2011

The Social Transformation of Coffee Houses: The Emergence of Chain Establishments and the Private Nature of Usage

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The Social Transformation of Coffee Houses:
The Emergence of Chain Establishments and the Private Nature of Usage

Dawn Marie Lozzi

A thesis submitted to the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment to the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Sociology

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Morgantown, West Virginia
2011

Keywords: Coffee House, Urban, Space, Third Place, Commercialization
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ABSTRACT

The Social Transformation of Coffee Houses: The Emergence of Chain Establishments and the Private Nature of Usage

Dawn Marie Lozzi

Much attention is given to Ray Oldenburg's (1989) concept of third places as environments that offer visitors friendship and a sense of community. However, given that coffee houses have moved from small-scale businesses to chain-owned and many people now use them to work on laptops, this idealized image of the coffee house also may be changing. Few empirical studies have addressed such possibilities. Using unobtrusive observation data on three independently-owned coffee houses and three chain-based coffee houses, this research examines the concept of third places to better understand the ways in which modern coffee houses live up to Oldenburg's social expectations of this often romanticized setting. The two key findings reveal that: 1) people increasingly use coffee houses less as a social sphere and more as a private zone to work, read, use electronic devices, and listen to music on headphones; and 2) chain coffee houses, though often criticized for their sanitized lack of character, may better meet the new third place needs of customers because of the greater variety of amenities (e.g., types of seating, food, and media), free services (e.g., Wi-Fi), and fewer time restrictions.

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Introduction

The discipline of sociology has long used theory and research to better understand public spaces and the meanings they have for individuals and communities (Goffman 1959, 1963, 1971; Lofland 1973). In particular, sociologists have celebrated coffee houses as “third places” that serve as an alternative to home and work and as environments that promote friendship, social support, and community (Oldenburg 1989). However, coffee houses are not monolithic, but rather vary in terms of what they provide to communities as third places. A better understanding of two major transformations in the form and function of coffee houses provides insight into changes in their use as third places.

One major transformation in coffee houses is related to function, especially with regard to coffee houses as public places for individuals to meet other people and socialize (Cowan 2004; Oldenburg 1989; Pincus 1995). The notion of coffee houses as environments for fostering sociability and communication stems from a larger intellectual discourse about the functions of public places for cities (Whyte 1998; Zukin 2010). Early urban researchers believed that coffee houses were ideal democratic places for people to freely speak their minds about political and social concerns (Cowan 2004; Oldenburg 1989; Pincus 1995). Yet arguably, with the rise of portable electronic devices and telecommuting, coffee houses are used less as hubs for socializing and more as places for people to read, work, and be productive.

The second significant transformation in coffee houses is associated with ownership. The transition from small, locally-owned coffee houses to chain-owned coffee houses has been lamented (Zukin 2010). Some even have argued that the emergence of chain-based coffee houses has undermined the role of the coffee house as a place that nourishes community (Friedman

Running head: THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF COFFEE HOUSES: THE EMERGENCE OF CHAIN ESTABLISHMENTS AND THE PRIVATE NATURE OF USAGE 2010; Thompson and Arsel 2004). The popular image of bohemian coffee houses include a lack of emphasis on branding and a devaluing of uniformity (Oldenburg 2001). For instance, such places may have casual, artistic, and shabby furnishings that appear to have come from an employee's home or a thrift store. This lack of uniformity often extends to employees' attitudes, behaviors, appearance, as well as to the coffee and food served and may even extend to the cups and dishes. At least in theory, community members are more likely to visit and support local businesses, as patronizing them is seen as a way of giving back to the locality (Mohr, Webb, and Harris 2001).

In contrast the owners of chain businesses often view the local community as an afterthought rather than prioritizing the best interests of the neighborhoods and residents whom they serve (Clark 2002; Porter 1995; Thompson and Arsel 2004). Aesthetically, chains are associated with corporate standards of cleanliness, bland simplicity, and prominent branding on merchandise. According to critics, chain-based coffee houses, with perhaps the most reviled example being Starbucks, are designed by soulless corporations for Yuppies. Customers who prefer these places are stereotyped as having little commitment to creative endeavors and as people who seek upscale environments without regard for or interest in aesthetic distinctiveness, cultural motifs, nor the details of how and why the coffee house runs the way it does (Roseberry 1996).

The current research empirically addresses these two transformations using Oldenburg's (1989) concept of the third place. Two major questions guide the discussion that follows: 1) In the era of portable technology to what extent do coffee houses serve the social purpose of a third place? 2) In what ways do independently-owned and chain coffee houses differ? I use

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unobtrusive observation to systematically compare the spaces, customers, and activities at independently-owned coffee houses and chain-based coffee houses to answer these questions.

