Market-Embodied Labor'**

With 27,339 retail locations as of the first quarter of 2018, Starbucks is firmly ranked as the largest coffeehouse company in the world (Knoema, 2019). The company initially focused on the US domestic market; since 1996, however, it has expanded throughout the Americas, China, Asia Pacific, Middle East, Africa and Europe. Starbucks operates two types of stores: company-operated stores that are centrally managed from Starbucks headquarters in Seattle, Washington, and licensed stores that are external firms holding official affiliation to the Starbucks brand (often located in airports, train stations or shopping malls).

Recently one of the former CEOs of Starbucks, Howard Schultz (Schultz & Gordon 2011), noted that this transnational expansion poses serious challenges for the company's ability to keep control over workers, products and brand-building. Since its foundation, the company has consistently increased its revenue and quantity of stores around the world (the only drop was registered in 2009-2011 during the financial crisis). More recently, Starbucks managers in Seattle fear the loss of vision and branded cultural value imagined to be linked with their company. Schultz noted that Starbucks is a premium product and that selling Starbucks involves the provision of specialized knowledge to customers; he also claimed that this sensitivity was hard to learn and required an educated staff.

Sociologists of consumption (see Bookman, 2013) have noted, that more than specialized knowledge, Starbucks seeks to control the classed 'experience' that consuming Starbucks represents. As noted earlier in this text, Starbucks is emblematic of a consumer economy that caters to customers' individual desires. Scholars have particularly pointed to the ways that Starbucks stores, with their fireplaces, leather chairs, newspapers and couches as well as displayed art, pictures and music, are strategically designed to mirror the imagined safe, comfortable and therefore non-threatening middle-class living rooms of its target customers (Gaudio, 2003).

This marketing strategy has social and ideological implications. By adapting their products and brands in this way, firms tap into, reinforce and elaborate upon social codes that reflect class, ethnic, gender and generational distinctions (Otis, 2012). In this sense, the type of experience that service workers at Starbucks are asked to produce is a means for customers to enact a 'rootless cosmopolitanism' (Wurgaft, 2003). This involves more than the cultivation of a transnationally shared taste of coffee and practice of coffee connoisseurship (Henningsen, 2012). Indeed, given its function as a space of casual interaction (Gaudio, 2003) and work (Myerson and Ross, 2006), Starbucks also allows customers to align themselves with a transnational class of creative, young, fancy, freelance and again cosmopolitan and rootless workers; it is a version of professionalism that is increasingly considered desirable, especially (but not exclusively) by younger generations (Plog, 2005). People choose to consume at Starbucks because it allows them to be surrounded by other customers who share modes of perceiving and being in the world. In this sense, Starbucks allows not only displays of class affiliation, but also a practice of class affiliation —an experience that according to Schultz, the former CEO of the company (Schultz and Gordon, 2011), must be preserved.

In order to keep control over the daily doing of the Starbucks brand and of service workers' ability to appeal to the classed desires of Starbucks customers, the headquarters in Seattle has

produced service templates of all sorts (e.g. the Lookbook; the Barista Certification Kid; the Barista Basic Learning Journal; the Green Apron) that serve to stylize the daily work and bodies of personnel. These templates are market-specific; that is, there are unique texts for the UK, Dutch, and Chinese markets, among others, and they target Starbucks staff at all levels, including store managers, shift supervisors and baristas.

Sociolinguistic research has produced influential knowledge on the nature of these templates, especially on how they exert power and control, how they allow the localization of messages (Duchêne, 2009, 2011) and how they are imbricated in changing regimes of work (Gee et al, 1996). When talking about behavioral templates, sociolinguists often refer to 'scripts'—textualized communicative instructions that stylize linguistic and verbal practices of workers and that structure talk at work (Cameron, 2000; Lorente, 2017). The rules and fabricated pieces of interaction that these scripts impose onto speakers are morally-loaded and have their own histories. They stand for specific sets of cultural values of specific groups of people with specific positionalities in the social structure (Agha, 2004; Leidner, 1996).

We draw on this sociolinguistic scholarship in our analysis of the management of bodies at Starbucks, but we want to expand the meaning of scripts to include the targeting of workers' entire physicality. We therefore borrow the concept of 'body rules' from Turner (1996) and subsequently from Otis (2012), to point to the ways that textualized and non-textualized knowledge about the body is used to control and discipline more than just language: the workers' total appearance. Body rules, Otis notes, like communicative scripts, are shaped by cultural norms of appearance and behavior that are historically related to specific types of identity including sex, age, class and ethnicity. They operate through interactive assessments of the body and norms of signaling identities. Understanding the centrality of the body for service labor necessitates an examination of such body rules, the expectations regarding bodily presentations, and the way that these rules are strategically used to adjust serving bodies and to provoke affective reactions from customers.

