

Consuming Lattes and Labor, or Working at Starbucks

Bryant Simon
Temple University

Abstract

This is an ethnographic portrait of working at one of the most conspicuous components of the neoliberal order: the upscale looking, fast-food acting coffee chain, Starbucks. Simon discusses the emotional labors of being a happy and chatty “partner” (employee), the difficulties of the uneven scheduling, the unexpected physical aspects of the job, and the culture of conformity at the nation’s largest seller of coffee and affordable luxury. The essay assesses the corporations’ reputation for being a good employer and contains extensive interviews with Wobblies trying to organize the chain. It suggests how workers are consumed by and with the brand in what the author calls “New Age welfare capitalism.”

To serve its nearly 50 million weekly customers, Starbucks employs around 150,000 workers around the world.¹ (This doesn’t count the people who grow, pick, load, and sort the beans at origin.) Most of these women and men either take money at the cash register or make and serve hot and cold drinks. They wipe down counters and scrub toilets, mop floors and clean the grout between the tiles in the bathroom, unpack boxes of cups and haul bags of trash out to the sidewalk, load CD racks and refill half-and-half dispensers, arrange the scones in the cases in the morning and wash out the coffee machines and blenders at night. But the jobs entail more than taking money, making drinks, and cleaning up.

The millions—really the middle-class millions—pour into Starbucks every day for caffeine and milk and sugar fixes, but they don’t just come for the buzz. They come to Starbucks because the company, in many ways, sells them back their desires—desires for status, individuality, predictability, and global justice. Yet nothing is free in the world of money and exchange. Satisfying one group’s collective desires inevitably costs others. The everyday indulgences people pay for at Starbucks take something from the environment (all the cups get burned up or shoved into a landfill), the character of communities (if every place has a Starbucks, how can you tell one place from another?), and the minds and bodies of the frontline employees who serve the coffee and create the company’s comfy couch culture of wish fulfillment and staged authenticity. That is what this article is about: what lattes, what service work in general, take from the people who make them.

Still, the fact that working at Starbucks has costs doesn’t mean that the job doesn’t give something back. Let’s get this out of the way. Of course, most people work at Starbucks for the money and the access to health benefits.

And Starbucks pays okay, if not great. The company pays a bit better than McDonalds and Wal-Mart, but not as much as the Container Store or UPS.² One Canadian trade unionist conceded that Starbucks acts like a “pretty good employer,” quickly adding, however, that is by the “abysmal” standards of the service sector.³ A former employee put it to me this way: She applied for a job at Starbucks after a friend told her it was a “decent shit job.” On average, Starbucks’ workers get paid about \$8.00 per hour plus tips—as little as \$1.25 per hour and as much as \$2.50 per hour—for their labor.⁴ With the money they earn, they become consumers.⁵ They pay their rent and light, heat and cool their homes. They purchase Internet access and cell phone service and kick in for their healthcare. They make car payments and pay back student loans. They buy six-packs of beer and jugs of milk, jars of Trader Joe’s spaghetti sauce and packets of Ramen noodles, Gap t-shirts and Old Navy sweaters, and for work, khaki pants and sensible shoes to protect their feet.

Clearly Starbucks workers do their part to grease the wheels of the modern consumer economy. But to get the money to buy the stuff they need and want, they have to work; they have to sell their labor. That makes Starbucks not just a consumer of coffee or distinct Main Streets or large tracts of landfill space, but also a consumer of time, bodies and, even, minds.

Like most people, Starbucks workers spend twenty to forty-five minutes getting ready for work. It takes them, probably, another half hour to get to their jobs. On average, Starbucks baristas work twenty-four to thirty hours per week. So if you add it all up—the amount of time it takes to prepare for work, get there, and then do the job and come home—Starbucks consumes 3.4 million person-hours per week. Over the course of a year, Starbucks employees spend more than 143 million hours in the stores making our lattes, asking customers (us) how our days are going, and cleaning up after us. That’s a lot of time. Despite all this time and effort, most Starbucks employees don’t get paid enough or get enough hours to make a living wage, that is, enough to support themselves or live on their own. For some this bargain is alright. They see the job as temporary or themselves as voiceless, but others are starting to raise questions.

Around midnight every day, Google sends me a news alert with a list of links to articles about Starbucks. That’s where I first learned about the Starbucks Workers Union—then a group of New York-based employees trying to organize the world’s largest coffee shop company. Obviously these stories interested me. But I think I would have been intrigued even if I wasn’t working on a book about Starbucks. The Starbucks Workers Union was affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World, better known as the IWW or the Wobblies.

During the early part of the last century, the Wobblies, led by union legends Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Big Bill Haywood, organized miners and millhands from Butte, Montana to Baltimore, Maryland around the twin radical faiths “One Big Union” and the abolition of wage slavery. Everywhere they went

they stood up for working people's rights to free speech and free association. After the Knights of Labor and before the CIO, they organized the unorganized. Between fiery speeches from union leaders, IWW troubadours sang songs about long hours, dangerous mill shafts, nasty bosses and fallen comrades. The union's ranks swelled around the time of the First World War. But that would be the high watermark. Battered by picket-line violence, blacklisting, and government and management repression, the IWW disappeared in the fierce wave of 1920s-era antiunionism. At least that's what I thought. Turns out, the union never faded away, not entirely. So when a couple of committed militants and union activists started to organize at Starbucks in New York and turned to the IWW, the union, by then down to about 2,500 members nationwide, lent its name to the David vs. Goliath fight. Reporters, not surprisingly, loved the story, writing articles with headlines like "Baristas of the World, Unite! You have nothing to lose but your company mandated cheerfulness," and "Starbucks Gets Wobbly."⁶

By the time I got in touch with Tomer, Daniel, Suley, and Kevin of IWW Local 600—the retail workers division of the Wobblies—they had been engaged in their campaign for eighteen months. By this point, they had enlisted only a few dozen committed members. Despite these modest gains, the union was clearly getting under Starbucks' skin. The company paid thousands of dollars for the advice of a pricey antiunion law firm. But the Wobblies didn't disappear. The company tried the soft sell. According to a government report, Starbucks store managers and supervisors gave workers pizzas, gym passes, and baseball tickets "to encourage [them] to withdraw their support" from the union. There was a harder-edged response at the same time. Trying to make the union go away, Starbucks officials allegedly harassed Wobbly supporters, cutting their hours, threatening dismissal, barring them from talking about organizing drives even during their off-hours, refusing to allow them to wear union pins, and citing them, but not others, for a host of petty violations of the firm's textbook-sized employee manual. Two workers claimed that the company fired them for organizing. While the coffee giant denied these charges, they did agree after a hearing in front of the National Labor Relations Board to reinstate the pair and pay back-wages.⁷ While the SWU never thrived, over the course of 2007 and 2008, a smattering of Starbucks workers in Boston; Chicago; Pittsburgh, Grand Rapids, Michigan; San Francisco; and London enlisted in the union organizing campaign.⁸