I specifically analyze the context of changes in the form and function of coffee houses and apply Oldenburg's third place concept to better understand the consequences for such changes. This paper extends the knowledge of coffee houses as third places in two major ways. First, by comparing independently-owned and chain-based coffee houses, I address some claims regarding differences in the social role of coffee houses. Secondly, by systematically observing the spaces, customers, and activities in both kinds of coffee houses, I empirically evaluate Oldenburg's assertion that coffee houses are "inclusively sociable, offering both the basis of community and the celebration of it" (Oldenburg 1989:14).

Literature Review

Coffee Houses as Third Places

Coffee houses have exploded in popularity in the United States. The National Coffee Association's National Coffee Drinking Trends 2011 survey reported that 40 percent of adults between the ages of 18 and 24 drink coffee on a daily basis (Nicholson 2011). Also, in 2010 Starbucks exceeded traditional fast food establishments Burger King and Wendy's in their net sales in the United States, exceeding analyst expectations at \$9.07 billion, only to be overshadowed by McDonalds (\$32.4 billion) and Subway (\$10.6 billion) (Novellino 2011). Coffee houses are clearly prevalent in the United States. Starbucks alone had 10930 U.S. locations, as of April 2011 (Starbucks Corporation 2011). Clearly, public coffee consumption has become an American pastime.

Coffee houses have been a social phenomenon since the first one opened in 1555 in

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Istanbul (Heffernan 2011). Researchers have examined the historic role of coffee houses in European cities where they often served as meeting places for peasants and laymen to discuss the rulers of the land without the threat of punishment (Cowan 2004). Through the turn of the 20th century, citizens continued to visit coffee houses for this purpose. For instance, women would gather in them to organize around issues related to gender equality (Cowan 2004; Pincus 1995). Coffee houses also have a history as sites for conducting business meetings. For example, a content analysis of 17th century discussions and debates about open public forums and coffee houses in London showed that coffee houses functioned as public places where businesspeople completed their routine affairs without actually having to bear the overhead expenses of a set location (Ellis 2008). Today, individuals often use coffee houses to separate their home and workplace, and to spend time engaging in leisurely activities such as reading, catching up on the news, or socializing with other patrons in a public space (Ellis 2004).

Sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1989) expanded on the idea of coffee houses as both domestic and professional spaces by forwarding the concept of the “third place”. Oldenburg (1989) argues that three major kinds of places dominate our lives. The “first place” is the home, which he views as a “domestic environment,” where one can relax where hosting social events and get-togethers with others may involve considerable work and making socializing an unattainable option to some. The second place is work, which he refers to as “gainful or productive.” This environment does not allow for much relaxation or a sense of community because of employee relationships and turnover. The third place is “inclusively sociable, offering both the basis of community and the celebration of it” (Oldenburg 1989: 14). The third place theory specifically asserts that coffee houses are ideal places for people to meet and socialize within a community, whether for purely social reasons or not. Third places are not only neutral

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and democratic, but they free people from the confines and isolation of home and work settings, the former of which may be too personal and casual for comfortable interaction and the latter of which may be too rigid and professional to feel welcoming. Oldenburg has a highly idealized view of third places as novel, non-judgmental public areas that people voluntarily seek out to escape their home and work environments and to socialize in a community setting with acquaintances, business associates, friends, neighbors, and other customers.

According to Oldenburg (1989), cafés epitomize functional third places because they promote friendship and a sense of community. In large urban areas where people are highly mobile and busy, forming friendships can be more challenging, so cafés can be important third places for locals to meet and socialize with other residents. Community members might never speak to one another without the common place of a coffee house. Friends and regulars are people one expects to see upon visiting a third place; when they are not there, they are missed.

Hampton and Gupta (2008) discuss the importance of socializing in coffee houses in their paper about the social interactions that take place in coffee houses where Wi-Fi is offered. Using exploratory ethnography, their study explains how Wi-Fi (wireless Internet) (free and pay-as-you-go) affects socializing interactions at cafés in Boston, Massachusetts, and Seattle, Washington. They describe customers hiding behind their “protective shields” (e.g., laptops, E-readers, and iPods) as well as customers who are there to be sociable with others. Their results show that urban public places tend to draw like-minded people and motivate individuals to create social ties with one another, especially in large urban cities. Hampton and Gupta (2008) also describe small social interactions focused on trivial matters (i.e., getting help connecting to the Internet) that can spark long-winded conversations and build friendships. For example, one of the participants they interviewed at the coffee house purposefully brought his laptop to a big

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empty table so others would have the opportunity to sit near him. He would then ask for help and carry on a conversation with them about computers (Hampton and Gupta 2008.) Place-specific friendships, like the one mentioned above, could be a factor in understanding why people choose to go to coffee houses versus bars, hair salons, or other hangouts that are at the heart of the community. Friendships that individuals find and form in coffee houses can build a sense of community. Individuals become regulars, and as time passes, they become involved in a coffee house community.