Before engaging in a discussion of these body rules, how they operate on the ground, and how they affect workers' physicality and relationality with clients, it is important to clarify the status of Starbucks in London's labor market as well as the type of workers that this company employs. The notion of 'market-embodied labor' stresses the ways that service labor interacts with consumer markets and the ways that labor is embedded and reconfigured by local employment legacies and perceptions of value. Starbucks in London operates within an increasingly saturated service economy that has created a demand for immigrant women to occupy low-wage service positions (Sassen-Koob 1984). This labor force consists mostly of racialized workers as a result of empire and post-empire networks of labor provision; there exists as well a sector of Eastern European laborers who have come to the UK as a result of the free circulation of labor enabled by the European Union.

We note at this point that the London consumer economy does not only employ women: we also find racialized male bodies in the transport industry as drivers and in various forms of security work. While it is clear that the lines differentiating female work from male work are blurred and draw on problematic histories of gender differentiation and female subordination, it is worth noting that workers at the Starbucks where our data was collected were, with the exception of the district manager who occasionally visited the store to ensure the quality of products and services, all female. Gaudio (2003), referring to studies of labor in urban geography, notes that in service contexts male servers who are perceived as racially different may be considered as threatening by middle-class consumers. This is why employers tend to avoid males on the floor

and to recruit instead female workers, who are often said to be better at reassuring customers and making them feel at ease.

In addition to its contribution to the shaping of a class of serving women, Starbucks is one of the employers in London that contributes to the shaping of what the sociology of work calls the 'working poor' (Newman, 2009). Specifically, it produces a type of worker that, even with fulltime work, struggles to get access to the most basic necessities. Starbucks is therefore part of a highly hierarchized, racialized and exploitative labor market, a complex system of labor production and exploitation that is at the basis of the stratification of London society and that contributes to the production of a city in which massive wealth co-exists with massive poverty (Standing 1999).

In this sense, the group of female workers we met during fieldwork at a Starbucks in central London were emblematic of this stratified system of labor. All of them had experienced transnational migration (although these experiences were at different life stages), all were multilingual, and all had experienced racial stigma and economic precarity. At the same time, what distinguished them from other low-wage laborers in the retail service economy (those working for example for food chains such as McDonald's or Kentucky Fried Chicken, who are almost always constructed as low-skilled and uneducated), was that they tended to be formally educated, some of them to a high level. Whereas other workers in the low-wage service economy tend to experience serious difficulties finding employment in other sectors of the job market, these women understood their employment at Starbucks as a first step towards entering the local labor market; some also worked part-time at Starbucks while pursuing studies in one of the city's top universities.

In this group there was Ada,[2] the store manager, who had been climbing the career ladder at Starbucks since arriving in London at the age of nineteen to work. There was Rae, self-categorized as British Chinese, who was born in London to parents who migrated from Hong Kong; she worked as a shift supervisor and was a candidate for assistant manager. There was also Erica, a part-time shift supervisor, who moved to London from Argentina and had completed her MA degree at one of the UK's top universities. There was Gill, from South Korea, who was studying at one of London's most prestigious universities while working as a part-time shift supervisor to finance her studies. There was Truda, a barista recently employed when we started fieldwork: a young British-Somali born in London who needed her job at Starbucks to finance her studies. There was also Vita, who worked as a shift supervisor after recently relocating from Spain. And there was Sally, from South Africa, a single mother of a 7-year-old child, struggling to make a living while residing in one of London's council houses. And finally, there was Yamato, a barista of French and Japanese background who lived in France before moving to London, and who worked at Starbucks to support her career as musician.

Interestingly, many of these workers were able to pass as members of the particular cosmopolitan community in London that consumes Starbucks on a daily basis. The only one who did not was Sally: she was clearly older than the rest of the group and was told that she lacked the sense of dynamism associated with the Starbucks's brand; this so-called lack of dynamism caused her to struggle at work. At the same time, all of these women clearly differed from the customers they served. Yes, they all work in central London, a fancy and cosmopolitan city center. However, their daily work routines do not mirror in any ways the fancy and cosmopolitan work or lifestyles that customers often associate with the brand. Their work routines are physical and repetitive, and they have very low possibilities of upward mobility. In addition, although their salaries are slightly higher than that of other retail chains, they are still situated at the lowest level of salary scales in London. Many of them cannot afford regular housing and live in community housing. And, none of them are able to pay for the very same service that they sell. Indeed, while as Gaudio (2003)

notes, meeting at Starbucks to have coffee is often understood by people as natural and normal, all of the workers that we met reported not being able to afford Starbucks, not even with their (albeit meager) employee discount.

Sociologists of work argue that the social and economic difference between service workers and the customers they serve is intentional. Brinton (2007) for example, notes that employers hire young, often female, workers to ensure status consistency between their age, gender and low-status work, making sure that they do not pose any status threats to potential customers. Others argue that managers employ workers based on their customers' assumed class, gender and race preferences, since it is reported that customers experience unease when a worker's appearance does not fit their expectations (Moss and Tilly, 1996; Williams and Connell, 2010).

It is this inequality between worker and customer that is inherent in such service labor. Drawing on the concept of 'market-embodied labor', in the next sections we explore the tension between Starbucks workers' need to appeal to the classed desires of customers and the necessity of exhibiting social deference. Through a close analysis of a document that is known by Starbucks workers as the Lookbook, we will show that service templates as entextualized body rules are guiding devices or technologies in a Foucauldian sense: they enable female workers to adjust their bodies in acts of both alignment and subordination.