I met with union members one Friday night at Alt.Coffee on Avenue A between St. Mark's Place and Ninth Street in New York's East Village. With its mixed and matched Salvation Army couches, flickering trash-picked table lamps, and quirky, urban hip "we-won't-do-anything-for-the-customer" rules—wall signs announced: "NO SLEEPING: YOU WILL BE RUDELY AWOKEN AND KICKED OUT" and "DO NOT PLUG YOUR LAPTOPS INTO THE OUTLETS—NO EXCEPTIONS"—this was an anti-Starbucks kind of place.⁹ And it wasn't really a professor's hangout either. With my short spiky graying hair, black Timbuk2 bag, and almost pressed J. Crew shirt,

I stuck out among the twenty-something service workers and punks drinking coffee and reading from the leftover sections of the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice* strewn across the side tables and chairs. But the music spilling out of the speakers put me at ease. As I walked in, the coffee slingers—I didn't think they wanted to be called baristas—put on one of my very own Desert Island Disks, Chris Bell's obscure and dreamy pop collection from the 1970s, "I Am the Cosmos." I ordered a coffee—a dollar for a ceramic cup with hot milk—and told the guy in the worn cords and t-shirt one size too small and not quite as white as it used to be that I liked the music. He looked a bit surprised and said, "Right on, man." Affirmation. I gave him a dollar tip and took a seat near the door.

Even though I wrote my first book on workers and unions, I had never met a real life Wobbly in person before that night. Still I had no trouble recognizing them. Tomer, who I later learned studied labor history at Cornell with a friend of mine, got there first. He wore baggy pants and a black knit hat with a red and white IWW patch in the middle. The others arrived shortly after and we crowded around a tiny rectangular table in the front of the cafe.

I had thought ahead of time about what I would ask them first. Inspired by Ed Bradley and Morley Safer's examples, I developed a plan of attack, really a plan of surprise. Like those Kings of Sunday night television, I thought I might catch my informants off guard by asking them at the outset what they *liked* about the job. It didn't work for me. No one said anything right away, they just looked at each other and then at me. Finally Tomer spoke up. (He still had on the Wobbly cap.) "Sure," he said. "My coworkers. They are some of the best people I have ever met. We hang out. They're my friends."

After not getting far with my first question, I asked them why they initially started working for Starbucks. They didn't jump at this one either, but Kevin, the youngest of the bunch, responded rather flatly that he "was looking for a job." The others nodded their heads in agreement. "During the training," he added, he saw a video and heard stuff about the "Starbucks experience" and thought "it was a cool place . . . it was a cool point of view." The others didn't nod their heads in agreement to this observation.

After the warm-up questions, I switched gears. "So what don't you like about the job?" I asked. Again, Tomer led off. "You are encouraged to treat the customers like celebrities," he said. He talked about how managers pressured him to make eye contact, start up conversations, and act like he cared about the customer's stocks woes or plumbing problems.¹⁰ But the worst he said was, "you have to keep a straight face when they order those ridiculous drinks." The other three laughed out loud when he said that.

Then I asked about the job itself. What didn't they like about the work? I didn't know what to expect on this front. "SLEEP!" they all yelled at once.

"This job," Tomer declared, "fucks with your sleep."

"This especially happens if you work the late shift," Daniel pointed out, "and have to return in the morning." Everyone again nodded. They all talked about how, although they worked in Manhattan, they couldn't afford to live

there. That meant long commutes, as much as another hour and a half and three different trains to get to the job. If you worked the night shift, followed by a morning shift, that could mean, Daniel and Tomer pointed out, almost no sleep.

“What else?” I asked.

Tomer mentioned the “Starbucks hump.”

“What’s that?” I wondered.

Tomer answered by standing up and pushing his shoulders forward making it look like there was an invisible weight hanging from his neck pulling the top of his body down in front of him over his shoes. “That’s how I feel after a six-hour shift,” Tomer explained. “My back hurts, my feet hurt, my brain hurts. When I’m finished working,” he continued, “I feel like . . .” He didn’t complete the sentence. Instead he put his finger to his temple, pressed down his thumb, and made the sound of a gunshot.

Working at Starbucks, the union backers maintained, consumed another part of them—“their voices.” Kevin and Suley reminded me how noisy it can get at Starbucks. Blenders whirl, customers talk into cell phones, the milk steamer hisses, and in the background, the music plays and plays. A few hours of calling out drinks over this blast of sound left their vocal chords raw and hurting. Each of the workers I talked with told me that they occasionally lost their voices and could barely talk after work. Several worried about the long-term impact on their hearing.

Then they all chimed in about the music. Listening to the same songs again and again, Kevin said, drove him crazy. “It’s like a form of musical torture,” he joked. Before he started fueling people with caffeine at Starbucks, he played Bob Dylan songs at home and on his iPod all the time. But then Dylan let the coffee company release a few of his older live shows, including a classic 1962 session from the New York City club the Gaslight.¹¹ Kevin heard this CD so many times that now when he hears Dylan’s signature raspy voice or the crisp folk sound of his harmonica, he starts to think of work, of long lines of jittery people demanding an “extra hot venti vanilla latte with three pumps of raspberry right now.” In a sense, Starbucks took Dylan from him.

At this point, Daniel took over the conversation. I knew from those Google news alert articles that he was the leader of this leaderless union. Up to this point, he hadn’t said much. Behind his dark hair, black pants with holes in the knees, and three or four days of stumble, he looked tired and pale, like a literature graduate student in the last push to turn in his dissertation to his cantankerous and unpredictable advisor. Turns out, though, the Los Angeles native didn’t study Melville on the side and was no accidental trade unionist. His grandfather drove a truck and belonged to the Teamsters. Before he started serving coffee, he delivered packages and shelved books at Borders. Everywhere he went, he preached the gospel of trade unionism.¹²

As we talked about the IWW’s push against Starbucks, the somber, slightly distant look on his face melted away. He became animated and engaging. You could see why other workers would listen to him and follow his lead into the union. He radiated a determined confidence. Even more, he lived their lives.

He started talking about what I gathered were familiar and common “barista” pains. He said that because Starbucks chronically understaffed its stores, workers suffered from a range of repetitive motion ailments. Making things worse, none of the stores, he said, used ergonomically sound designs. As a result, he continued, leaning forward in his chair and tapping his fist into his palm, workers endured a variety of avoidable back and foot pains. Some days, he said, he has trouble moving his wrists. At the Gothic Revival church remade into a Starbucks where he worked, all twenty-dollar bills went into a cash box on the floor. Every time a customer paid with one of those crisp ATM twenties, the person on the register had to bend all the way over. After doing this again and again, Daniel declared, your lower back started to throb.

Working at the espresso machine was worse. Piping hot milk sprayed Daniel’s hands and splattered on his forearms. Putting finished lattes and cappuccinos up on the half-moon bar required a long reach at a weird angle. Doing this a few hundred times, Daniel insisted, strained muscles you didn’t even know you had. Slips and falls, he continued, happened all the time. “Not a week goes by,” Daniel proclaimed, “without burns.” One time, he told me, he watched as a new employee singed her arm replacing a huge coffee filter. “She just started shaking like she was having a seizure,” Daniel remembered, shaking his own head as he recalled the story.¹³

Before I met Daniel, Kevin, Suley, and Tomer that night, I spent two hours observing the comings and goings at a Manhattan Starbucks store. Unlike Nike and Wal-Mart, Starbucks doesn’t try to erase the commodity wall standing between consumers and the labor that produces the things they buy. Actually it does just the opposite; it tries to make workers—at least the workers seen by most customers—and their on-the-job treatment and benefits part of the company’s story and appeal. Perhaps most important, these factors are cited as a reason—a reasonable reason—to pay more for the coffee.¹⁴ Offering a hint at how this works, an Indiana journalist wrote in 2007, “It’s worth also mentioning [that] Starbucks provides benefits like vacation days, insurance packages, and stocks plans to any employee who works twenty hours a week or more, which I think also helps warrant the price tags on the overhead coffee menu.”¹⁵

Most likely, he got his information about Starbucks from Starbucks. On the door of the Broadway store where I went that day hung a sign. I had seen it before at other outlets, but I studied it more closely that day knowing I was talking to the Wobblies later that night. Leisha, a caramel-skinned woman in a green apron smiles and “says” in bold face print, “Health benefits, a 401K plan, and growth opportunities.” Under that, she “talks” about how much fun she has at her Starbucks job and how great it is to love what you do. Another sign on the door of a Starbucks near Penn Station said simply, “Health Care Matters: Apply Today.” Another urged prospective employees to “Dream Venti. Our Careers will Inspire You. Create the Experience.” “Love What You Do,” declared the sign on the door of a Chicago store I visited some months later. Under that, it introduced Matt, a regional manager with fifteen

years of experience working at the company. His story went like this: “Like a good cup of Sumatra, a job at Starbucks is likely to make you feel warm and inspired. It’s a great pleasure to connect with people. With [the] health benefits we offer you can feel good about your future.”

Company chairman and CEO Howard Schultz sounds these same themes all the time. Just about every time he talks to a journalist he tells them—and they usually write it down or repeat it—how much his company cares about its employees. Partners, he calls them. As evidence, he points to the free weekly pound of coffee and stock options—the Bean Stock program—the company offers its employees. But health benefits are usually Schultz’s key talking point. Starbucks, he never fails to mention, provides broad medical coverage for part-timers. He maintains that Starbucks spends more money on health care than coffee. (What does that say about how much coffee growers and pickers are getting paid?) But he is quick to add that he remains committed to this expenditure (although he thinks the government should step in and do something). He does it, he says, for the workers, but really in honor of his working-class dad. One day, he recalls, he came home from school and found his parents in tears. His father had broken his ankle, but he had no health insurance and very little savings. Fear gripped the young Schultz. Once he took over Starbucks, the company chairman says, he vowed “to build a kind of company my father never got a chance to work for.”¹⁶ Sometimes but not always, he will add that the availability of health benefits enhances the company’s profitability by limiting turnover, but his real point is about his father.

The story of Schultz and his injured dad has been woven into company lore. Journalist Alex Frankel went undercover to work at Starbucks and report on the lives of front-line employees in the service economy. On his first day wearing a green apron, Marty, his supervisor, sat down with Frankel for a French-pressed, freshly brewed cup of Ethiopian Sidoma. Marty told him how the beans took on a citrusy flavor because they grew next to lemon trees. Then he asked, as Frankel recalled, “what the name Howard Schultz meant to me.” Frankel answered that he thought he was the chairman of Starbucks. Marty nodded and then continued, muddling a detail here and there. “He told me,” writes Frankel, “about Howard growing up in the projects of New York and his father getting hurt while his mother was pregnant with her fourth child. He said that Schultz’s father worked for a company that did not have workers’ compensation, so the family had trouble paying its bills. This is why,” Marty concluded, “Howard Schultz cares so much about us, the partners.”¹⁷

The messages delivered to employees, on the signs of store doors and through Schultz’s television and radio interviews, all seem to work. They stick in people’s heads. When I tell people I’m writing about Starbucks, they invariably ask me, “it’s a good company isn’t it?” Before I can respond, they answer their own question, saying “they provide their workers, even part-timers, with healthcare, right?” Bill Clinton and the editors of *Fortune Magazine* feel the same way. At a White House ceremony during his presidency, Clinton applauded long-time Democrat Schultz for how well he treated his

employees. The business magazine regularly singles out the firm in its annual issue on the nation's top one hundred companies to work for. Last year, it ranked Starbucks twenty-ninth. And this, it seems, is part of the appeal of Starbucks. The company tells you that the person serving your desires likes what she or he is doing, so you don't have to feel bad about them serving you.¹⁸

"Nothing," Daniel Gross insisted when I asked him about Starbucks and its healthcare plan, "is what it appears." He told me that Howard Schultz isn't lying; his company does provide health benefits to part-timers. "But that's all there are at Starbucks," Daniel snapped. Everyone in the stores, except for the managers, is part-time. And everyone contributes to his or her coverage. There is no free ride. Starbucks asks workers to kick in \$80 to \$100—as much as fifteen percent of their income—per month for healthcare—and that is for the cheapest option the company offers, basically, catastrophic health coverage. (One of the Wobblies I talked with, Suley, had four children and opted out of the Starbucks' plan, because, she said, it cost too much. She relied instead on Medicaid.) Even then, Gross argued, it isn't that simple. Only about forty to forty-five percent of Starbucks employees sign up for the company's coverage. Wal-Mart, Daniel explained, covers a higher percentage. (Starbucks' officials don't dispute this number. Many baristas, Audrey Lincoff, a company spokeswoman who has since left the firm, told me as we drove through Seattle in her bright red convertible, rely on their parents or partner's benefits. Overall, she estimated that eighty percent of the company's employees have some form of healthcare coverage.¹⁹) In order to qualify to pay for Starbucks' health benefits, employees must work 240 hours per quarter, about twenty hours per week. That means the schedule—really the control over the schedule—represents a crucial issue.