3. Body rules and the erasure of worker individuality

At the beginning of our fieldwork, one of the baristas, Yamato, shared the documents and guidelines that every employee receives from the store manager after signing a work contract with Starbucks. 'The Lookbook', she noted, 'is the most crucial guide at Starbucks, especially for beginners. It regulates the way workers dress and are expected to look'. 'Complying with these regulations', she explained, 'is paramount and deviance is punishable; if repeated, workers risk losing their jobs'. Aligning with this service template and the body rules it entextualizes represents a condition for promotion and forms a part of the assessment procedure for workers who want to become shift supervisors.

The Lookbook is a fifteen-page booklet targeting workers' clothing, hair and personal hygiene. Images of model workers and explanations of rules in the book provide employees with details of the dress code. They include full-body shots of model workers who dress in solid colors, with a Starbucks green apron and their name badges on; notably, everyone has a smile on their face. Moreover, there are small graphics of 'right' and 'wrong' shirt tops, shoes, socks, colors and patterns. In its introductory section the Lookbook notes:

"We are writing to you to bring your personal taste and handcrafted style to work. As ambassadors of the Starbucks brand, you should feel proud of your own look as you tie on the green apron. Our Dress Code reflects the professionalism you bring to your craft, the commitment to making every moment right and the inclusive welcome at the heart of our brand. We hope this Dress Code Lookbook gets you excited to open your closets and have fun." (Lookbook 2017)

This excerpt appears on the first page of the service template. It interpolates workers at Starbucks as ambassadors of the coffeehouse; that is, they are somehow animated signs of the firm's brand. By complying with this guide, workers embody the values that the coffeehouse is imagined to be representing; in other words, one way that the brand Starbucks becomes visible to customers is through the workers' bodies, gestures and appearance. In this sense, the Lookbook is a part of the

company's branding tools and one way in which they keep control over the Starbucks experience. Indeed, even if the opening and closing sentences of the cited excerpt mitigate the imposition of a rigid dress code and present it purely in terms of professional regulation, the Lookbook undoubtedly operates as a tool in the promotion of uniformity among workers. As we see later, it results in the erasure of their own bodily differences and subjective individualities. The repeated usage of the terminology 'personal taste' and 'handcrafted style' as well as the words 'excited' and 'fun' mirrors Starbucks customers' alleged excitement for style, fashion and appearance. As we will show later, service templates such as the Lookbook set up the institutional expectation of workers' alignment with customers' imagined aesthetic preferences.

Gill, one of the shift supervisors, agreed with this assumption and noted that 'when people visit Starbucks, they just want the Starbucks service.' She added that 'if a customer asks for an extra [an extra shot], but baristas make a mistake and don't put an extra, customers usually don't recognize it.' She explained, 'Some customers are really interested in, really focus on the drinks, but most of them just focus on Starbucks, they want the Starbucks experience.' This foregrounding of the service experience as a key element of the Starbucks brand was a leitmotiv that we repeatedly encountered during fieldwork.

In one of our first days at Starbucks, we were told that in order to control the quality of their beverages, Starbucks changed their manual coffee machines into automatic ones. Manual brewing of coffee can now only be found in special Starbucks Reserve coffee shops (there is only one in London). We learned that differences in baristas' skills in steaming and pouring milk into coffee can generate differences in flavor, but that these differences are very slight and are unlikely to be noticed by average consumers. Technical machines were introduced in order to ensure a certain quality of product and to save the company time and energy in finding or training baristas in high-level coffee-making skills. In short, according to the workers we met, what makes a Starbucks coffee desirable for its customers is not the quality of the coffee they consume, but rather the practice of ordering coffee and the predictable interactions with the barista and other service workers. It is an encounter that remains the same everywhere in the world and that transforms the customers into what might be called cosmopolitan coffee drinkers.

The assumption that the value of the product is in the service and not in the coffee —or, what creates distinction is not the quality of the product but the quality of the service— shifts the regulatory power onto the workers' bodies and appearance. Indeed, in comparison to coffee flavor, which can be hard to discern, workers' appearances are visible for every customer. As a result, their physicality and service practices need to be in full alignment with customers' classed expectations. It is within this specific logic that we need to understand the organizational value of a template such as the Lookbook.

One of the targets of this document is workers' clothing. Becoming an ambassador of the Starbucks brand involves complying with colors and tastes that customers associate with the cosmopolitan experience that Starbucks is believed to represent. Workers at Starbucks are invited 'to wear a range of subdued shirt colors beyond black and white, including gray, navy, dark denim and brown. 'Solids are your friend, and so are smaller, tighter, low-contrast, patterns.' Employees are compelled to look for the aesthetic 'friend', to find solid clothing in their wardrobe and put aside pieces that do not fit with the Starbucks brand architecture. Workers are supported in their body choices by a 'YES LIST' and a 'NO LIST' that differentiate between items, colors, materials and modes of wearing clothes that are permitted or banned. In unclear cases, workers are asked to consult with their line managers or store managers. 'We trust you to make the right choices, but if you have any questions, your manager is there to help guide you.' Further, 'Store managers will

ultimately make the call as to what's okay and what's not. If you come to work inappropriately with unacceptable appearance, you may not be permitted to start your shift.' It is expected that workers should avoid sticking out or displaying individuality.