Store managers draw up the schedule every two weeks. "You don't really know when you are going to work," Daniel told me, with the others once again nodding in unison. "You are never guaranteed work or hours and the length of [your] shifts varies." Sure, the hours are flexible, as the signs on the coffee shop door tell prospective employees, but as Daniel explained to journalist Anya Kamenetz, "they are flexible for the boss, not for you."²⁰

I asked a lot of questions about this. What I learned was that under the Starbucks system, the store manager possesses tremendous power. There is no formal seniority nor does anyone have a set schedule. You never know from week to week when you will work or how many hours you will get. That means, as one employee put it, "your paycheck is really unstable."²¹ If you need time off, you have to ask. If you have a second job—and at ten dollars per hour with tips it is hard to pay for food, a place to live, clothes, a car, and phone, especially if you are on your own or living in a big city like New York or Boston—you have to ask. If you don't want to work a late-night shift followed by an early morning shift, you have to ask. But if you ask too much, you could lose your hours, and if you lose too many hours, you lose your healthcare coverage. So healthcare acts as both a carrot and a stick. It gets people to sign up with the company, and then it keeps them there and keeps them quiet.

As the IWW supporters described to me how the scheduling worked, I kept thinking of one of my favorite books from graduate school—David Montgomery’s *Worker’s Control in America*. With his characteristic thick description, Montgomery recounts life on the shop floor for workers a hundred years ago.²² In most places outside of the highly skilled crafts, foremen held all the cards. They decided who worked and who didn’t, who made some money and who didn’t. Only the advent of mass trade unionism in the 1930s loosened the foreman’s daily grip on power. But the Starbucks experience that the Wobblies described at Alt.Coffee sounded to me like a throwback to those mean, capricious days that Montgomery wrote about so clearly.²³

The day after I went to New York, I got on my computer and on the phone. I got in touch with as many Starbucks workers as I could. I asked them about sleep, injuries, swollen arches, and nagging pains, and even more, about scheduling, managers, and healthcare. I wanted to know about waiting on customers and dealing with supervisors. I wanted to see—I guess—if the IWW story checked out. Really, I wanted to learn more.

Symbol Lai wrote back first. Symbol stands just about five feet tall, but with her buzz haircut and light-up-the-room smile, she is hard to miss. When we sat down to talk at La Columbe, a “French” coffee shop in Center City, Philadelphia, she had just completed her fourth year at Temple University and her fifth year at Starbucks.

“The best thing about Starbucks,” Symbol laughed, talking about one of the company’s employee benefits, “is the pound of coffee you get each week. I never run out.” But the job, she volunteered, was taking a toll on her body. Just twenty-two years old and in pretty good shape from karate workouts, she suffered from back and shoulder pain. Her heels ached all the time and she had, when we talked, just gotten over a long and painful bout of shin splints. Symbol worried, moreover, that the noise on the job would result in permanent hearing loss down the road. Then she laughed again. “But what I am really dreading,” she chuckled, “is when Starbucks starts playing Hendrix. Because when they do, they will play him over and over again.” Then she would end up, she lamented, not liking the bluesy left-handed guitar wizard anymore.

Like Tomer, Symbol also couldn’t stand the “emotional labor,” to borrow sociologist Arlie Hochschild’s telling phrase, demanded by the job. Like the flight attendants Hochschild studied, Starbucks’ clerks are called upon to deliver not just coffee, but also to create through their tone, faces, and moods “a particular emotional state in others.”²⁴ Starbucks calls this “legendary service.” According to the *Learning Journey Guide*, the Starbucks employee manual, “basic service” creates “satisfied customers” by meeting client’s expectations with “speed, accuracy, quality product, and cleanliness.” Legendary service goes several steps further by exceeding expectations and creating “loyal, *enthusiastically satisfied* customers.”

The manual gets into the nitty-gritty of how to manufacture loyalty: “Personalization—Knowing customers’ names/or drinks or personal

preferences.” Unlike at the deli counter, visitors aren’t supposed to be numbers at Starbucks. Coffee coaches instruct baristas to ask for customers’ first names when they order. The company put this system in place not just to sort out who gets what, but also to help employees get to know the regulars as quickly as possible. That way, they can address them by name when they come through the door every day.

The employee manual lays out several instructional “legendary service scenarios.” In one, a worker hands a customer a drink and says, “Tall mocha, thank you.” “Basic or legendary?” the manual asks baristas in training. “Basic,” is the answer, “because it what the customer expects. It is a polite response, but there is no personal connection.” To upgrade the service, the manual recommends that workers say something along these lines: “Thanks, John, enjoy your mocha!” By putting it this way, the manual explains, “The partner recognized the customer by name. There was a personal connection.”²⁵

The *Green Apron Book*, the shorter, handier company-issued guide for Starbucks workers, reminds “partners,” to be “welcoming, genuine, considerate, knowledgeable.” “It is a little forced,” Symbol admitted. “We are judged,” she elaborated, “if we say hello. You have to smile and make eye contact.” If you want to go “above and beyond,” she said rolling her eyes as she coughed out the last phrase from the employee manual and the *Green Apron Book*, “you have to start customer conversations.” Sounding just like Tomer, she said that you have to pretend you care about their vacation plans and car troubles, what they drank yesterday and what they will eat today.

I asked her if she ever got reprimanded for not engaging enough with customers. “Yes,” she cracked, “on a recent report, I got shit for ‘not being friendly enough.’”

Symbol asked her manager what that meant. He told her to “smile more with your eyes.” Repeating this phrase made Symbol, who laughs easily, smile and roll her eyes again. “You know, after you have been working for a while, it is hard to say ‘Have a nice day’ to the hundredth customer.” It got even harder when latte lovers made sexist jokes or racist comments or condescending remarks. “Just because you work at Starbucks,” Symbol told me, “some people think they are better than you.” After a while, she said, “you just want to tell them ‘to shut fuck up,’ but you can’t because how else are you going to get healthcare coverage?”

The emotional labor of the job also requires looking the part. Starbucks says it encourages workers to be themselves. But not too much. Symbol knows about this from experience. Like everyone who puts on the green apron, she made sure not to wear dangly earrings or get a tattoo she couldn’t cover up. “You cut your hair,” Greg, her manager, used to say to women, “I cut your hours.” When Symbol shaved her head, Greg grouched that she “didn’t look like a girl anymore” and told her to make sure she wore a hat at work.

As Symbol told me this, I remembered an article I had read about an Indo-Canadian woman and Starbucks employee named Asiha Syed. In 2002,

a store manager told Syed to remove her nose stud saying it was against company policy. (The Starbucks dress code does not allow any “facial jewelry.”) Syed refused to comply, saying that the nose stud was “part of my identity as an Indian woman, it connects me to my grandmothers.” Starbucks officials refused to budge and fired her.²⁶

Still, Symbol maintained, the schedule remained the worst thing about the job. “It is so erratic,” she stressed, adding, “it is hard to get your life organized.” Starbucks consumed her days off as well as her days on. “All I do is sleep and lounge around,” Symbol said of her time away from work, “It is quite a miracle when I do anything productive . . . Sometimes I sleep twelve hours on my days off.”

I sat down again with Symbol a few months after our first meeting. She told me about a couple of confrontations she had had with her manager, Greg. “If you work, say, holidays,” she said, “you get rewarded” with more hours (and more pay). But if you request a lot of days off, your hours could get cut. That’s unless you are one of Greg’s personal favorites. “Then,” Symbol said, “you can get away with stuff.”²⁷ Symbol, however, wasn’t one of Greg’s favorites. At some point, she recalled, “I wasn’t getting enough hours because of my school schedule. I went below my 240 hours for a quarter.” She worried about losing her healthcare. She begged Greg for more shifts, and she got them—all on Saturdays. Symbol told me she hated working Saturdays because people who didn’t know how to order packed the store and held up the lines. Greg knew about her preference but put her on anyway, even while he let others with less seniority pick their hours. Another time, Greg cut her hours without notice, again pushing her close to losing her healthcare. When she asked him about it, he told her that he had hired a bunch of new workers who needed hours and were willing to work any shift. Symbol thought she had at least informal seniority, but she quickly found out that this didn’t exist or matter. Again she had to pick up some weekend and holiday shifts to keep her healthcare.

A year or so later, with Symbol still in school, Greg kept scheduling her to close the store at night. On those shifts, she wouldn’t get out until after midnight, and then, still jacked up from the coffee and the noise, she couldn’t fall asleep. When the alarm rang in the morning, she had to drag herself out of bed and later in the day she had to pinch herself to stay awake in class. (She must have pinched herself pretty hard because Symbol graduated with honors in History and American Studies.) Symbol asked Greg “to keep an eye out for this” and to balance out her schedule with a few day shifts. He responded by putting her on three 5:30 a.m. shifts in a single week. Once again, Symbol went to talk with him. “You are requesting lots of changes,” he snapped, “You know your hours will be cut. The more requests you make, the more your hours will be cut.” Worried that Greg might follow through on his threats and slash her hours, Symbol backed down. She didn’t want to risk losing her healthcare coverage.²⁸

Not long after this confrontation with her boss, Symbol decided to move to Hawaii for a while to check it out and begin studying Asian culture on the side. Before she did, she got into another spat with Greg; this time over a prank. As her shift wound down, she and another coworker Velcroed the last cupcake in the case to a plate and then Velcroed the plate to the ceiling. Greg didn't think it was very funny and he fired her for insubordination. A couple days after her termination, I talked to Symbol over the phone. "I have been sleeping nonstop," she told me. "I guess that's just how tired I was." Starbucks, it seems, continued to consume her time and body even after she left the company.

Symbol introduced me to Beth Johnson, a coworker at the same Haddonfield, New Jersey, Starbucks. By the time we sat down to talk, she had been with the company for nine years. Thirtyish with plain-Jane looks, dark hair, and a quiet, rather reserved manner, she told me that she rarely made any schedule requests. As a result, she thought, Greg gave her "pretty good hours."

"What did you work last week?" I asked, trying to get a gauge on her definition of "good hours."

On a napkin, she scribbled down her shifts for me:

Monday: 5:30AM–2PM

Tuesday: 2:30PM–11PM

Wednesday: 10AM–6:30PM (She told me she didn't like this shift because she really didn't get off until after 7:30PM.)

Thursday: 5:30AM–2PM

Friday: Off

Saturday: 8AM–4:30PM

Even with these good hours, she felt the job in every part of her body. After nine years at Starbucks lifting milk jugs and bags of ground coffee and bending over to pick up cardboard boxes of cups and shelves of lids, Beth said, her back hurt all the time. On the old semiautomatic machines, she recalled, her wrists throbbed and she regularly got burned. These days she gets burned a lot less. (Most of the workers I talked with actually prefer the automatic machines. Even though these devices took some of the skill away from the job, it saved them wear and tear on their bodies.) Mostly, however, she felt chronically tired and sleep deprived. Even with those "good hours," she barely got a regular night's sleep.

I wanted to talk to an employee with a more positive view. Matt Lassiter, who teaches US history at the University of Michigan, suggested that I contact one of his students. He described Abe Lorber to me as smart, combative, loquacious, and somewhat conservative. Abe, he said, worked at Starbucks and occasionally sparred with some of the more liberal students in his History of the Suburbs class over the role of large corporations in contemporary American life. By the time I tracked Abe down over e-mail and then by phone, he had left Starbucks after five years with the company so he could concentrate full time

on law school. Still, he announced right away, “I love capitalism, and Starbucks has a good business model.” While Starbucks isn’t perfect, Abe conceded, it isn’t a monster. Instead, he argued, it is “better than most.” Overall, he maintained, the company treated him well. In fact, he told me he had earned enough money from the company’s employee stock options program to pay for his fiancée’s engagement ring. Well, I thought, I had found my non-Wobbly.

After talking for a while, I shared with Abe some of the things that the union members, Symbol, and Beth had told me. About scheduling, Abe, who served as a shift supervisor, explained: “Starbucks uses an Automated Labor Scheduler (ALS) which formulates schedules for the week based on employee availability.²⁹ Managers (or assistants, but not shift supervisors like me) have the ability to go into ALS and make specific schedule changes, giving them absolute power to determine schedules. Managers do tend to exercise this power with some bias, giving preferred hours and days off to preferred, senior, or particularly hard-working employees.” “I have never heard,” he responded to a question I asked about abuses of the system, “not even a rumor, of a manager accepting bribes for scheduling favors. I have heard a rumor, however, that managers are strongly encouraged to let ALS be and that ‘Corporate’ has a way of monitoring the number of changes they make to the computer-generated ALS schedule.”