Clothing is not the only aspect of workers' physicality that is subject to discipline. The Lookbook also targets the worker's body. 'Please follow all reasonable grooming standards, including regular bathing and use of deodorant.' And, 'If hair color is your style, it's welcome. Please keep it tidy: clean, brushed and kept back from the face. Hair color must be permanent or semi-permanent: no sprays, glitter, chalks, or temporary products. Tie long hair back with plain clips or hairbands to avoid contact with drinks or food.' This intervention in the workers most intimate spheres is justified by the invoking of 'hygiene', as well as health and security principles.

At the same time, we argue that the regulation of the worker's body is a means of ensuring that customers are not alienated by appearances that may diverge from their expectations or make them feel out of place. We know from Pierre Bourdieu's work on taste and distinction (Bourdieu, 1979) that the body displays individuals' experiences of wealth and inequality. Therefore, body choices, or the way people behave and move, and aesthetic choices that people make in dressing or styling their hair display gender norms and class affiliations. In order to ensure that all aspects of workers' appearances conform with the messages that the firm wants to communicate, the Lookbook invites workers to erase all traces of their own individuality, especially markers that may display differential class experiences and that deviate from the social values propagated by the Starbucks brand.

Accordingly, on page fifteen of the Lookbook, the guide notes that 'visible tattoos on face and neck are not allowed. Other visible tattoos are permitted so long as they don't contain obscene, profane, racist, sexual, or objectionable words or imaginary'. And, 'you are not permitted to wear buttons or pins that advocate a political, religious or personal issue. Pins may not interfere with safety, threaten to harm customer relations or otherwise unreasonably interfere with Starbucks public image'. This necessity to erase the workers' political positioning, especially opinions which may be perceived as threatening, relates to Starbucks ambition to cater to a type of customer that is likely liberal, pro-cultural diversity and environmentally-friendly. Workers do not only need to look like Starbucks, they need to think like Starbucks. Displaying a political or religious stance that goes against the firm's values is seen as potentially threatening.

In order to keep pleasing their target customers (and to ensure the long-term generation of profit), the bodily display of controversial ideologies that could alienate customers' needs to be prevented absolutely. For workers, this means that representing the Starbucks brand involves not only subjecting one's body to the classed tastes and physical choices imposed by the firm, but also aligning their beliefs with those that Starbucks represents.

So far, we have examined the serving body as a site of labor control and generation of profit. Drawing on the concept of 'market-embodied labor', we have highlighted the inseparability of the worker's body from the service product and how workers have to erase their own individualities (the classed experience that the body displays) in order to prevent the potential unease that unexpected bodily performances could represent for customers. We have argued that the Lookbook is one of many service templates produced by Starbucks that regiments workers' classed bodies and physical choices to appeal to the imagined shared preferences of Starbucks' customers. In what follows, we will discuss the strategies put in place at Starbucks to enforce such body rules prescribed by service templates such as the Lookbook.

4. **Surveilling laboring bodies**

In Starbucks stores, surveillance is conducted by actors occupying different positions in the management infrastructure: by the district manager, store manager, assistant manager, as well as by shift supervisors and baristas. The café we studied did not have an assistant manager at the time of the fieldwork, and when we were on site, we came across the district manager once a week. Every time he visited, he greeted the manager without engaging in any sort of social interaction that was not strictly professional. He sat down as if he were a normal customer working on his laptop; instead of using the manager's back office where administrative and personnel issues are usually handled, he chose to be present in order to monitor how things were running in the store. He also set goals for workgroups and checked the implementation of policy and scripts in the district's stores. Before leaving, he approached the goods shelf, stacked sandwiches and bread, and subsequently went to have a conversation with the manager, during which he pointed here and there. We hardly saw him talking with other baristas. Once, a barista saw him waving to the manager and asked the manager whether the person was her friend. Clearly, the baristas were not familiar with him and were not aware of his role, nor of the position of power he represented.

Whereas the district manager's surveillance was characterized by his anonymity or even invisibility, Ada, the store manager, exerted control through her omnipresence. Being visible on the floor was her way of making the baristas aware that they were being watched. As we will discuss below, effective surveillance is not necessary performed through the practice of constant monitoring of laboring bodies, but rather by making people aware that they may be surveilled. 'How can you know what you guys are doing and what is going on when you are not there?' she asked in one of our several conversations. We observed this while documenting the work activities on the floor. We had heard from baristas and supervisors that store managers in other stores would spend their days in their back office, but Ada liked to be on the front line where she observed, controlled and corrected workers. When she was away, she selected supervisors to become her 'eyes' by helping to inspect other baristas' work.