When I asked about aches, pains, and other health issues, he explained, “It is true that burns, cuts and scrapes are extremely common. Less common, but existent, are repetitive motion injuries.” Then he added an interesting insight. “In my experience,” Abe wrote in an e-mail, “the burns, cuts, and scrapes are marks of pride, necessary mementos of doing the job. Employees are known to show off their ‘barista’s hands,’ the honor going to the one whose hands are most scarred and torn.” Despite all the bravado, Abe stressed, sleep—and by implication the unpredictable allocation of shifts and hours—remained a persistent problem and the hardest thing for workers. “The randomness of some of the scheduling,” he argued, “does sometimes contribute to inconsistent hours of sleep, a situation that I believe has scientifically been proven to increase risk of injury and decrease psychological health.”

Sandy Griffin spent five years as a 911 dispatcher before going back to school at Temple University. To make ends meet and avoid the worst of the fast-food rut, but mostly to get health coverage, she took a job at Starbucks. When I spoke to her, she was fed up. Sandy described working at Starbucks as an almost daily battle to maintain her dignity, individuality, and sense of herself against the company’s determined psychological incursions and relentless self-mythologizing. Starbucks, she claimed, wanted it all: It wanted her time and her labor. Really, it wanted to consume her, to turn her face, her words, and her emotions into a commodity.

As I mentioned earlier, I started my academic career as a labor historian. The very first article I published discussed a benevolent, some said paternalistic, Greensboro, North Carolina, employer, the Cone family.³⁰ Each year, these Jewish denim manufacturers gave their workers Christmas hams. During other seasons, they sponsored company baseball teams and marching bands,

health clinics and adult education classes. They paid their employees a little more than their competitors and built sturdier houses for them than the mill owners down the road. Labor historians in those days—both the Cones' days and my first days of graduate school—called these kinds of actions “welfare capitalism,” and were absolutely clear about the policies' intention: the employers wanted their employees to identify with the firm, not with each other. Welfare capitalism acted as the carrot to the stick of bust-them-in-the-heads antiunionism on one hand and alarming turnover rates on the other hand. Trying to navigate between these extremes, companies spent heavily on perks so that workers would feel grateful and appreciative toward management. Maybe they would even see the factory owners as motivated by human concern ahead of profit. But as a bare minimum dividend for their investments, the owners wanted operatives to stay on the job and out of the union. Welfare capitalism's goal, as I wrote back then, was to create “a stable and tractable labor force.”

It occurred to me that Starbucks seems to practice an updated, “new-agey” version of welfare capitalism—it wants to create a stable and tractable labor force to dole out coffee and smiles, and it does this by offering workers “gifts”—not Christmas hams or night classes, but names for jobs like barista and partner, free coffee each week, stock options, and health benefits. The company has also added a new twist to the formula. Through Howard Schultz's phone messages to workers about the larger social importance of creating comfortable community gathering centers—or third places³¹—in the contemporary world; the postcards, letters, and e-mails from Seattle telling counter-help about the company's park building programs in underserved neighborhoods, grade school literacy efforts, and policies to improve both farmers' lives and the environment in the developing world, Starbucks portrays the job not as a way to make some money but as a social service. Employees are encouraged to see the firm not as a profit-making machine, but as a churchly outfit guided by timeless values and missionary leaders. These days labor historians aren't heard from very often, so business school professors get to do most of the analysis. They call what Starbucks does “internal branding,” not welfare capitalism.

Temple University business school instructor and marketing and brand consultant Susan Mudambi told me over coffee at the Starbucks on campus that companies aim internal branding at employees. Most firms think that good works translate into higher morale, increased loyalty, and better customer service (presumably smiles with the eyes). Well-publicized efforts to provide books for underperforming urban schools and water to rural Africans, she said, helped to recruit new Starbucks workers and keep old ones on the job. But this is also about money. Each time an employee quits, the company pays for it. By Mudambi's quick and rough estimate Starbucks loses as much as \$2,000 every time someone leaves for another position.

Marc Gobé, author of *Emotional Branding* and *Citizen Brand*, two key books for businesspeople looking for advice on how to guide their firms in

the new postneed economic order, agreed about the aim of internal branding. As we walked through a New York City Starbucks, he maintained that corporate social responsibility programs made companies look good, but also made their employees look good. Nobody, he joked in his thick French accent, goes to a party and brags about working at McDonalds and nobody goes home with someone just because they work at McDonalds. But working at Starbucks, he guessed, gave them a shot at love.

Starbucks' internal branding—telling employees what the company does to make the world a better place—really served as a battleground for Sandy Griffin's heart and mind, and it began before she ever set foot in a store. The company sent her for training at another location. For one long day, instructors and videos drilled the gospel according to Starbucks into her. Again and again, Sandy remembered they talked about Howard Schultz's rags-to-riches story and about his commitment to healthcare and his father's legacy. They detailed the company's social responsibility programs, talking about how it provided day-old scones to the homeless, passed out coffee grounds to composters, and improved the lives of peasant-like Costa Rican coffee farmers. Starbucks knew what it was doing. "I'm pretty cynical," Sandy remarked, "but still I was impressed by the company's actions." She added, "It is hard for me to admit this." Many of her coworkers emerged from the training session, Sandy thought, "fully indoctrinated." They felt like they now worked for a "superior company," that they were better than those poor exploited fools at McDonalds who handed out fat-laden food and that's all. They trusted that they were helping to create community one smile at a time and make the world a better place—both in terms of taste and justice—by serving handcrafted lattes from beans grown by well-respected and well-paid families in far-off places. Sandy called these people "the believers."

Sandy proudly put herself in the "nonbeliever" camp. "Lots of people," she elaborated over a lukewarm cup of thin coffee at the canteen in the basement of the Temple University library, "think it's cool or important to work at Starbucks." But they don't see "things for the way they are." Stripping it down for me, she declared, "If you work at Starbucks you still have to scrub toilets." Contrary to the company's policy on emotional labor, Sandy tried NOT to chat up customers or make eye contact. When she did talk to people, she wanted to make sure it was genuine, really genuine. When Sandy felt like her interactions were contrived or done to make her supervisor feel like she was following the plotted scenarios from the employee handbook or *Green Apron Book*, she felt bad about herself—like she had lost a measure of personal integrity. When she overheard "believers" making small talk with customers and smiling at their "stupid comments," trying to give them what Starbucks' officials call "legendary service," she found it "disgusting." It alienated her from them and from her job.