Another technique of control Ada mobilized was what she called 'caring'. When we asked about the ways she was able to control her team, she noted that caring about them, in the pastoral sense, was a powerful means to make sure that they would follow her orders and comply with the company's standards. She remembered that in her interview for the store manager position, she had explained that one way of running a Starbucks successfully is by caring about the employees. 'If you do not care about them', Ada explained, 'they do not care about anything'.

It is important to note here that Ada's surveillance tactic, that is, the way in which she controls the workers' bodies and interactions with customers is also framed by the service templates. Indeed, her insistence on 'caring' is a managerial strategy that turns professional relations into something resembling a family structure, where the head of the family disposes and exerts control over the members of the family— the workers. While this family rhetoric erases the coercive effects of a professional employer/worker relationship, it plays on the interpersonal and maternal qualities of a caring woman. We know from job descriptions of management positions that 'interpersonal skills', 'ability to coach and mentor others and to provide direction', 'listening', and 'demonstrating a calm demeanor in unusual events' are all part of the skillset required from managers who lead Starbucks stores, and they are qualities that Ada perfectly embodies.

We do not want to elaborate too much on power theories and on histories of power and societal control. But it is nevertheless worth noting at this point that in his work on the history of governmentality, Michel Foucault (1991) notes that before 'government' as a practice of rule became an issue of state power, it was about the pastoral management of the household, children,

souls and the family. Family and the household, Foucault adds, meant economy, i.e. making the family fortune prosper by correctly managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family. Foucault also notes that the art of government, as it emerges from the 16th century, is essentially concerned with answering the question of how to introduce the economy—the correct way of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family— into the management of the state. What we see in Ada's stressing of the tropes of family and care is the reemergence of a historical technique of power transposed into current consumer service capitalism; in this way, pastoral care becomes a key condition for the surveillance of laboring bodies.

It was true that most of the informants we spoke to claimed to respect the manager for her consideration and diligence. Yamato in particular was impressed with how the manager sat down with her to discuss both her personal and work-related issues, including possible ways of improving herself. In doing so, she blurred the line between work and non-work as well as the line between manager and mothers. Yamato felt respected, supported and cared for and was therefore ready to commit herself totally to this job at Starbucks. Rea also told us that another way Ada expressed control over her staff was through her reputation. Ada was known by her crew as being an extremely hard-working person. She volunteered to be on the morning shift (the busiest shift that everyone else tried desperately to avoid) and worked until 4pm every day except Saturdays.

We were able to document Truda's induction training and noted that surveillance was also conducted through training. Normally, store managers and shift supervisors were in charge of new employees' training, especially for those with no previous Starbucks experience. Truda was given time on her first working day to sit in the back office and read Starbucks materials. This reading time was set aside for employees to gain a general grasp of the basic components, regulations and information about Starbucks (such as the Lookbook) in order to facilitate subsequent training. The next step was for Truda to work on the floor with a shift supervisor standing beside her to teach and remind her. Training supervisors in this part of the process were not fixed. Since Truda needed to experience all three shifts, whichever supervisor was on the shift would act as both her trainer and her inspector, meaning that she had to adapt to different trainers' styles and pace. Further, Ada inspected the training constantly. She was convinced that training needed to involve hands-on experience, and not just reading. 'People forget quickly what they read', she noted. 'Training workers through work', she explained, 'is much more effective than asking them to read guides, regulations and scripts, since it allows you to observe their work, inspect their knowledge and to correct them as necessary'. She clarified that when she works with baristas, if she is not sure whether they have learned Starbucks practice about washing hands from their Barista Guide, she would ask them to 'change the rubbish and then go and wash your hands' and 'then check if hands are washed correctly'. If it was not the case, she asserted that 'I'm still here to remind them that what is required', and she would then have a chance to correct the worker directly and immediately.

Finally, the customers themselves also seemed to be part of this complex surveillance system. We initially wondered about how many of the regulations were directed towards the customers; that is, how much of the scripted service would affect the customers' experience of Starbucks. We were in doubt about whether customer satisfaction was used simply as a justification to control the worker's body, given the possibility that customers would not be able to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate service, appropriate and inappropriate behavior, and appropriate and inappropriate appearances. In fact, customers do care and are able to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behavior as well as appropriate and inappropriate body appearance. Once, a customer asked Erica if she had new tattoos. Erica rapidly denied that she had tattoos and said it was just her shirt pattern. Although the customer did not

criticize, at least not explicitly, and Erica's tattoo was allowed in the code, it indicated the tattoo's visibility to customers. In another case, a senior couple who came every morning because they worked in the same building as the Starbucks, enquired about Yamato's hair while they were waiting at the bar for their drinks. Yamato told the couple that the manager had instructed her to change her hairstyle. At that time, the manager was standing beside her and echoed 'stop, stop.' It was not very clear whether the manager counted this as an official verbal warning, but Yamato did not receive any other punishment and still wore the long pink wig in front of her chest for the whole shift. Such temporary hair products are prohibited in the Starbucks dress code, since they are said to threaten food safety; however, in the midst of a busy morning, the manager did not take any action to end Yamato's shift or to remove her from the customers' view.

We do not know whether the clients' reaction to Erica and Yamato's tattoo or hairstyle were a means of sanctioning their appearance, nor can we say with certainty that customers see themselves as part of a surveillance apparatus. People asking about tattoos or haircuts at Starbucks may also be a way of humanizing the workers, to build rapport or show alignment, especially if these people are regular customers. Erica and Yamato's reactions to the customers' comments, however, indicate that they are aware of an effect on the customers. They are aware that in consumer economies service personnel's unexpected bodily performances can cause unease or even sanctioning from the customers. Therefore, we argue that regardless of the customers' real intentions, service personnel perceive their presence as controlling and therefore as an extension of the apparatus of surveillance put in place to monitor their physicality as it relates to the Starbucks experience.

This sense of surveillance where, as in the case of Bentham's panopticon (Foucault, 1975), workers on the floor need to assume that their body practices and physical appearance are constantly subjected to control and assessment by an invisible body—such as the district managers, the caring 'eyes' of the store manager, a trainer, supervisor or by the customers themselves—does not mean that workers on the floor were not able to enact alternative subjectivities and 'deviant' professional behaviors. On the contrary, we observed many such practices. For example, workers often interacted with colleagues in languages other than English in front of customers, although this was explicitly forbidden and punishable. Ada repeatedly explained to workers that accommodating customers' linguistic choices was a practice that she encouraged, so workers should use their entire multilingual repertoires to contribute to the success of the Starbuck store. On the other hand, talking in languages other than English within the team of workers could be discriminatory, especially for co-workers who do not share the language used. We also saw deviance in terms of allowed hairstyles and use of makeup, both forms of body practices which were subject to strict regulation in Starbucks texts.

While deviating bodily behavior was always possible, the system of surveillance ensured that workers were aware of potential consequences: there was always the possibility of being judged or punished for non-compliance with the company's standards and regulations, and such non-compliance would affect a worker's position within the store as well as their possibility of promotion. For some of the workers, employment at Starbucks was one step in a longer professional trajectory that ultimately would lead to a more prestigious and better paid position, but for others it was not. In such cases, deviance from the body rules prescribed by Starbucks service templates was not an option. Sally, for example, was one of the workers who did not dare to challenge the regulations at work. We met her once at the store on a day when she was not working but had come to meet the manager to discuss some personal issues. She looked different than on her regular shift, and so we asked if she was wearing makeup. She said she was not and

suggested that her different appearance might be connected to her untied hairstyle. She never had her hair loose during her shift, since it was not allowed, and she did not dare challenge the regulations and the Lookbook. Sally needed this job to raise her child, as she did not have a partner living with her. Putting her job at risk for her preferred hairstyle was simply not worth it for her.

In other words, service templates and the system of surveillance put in place to ensure the application of the entextualized body rules are perceived unequally by the service workers we met. While some dare to enact alternative, often prohibited, body practices, others subject their own bodies to constant self-surveillance and self-alignment with the expected appearance. We previously argued that 'market-embodied labor' encapsulates an intrinsic relation of inequality between the worker's body and customers' expectations, with workers obliged to perform both alignment with the customers' taste and choices and at the same time social deference and subordination to the customer and his or her status. To this relation of inequality between worker and customer, we add a form of inequality among workers, namely their differential exposure to the regulatory power of instruments and techniques of surveillance; it is a form of inequality that is again rooted in the social structure and in workers' unequal professional aspirations and perceived future opportunities.

In the following section, we examine the ways that alignments with or deviations from the body rules entextualized in service templates are used to assess the value of service workers' performances and to stratify access to symbolic and material resources.

5. Assessing laboring bodies

Ada did not like paperwork. While Starbucks headquarters provide local stores with a whole set of frameworks and assessment techniques to standardize the measurement and improvement of workers' productivity, the store manager preferred to handle feedback personally and immediately. Along with her understanding of control through presence, care and trust, for Ada, face-to-face verbal feedback was the most efficient. As we already noted, working with and monitoring baristas enabled her to point out their mistakes directly and immediately. The manager only documented workers' inappropriate behavior on file after three verbal warnings. And, the file record would not have any concrete effects until there were three documented records; at this time workers could be dismissed. 'A single mistake', Ada clarified, 'will not be written down until an employee makes the same mistake three times'. Making the same mistake more than three times is interpreted as disrespect for her authority. The physical record acted as a final powerful deterrent.

As we know from Dorothy Smith's work on texts in institutions of power (Smith, 1990, 2005), written texts are considered to be more powerful than oral ones because they constitute traces and can be entextualized in order to serve as evidence (for example, of poor work performance) for further action (firing someone). Further, those whose practices or behaviors are recorded usually do not know the consequences of these entextualized records. Here we find the logic of keeping people in a situation of suspense and ignorance as a technique of discipline. As the manager explained: 'if you talk to them and they ignore you, first time, second time, but then you put it in writing and you ask them to sign, immediately it works, because they don't know what this will lead to, what things gonna to happen tomorrow'.