"Believers," Sandy noted, followed, and even enjoyed, the company's scripting. They smiled and laughed at customers on cue, making it all seem natural, and in part it was. They believed in the company. "If you said something negative (about Starbucks) around a believer," she remarked, "they would get

disappointed.” They had an investment in the image—of the company and of themselves—generated by internal (and external) branding. One woman she worked with drank Starbucks coffee, listened to Starbucks CDs, and collected Starbucks stuffed “Bearista Bears” and decorated her home with them. But the clearest way to distinguish a believer from a nonbeliever turned out not to be coffee knowledge or in-store performance; it was, Sandy argued, language. Believers spoke Starbucks. They didn’t refer to themselves as employees or co-workers or coffee hacks, but as “partners.” Customers were always “guests.” They never said small coffee; it was always a “tall Sumatra.” And they didn’t toil in a coffee shop, but they helped to create a “Third Place . . . experience for everyone who comes in the door.”³²

One time I saw a believer in action. I was sitting in a Starbucks in Austin, Texas—a newer one along a highway with a drive-thru on one side and a Jiffy Lube on the other—with John Moore, a thin, earnest, well-informed brander who had started out at Starbucks as a front-line employee after graduating from Baylor University and then climbed the corporate ladder to a marketing position at the company’s Seattle headquarters. He designed in-store wall signs, the little wedges of information the company puts on tables, and the customer feedback brochures above the milk and sugar bar. As we talked, I felt the guy next to us eavesdropping on our conversation. Eventually, he introduced himself to Moore as a former “partner.”

Turned out, his name was John as well. I never got his last name. He was probably in his late thirties or early forties. He looked like he might have played high school football, but that was long ago, and these days, he was a tad slow and not in great shape.

John told us that he didn’t work for the company anymore; he had left a few months earlier to pursue other options. Despite leaving the “Starbucks team,” he kept referring to the corporation and its employees as “we.” “We opened a store in South Austin,” he said. “We had good muffins back in the day,” he pronounced.

“What did you like about working at Starbucks?” I asked.

“Well, first,” John replied, “the friends I made. I made a lot of friends working there. I got to be friends with the customers and we hung out away from the store. But you know what, I didn’t like it when I was out and people said, ‘Hey there’s the Starbucks guy.’”

“What else,” I wondered, “did you like about working for Starbucks?”

“The total pay package was good, really good. The benefits were great. They covered eye and dental and even alternative forms of medicine. Recently, they even added a tuition remission plan.”

John Moore interrupted and said, “It is pretty paltry, isn’t it, like only \$500 a semester?”

“No, more like \$500 a year,” answered John the second, “but you know what, at least it is something.” “I’m no fan of corporations,” he volunteered, “I criticize them all the time, but if more of them acted like Starbucks, the world would be a much better place.” Staying with this theme, he told us how

“proud” he was of “our” community service. He finished by praising Starbucks’ policies toward farmers in coffee-growing countries.

“Why then,” I asked, “do so many people criticize Starbucks?”

Before answering, he made a face and looked at me as if to say, “Are you one of them?” Continuing, he maintained, “Starbucks is an easy target,” adding, “I have a story for you.” Not long after the South Austin store opened, he told me, protesters blasted the building with eggs.

“What were they protesting?” I asked.

“I don’t know. Something. But I’ll tell you what; as soon as the media left, those same kids came in and bought fucking frappuccinos.”

Maybe the point for John really is whether Starbucks is good or bad in an absolute sense, but that wouldn’t be the way most labor historians would see things. Through their eyes—and mine—work represents an economic exchange. Laborers sell their time, bodies, and feelings to the highest, most attractive, and convenient bidder. Starbucks, as one of its employees said to me, is a “decent shit job.” All companies try to buy labor as cheaply as possible. They just don’t calculate the bargain in the same way. Some firms—especially the ones with jobs that require little skill and training—buy the absolute cheapest workers available. They use them for a while and let them drift away. Starbucks has a different philosophy but not a different mission. For a fast-food chain, it invests a relatively large amount of time and money in training—about twenty hours compared to zero at McDonalds—so it needs to hold down turnover rates as much as possible.³³ Because it sells what it calls an experience—a careful presentation of authenticity, belonging, and luxury—it requires large doses of “emotional labor”—hellos, how are yous, and smiles with the eyes. So to get the right kinds of workers—young, clean-cut, college-looking kids and twenty-something women and men—Starbucks pays slightly more than its competitors: McDonalds, Boston Market, and Burger King. To keep these workers content and limit turnover, it sells them—it doesn’t give them—health insurance at a discount. That’s enough for most to stay on the job in this nation of ours mired in a healthcare crisis, really a healthcare travesty. But to get them to go a step further and tolerate daily ailments and identify with the firm—to let themselves be consumed by the brand’s own mythmaking—the company sells itself and its values. Like welfare capitalism, internal branding functions as a kind of corporate mythmaking machine. The point of it—and of many of the company’s good works—is to make employees like John feel better about their work, to see it as something bigger and more socially significant than serving overpriced coffee to java junkies and status seekers. Once they take that step, the emotional labor is easier and more free flowing. Clearly, some, like Symbol and Sandy, felt alienated by all the corporate self-promotion and the steep demands of the daily performance. But partners like John believed in Starbucks and as a result, played their assigned roles, tending to their customers’ caffeine and emotional needs. In the old labor history that would make John a company man, not a working man. And that’s

just what Starbucks—or any other company—would want in an employee: someone consumed with and by the brand.

NOTES

1. That number comes from Melissa Allison, “Chin Up, Schultz Tells Workers, Don’t Let Critics Get You Down,” *The Seattle Times*, February 14, 2007.

2. For more on service work both in the present and historically, see Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing it Out: Waitresses and their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, IL, 1992); Katherine Newman, *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City* (New York, 2000); Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (New York, 2001); Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (Boston, 2001); and Alex Frankel, *Punching In: The Unauthorized Adventures of a Frontline Employee* (New York, 2007).

3. Bruce Constantineau, “Last B.C. Starbucks Outlets Cut Ties to Union,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 28, 2007.

4. In March 2008, a California judge ruled that Starbucks owed its workers \$100 million in back tips. What the company, he ruled, was doing was sharing the tips with shift supervisors. He charged that the company was “subsidizing labor costs for shift supervisors by diverting money from the tip pools to shift supervisors instead of paying more to them out of Starbucks’ pocket.” Supervisors, he added, should not be in the tip pool because they have authority to hire, fire, supervise, and direct other workers. What Starbucks was doing was, therefore, illegal. Starbucks denied that it was acting illegally. See Miriam Marcus, “Starbucks Tips Baristas \$100 Million,” *Forbes*, March 21, 2008.

5. Kris Maher and Janet Adamy, “Do Hot Coffee and ‘Wobblies’ Go Together?” *Wall Street Journal*, March 21, 2006.

6. Tania Padgett, “Wake up and . . .,” *Newsday*, August 9, 2004; Anya Kamenetz, “Baristas of the World, Unite! You Have Nothing to Lose But Your Company Mandated Cheerfulness,” *New York*, May 25, 2005; Maher and Adamy, “Do Hot Coffee and ‘Wobblies’ Go Together?”; Mischa Gaus, “Starbucks Gets Wobbly,” *In These Times*, October 4, 2006; Daniel Gross (no relation to the other Daniel Gross), “Latte Laborers Take on a Latte Liberal Business,” *New York Times*, April 8, 2007; David Segal, “Coffee Break: Top Employer Starbucks Has a Crack in Its Image,” *Washington Post*, April 12, 2007; and Brendan Brosh, “Steamed Workers Taking on Starbucks,” *New York Daily News*, August 21, 2007.

7. Steven Greenhouse, “Board Accuses Starbucks of Trying to Block Union,” *New York Times*, April 3 2007; and Sewell Chan, “Starbucks Accused of Firing Outspoken Barista,” *New York Times*, June 19, 2007.

8. “Starbucks workers’ union expands to Chicago,” August 30, 2006: seattlepi.com/local.6420AP_IL_Starbucks_Union.html. For more information and additional articles, go to, www.starbucksunion.org.

9. I added to my description by using the following website: <http://newyork.citysearch.com/profile/7098727>. Note when I rechecked this website on June 26, 2007, I learned that Alt.Coffee had closed.

10. For evidence on how managers encourage interaction, see the ode to the company, Michael Gates Gill, *How Starbucks Saved My Life: A Son of Privilege Learns to Live Like Everyone Else* (New York, 2007), 103,109.

11. Aidin Vaziri, “Bob Dylan in Exclusive Deal with Starbucks?” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 2, 2005.

12. Kamenetz, “Baristas of the World, Unite!”; Maher and Adamy, “Do Hot Coffee and ‘Wobblies’ Go Together?”; Gaus, “Starbucks Gets Wobbly.”

13. I filled in some of the details here from an interview with Daniel Gross. See Padgett, “Wake up and . . .”

14. From the Rev. Billy quoted in Kevin Penn, “Performance Artist Delivers Anti-Consumption Message,” *Allentown Morning Call*, May 1, 2005.

15. Philip Potempa, “Coffee, Tea, or Me?,” nwtimes.com, posted December 29, 2006.

16. Howard Schultz, *Pour Your Heart Into It: How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup at a Time* (New York, 2000); Matt Miller, “The Senator from Starbucks,” *Fortune*, July 26, 2006; “A Full-Bodied Talk with Howard Schultz,” *Business Week*, November 22, 2004: <http://www>.

businessweek.com/magazine/content/04_47/b3909098.htm; and Alex Witchell, "Coffee Talk with Howard Schultz: By Way of Carnarsie, One Large Hot Cup of Business Strategy," *New York Times*, December 14, 1994.

17. Alex Frankel, "Confessions of a Starbucks Barista," *Brown Alumni Magazine*, September/October 2007; and Frankel, *Punching In*.

18. See: <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/bestcompanies/2006/snapshots/1267.html>.

19. Another Starbucks spokesperson said the exact same thing to a Seattle journalist; see Melissa Allison, "Union Struggles to reach, recruit Starbucks Workers," *Seattle Times*, January 2, 2007.

20. Kamenetz, "Baristas of the World, Unite!"

21. See "Following Public Campaign for Trademark Efforts, Coffee Giant Starbucks Signs Licensing Deal that Could Bring Millions to Ethiopian Farmers," May 9, 2007: www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=07/05/1515200.

22. David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (Cambridge, 1979).

23. Just as a side note, since our meeting, Daniel and Suley have lost their jobs with Starbucks. Daniel got fired after the company claimed he threatened a manager at a union rally held to support another barista. Out of work, he entered law school at Fordham University. He continues his union activism. To the best of my knowledge, this is what happened to the rest: Suley lost her job after refusing to remove a Wiccan pedant. Starbucks said it violated the company's dress code; she said it was a matter of religious faith. Tomer remains with the company and the union. Kevin's whereabouts are unknown.

24. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley, 1983). See also on emotion work, Robin Leidner, *Fast Food, Fast Talk: Service Work and the Routinization of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, 1993), 4, 26; Richard Lloyd, *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City* (London, 2005), 179–204; and David Grazian, *On the Make: The Hustle of Urban Nightlife* (Chicago, 2007).

25. *Learning Journey Guide*, 98, 122.

26. Sharmistha Choudhury, "Brewing Racism in Canada," posted October 21, 2004: <http://nation.ittefaq.com/artman/exec/view.cgi/23/13263>. Another Candian woman was apparently fired for wearing a silver stud in the middle of her tongue. Jacquie Miller, "Starbucks Hip to the Latest Trends—up to a point," *Ottawa Citizen*, April 17, 1997.

27. A union source reported that Christina Rosevear asked for time off to deal with severe morning sickness, only to have her hours severely cut. See Worker Freedom, "Victory For IWW Barista Against Pregnancy Discrimination at Starbucks!" at www.starbucksunion.org.

28. One company critic wrote to ihatestarbucks.com on June 26, 2006: "False employee benefits. They give part-time workers (20 hr week) health insurance. However, I have received hundreds of e-mails from employees that consistently receive 19.75. 15 minutes shy of earning those costly benefits." Clearly she/he saw a company conspiracy afoot here.

29. Nowadays the company calls its scheduling software "Star Labor." This is according to Taylor Clark, quoted in Taylor Clark, *Starbucked: A Double Tall Tale of Caffeine, Commerce, and Culture* (New York, 2007), 240.

30. Bryant Simon, "Choosing Between the Ham and the Union: Paternalism in the Cone Mills of Greensboro, 1925-1930," in Jeffrey Leiter, Michael Shulman, and Rhonda Zingaff, eds., *Hanging by a Thread: Social Change in Southern Textiles* (Ithaca, 1991), 81–100. For an excellent account of how welfare capitalism worked, see Gerald Zahavi, *Workers, Managers, and Welfare Capitalism: The Shoeworkers and Tanners of Endicott Johnson, 1890–1950* (Urbana, IL, 1988).

31. Starbucks's marketers often call the stores third places. The idea is that home is the first place, work the second place, and then third places are locations that are neither, but serve as gathering places. Starbucks borrows this term from the sociologist Ray Oldenburg. See Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of Community* (New York, 1993).

32. For another example of this, see uber-believer, Gill, *How Starbucks Saved My Life*.

33. Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.