We noticed that managers do not fire employees unless it is recognized as absolutely necessary. Ada dealt with sanction policies flexibly, and all decisions were made by her. Policies from the HR section of Starbucks headquarters and rules imposed by the district manager were only a reference for her, not a requirement. Ada found it disrespectful to put a permanent record

on a worker's file without sufficient prior attempts to solve the problem interpersonally. 'I'm here to remind them, that's my job. To correct them. I'm not that fond of paper work. It's only for some of that really ignoring'. Here is again the principle of care and trust, used both to build confidence as well as to conduct surveillance, albeit softly. Workers did not consider Ada's 'caring' to be a means of disciplining or punishing them for deviating from the rules and regulations affecting their laboring bodies at Starbucks. Yamato, for example, was convinced that as long Ada cared about her and helped her improve the quality of her work, she
would not be punished or dismissed for her inappropriate behavior.

Ada's presence on the floor and her daily interactions with workers allowed her to situate each of her employees within the Starbucks system of grades and promotion and to assess their potential for promotion. Like a good 'mother', she knew her workers well. She noted that although Rea could be promoted from shift supervisor to assistant store manager, she found her too 'childish' and unwilling to do the 'additional work required for such a position'. That is, in the past, Rea had refused to work the morning shift, instead showing preference for the afternoon shift starting at 2pm so that she could wake up late and have fun in the evenings. This, according to Ada, was not 'the mature behavior expected by an assistant manager'. 'Vita', she added, 'is another candidate for such a career progression. She knows the job well; however, she struggles with her English.' Rea and Vita were aware of their positions on the career progression ladder. Rea, for one, was not concerned about being promoted. While she needed the extra money, she was worried about the additional workload that this would entail. Vita, on the other hand, struggled a lot with Ada's assessment of her. A promotion would put her in a position of prestige and enhance her professional mobility, which was the initial reason why she moved to London from Spain. According to Ada, the only one who was ready for the job of assistant manager was Erica. Erica was considered to be a good candidate because of her fluent English competence and solid knowledge of Starbucks regulations, scripts and practical work on the floor. Erica, according to Ada, was also an excellent Barista trainer, and good at introducing coffee drinks to customers. In contrast to many other workers, and especially in contrast to Rae and Sally, she was willing to do every shift, including the one in the morning. Sally, on the other hand, needed to be downgraded. Although she had been promoted to the rank of supervisor by the previous manager, Ada reported that her performance had declined dramatically. 'She is forgetting all the standards and everything. It is awful to work with her'.

What is important for us to note at this point is that Ada's assessment of workers' professional capacities and her positioning of these workers within a professional hierarchy is always informed by Starbucks service templates and body rules. For sure, the lines between Ada's personal evaluation and judgements informed solely by the official service templates are blurred, but justification of her assessments did always require an explicit reference to the company's regulations.

During fieldwork, Yamato was one of the workers whose body and conduct was repeatedly sanctioned by Ada. She used to wear white, red, and pink wigs—all colors deviating from the scripts imposed by the Lookbook. And, as her natural hair was pink and long, Lookbook standards required her to tie back her hair with plain clips or hairbands. As a reaction to Yamato's repeated deviant body behavior and her alleged poor quality of work, Ada put her on a so-called 'Performance Improvement Plan' (PIP). The employer uses PIPs to guide employees towards improving their performance; such a plan is always coupled with disciplinary actions. During the PIP, Yamato was assessed and reviewed weekly. The textual evidence produced through these regular reviews are intended to support a worker's improvement; at the same time, this evidence

can be used to justify fair dismissal in the future. In Yamato's first weekly review, Ada noted that she had no energy at the bar, lacked a smile, provided inconsistent beverage quality, was too slow, and was not good at service. It is true that during our fieldwork, Yamato did come across as a person who rarely smiles, and she also described herself in this way. She made an effort to smile more, but still found it hard. Yamato suffers from obstructive sleep apnea that makes it hard for her to sleep and consequently, to smile at work. Her job at Starbucks, standing and moving during long shifts, also causes her severe back pain that prevents her from keeping the pace expected of her. Ada noted this information in her report, but health issues were not considered extenuating circumstances. Broken bodies disturb the service practice and endanger the Starbucks experience expected by customers, so this leaves no room for exceptions, feelings of compassion or mutual care, and uncovers a more cynical interpretation of the 'family' trope.

In addition to Ada, Rae and Erica (two shift supervisors who were candidates for assistant manager) also observed Yamato's work for one day. This happened in the third week of her PIP. Ada provided them with an observation form that helped with the standardization of assessment and feedback. The form lists the items of a barista's key responsibilities, giving the opportunity to rank each according to their observations of Yamato's work practices: speedy service, high-quality beverages, promoting Starbucks culture, evaluating environment constantly, following operational policies, maintaining cleanliness standards, reinforcing individual and team accomplishment, assisting coaching, maintaining punctuality, and meeting the dress code standards. There were four levels of assessment: must improve, meets expectations, above expectation and consistently exceeds.

Both Rae and Erica took the observation seriously, enjoying the extra responsibility of managerial tasks. On Rae's assessment form, all of Yamato's actions were rated at the worst level. Under general comments, Rea summarized: 'speed needs improvement. Be more useful instead standing around doing nothing.' Erica's marks were between 'must improve' and 'meets expectations'. Her overall comments were, 'Please place in assisting others as much they assist you. Be efficient. Keep working on speed. Offer to do tasks. Try to multitask and not have 'tunnelvision'. Don't expect others to work harder than you. Speak louder.'

These negative evaluations of her body and her physical performances hindered Yamato's ability to be promoted to shift supervisor. Since her intention had always been to work in the music business as a performer, she did not consider this to be a major problem. Still, she needed money to pay her bills and to buy accessories and makeup for her show. Over time, her work environment slowly worsened. Along with Rae and Erica's assessment, other co-workers started complaining about her attitude. Her repeated absences and shift delays, in addition to repeated instances of body deviance, motivated Ada to ask her to resign. They came to an agreement that if Yamato would resign by herself, Ada would write her an excellent letter of reference, a gesture that Yamato understood as a sign of Ada's care—the 'family' trope again.

Some scholars have questioned the effect of surveillance on people and their ability to live a more comfortable life. Woydack and Rampton (2016), for example, have argued that scripts are empowering tools that support workers in their attempts to navigate complicated work interactions (also see Woydack and Lockwood, 2017). Other scholars have noted that capitalist theories of labor are never fully integrated bodies of knowledge and that individuals are able to mobilize, rationalize and dialectally engage with, and in certain cases benefit from, this knowledge (Gal, 2016). In this section we argued that surveillance at Starbucks and deviance from the imposed body rules had concrete consequences. This is true not only for Yamato— whose underperformance was noted by different actors in this system of control, and who did not meet

her manager's expectations— but also for other employees. We cannot assess whether or not employees' deviance from templates and body rules had been pivotal in Ada's decision-making. However, we argue that workers' compliance with or deviance from regulations were used to legitimize Ada's decisions, serving as technologies in the regulation of workers' access to grade improvement, promotion, and symbolically-related career ambitions and life projects.

6. **Conclusion**

In this article we have taken Otis (2012)'s concept of 'market-embodied labor' as a starting point for an ethnographic understanding of the role of serving bodies in consumer economies. By focusing on the surveillance practices at a Starbucks store in London, we have examined the complex mechanism through which serving bodies of female workers are made to fit customers' expectations and desires for distinction. We have particularly pointed to the ways that service templates help workers to become extensions of the Starbucks corporate brand and how this alignment with the firm's stated values necessitates the enactment of social deference and subordination, resulting in an erasure of the classed histories that workers' bodies display.

Now, while our analysis has insisted on the disciplining practices that workers are subjected to at Starbucks, we showed that 'market-embodied labor' is not only about subjectivity. 'Market-embodied labor', we explained, is also a condition for the perpetuation of a relation of subordination between service workers and customers— an asymmetrical relation that is anchored in longer histories of class inequality. We have also claimed that the female workers we encountered at Starbucks are differentially subjected to the punishing effects of deviant bodily practices and that these differences point again to hierarchies and forms of inequality within the group of workers themselves.

This contribution of course heavily relies on Michel Foucault's work on biopolitics (2008) and on the different techniques through which bodies are regulated and disciplined. However, while Michel Foucault understands the disciplining of bodies as means to enhance productivity and physical capacity as well as to securitize territory and populations (for example, the disposing of bodies and things in order to generate wealth and prosperity), the type of regulatory power we analyzed in this contribution is rather a means to reproduce subordination and class distinction. Workers' bodies, and the signs and values they mediate, are used by employers such as Starbucks to organize relations with customers.

We know from sociolinguistic research on service work that language places a key role in managing relations with customers (Urciuoli & LaDousa, 2012). Scholars have particularly noted that in situations where the workers and customer interaction is mediated by the phone, that is, by a technical device that enables the absence of the workers' bodies and foregrounds the workers' voices, language becomes the only medium through which the worker can do service (Duchêne, 2009). Language allows the management of customers' affective disposition towards a company and its services and enables the company to foster specific desires in order to influence consumption choices (Cameron, 2000). However, in the type of service work documented here, workers are present with their entire physicality, not only with their voices. Therefore, their bodies are seen as more than sources of manual exertion, whose capacities need to be coordinated and optimized. Bodies, we have noted, are also managed in order to communicate messages about the company that they are meant to embody.

We want to conclude by saying that we need to know more about the differential ways workers appropriate body rules and learn to meet the demands of their employers. We know that

given the female body's constant subjections to regulation and valuation, women internalize quite early in their lives the socially and culturally marked body rules that employers eventually expect them to enact. What we need to know more about, however, are workers' unequal capabilities to enact those internalized body rules—that is, about the circumstances under which workers succeed or fail to meet the physical demands of their employers and about the corporal dispositions allowing or preventing them to do so. What we also need to understand are the ways in which workers navigate these body expectations, how they cope with and subvert these body rules and how they use these rules to enact alternative projects and agendas.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. Data was collected by Mingdan. Data was analyzed jointly by Mingdan and Alfonso.
2. All personal names are pseudonyms.

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