In this way, coffee house communities offer a new aspect to urban life that first and second places do not: novelty. The novelty of the coffee house experience, a theme in Oldenburg's work (1989), is needed in individuals' lives to remove boredom and break-up mundane routines. One example of the need for novelty can be seen among the elderly. In old age, some are limited by lack of mobility, so going to third places such as coffee houses or community centers provide opportunities to discuss new matters and acquire new skills (e.g., using the Internet, setting up email accounts to stay connected with family, and learning about computers). Novelty is not something that one can easily find at home. Even for people who do not live alone and are engaged in paid work, novelty is important. The discussions about household matters at dinner and chatter about the weather and sports in the workplace may drive people to coffee houses as an escape from everyday rituals.

Throughout the history of coffee houses, there have been transitions in the uses of coffee houses by the patrons who frequent them. Coffee houses began as a place for people to speak their political minds over a cup of coffee instead of alcohol (Ellis 2004). Coffee houses also were a place for individuals to catch up on the latest news and gossip by word of mouth or from a newspaper as witnessed during historic English and Boston coffee houses during the American

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Revolution, which some regard as a social movement (Jameson 1968). Yet in recent years, coffee houses have become places to enjoy leisure activities such as socializing or reading, as well as places where people can complete work tasks for pay, school, or recreation (e.g., managing social network sites.)

Coffee houses have evolved along with the demands of their customers to varying degrees. With the rise in portable technological devices, some coffee houses have adapted their stores to suit patrons who wish to incorporate the use of devices while spending time at cafés. With a brief look at the history of coffee houses, one can see how they have transformed to fit the needs of their customer base. With this being the case, it is evident that coffee houses will once again continue to evolve in what they offer their customers and how customers use them.

Empirical Studies of Oldenburg's Third Place Concept

Empirical studies of Oldenburg's third place concept have recently shown that people use and patronize coffee houses for a variety of different reasons. Some visit so that others can entertain them, whereas others seek to escape from their usual lives. Some visit coffee houses just to purchase their favorite beverage, while others camp out there for hours to accomplish a task. The study outlined in this paper attempts to answer questions about the social role of coffee houses, and the sociability coffee houses in the Greater Boston Area. The findings add to the scholarly work that has been completed so far and fill gaps in previous research.

Few researchers have tested Oldenburg's concept of a third place. An exception is Blank and Van Vooren (2007), who conducted observations and interviews (at coffee houses) of patrons focusing on the people who "camp out" or stay for long periods of time (i.e., between three to five hours). They based their interview questions on concepts that Oldenburg uses to describe what a third place is and what he believes is the reason that people choose to spend long

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periods of time at coffee houses. They conducted participant observations and interviews at 20 different coffee houses (ten Starbucks locations and ten independently-owned locations) to determine how coffee houses fit into the patrons' everyday lives. They both found similarities and differences between Oldenburg's work and their findings. The cafés were similar to Oldenburg's idea in that they had a relaxing ambiance for working and regulars socialized in the cafés. The regulars who attended cafés on a frequent basis gained a sense of community by befriending other patrons and employees. The main difference between their work and Oldenburg's is that the people who camped out at coffee houses did so to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and gain some alone time (Blank and Van Vooren 2007). This idea that people go to coffee houses to be alone and get away from the distractions of their usual setting not consistent with Oldenburg's ideas because he believes that people should use a third place as a community social hub. Which leads to the authors' second finding, that camping out detracts from the socializing functions of cafés because most of the campers worked for long periods of time. Oldenburg (1989) would find these locations unsatisfactory as third places because such cafés are a multifunctional atmosphere that do not cater to socialization and actually harm it.

Another test of Oldenburg's research is presented in Gaudio's (2003) work on third places, which examine Starbucks chains in a middle-class community. He studied what people were looking for in cafés and the characteristics that make cafés acceptable for casual conversation. He conducted his study interviewing coffee house owners, employees, and patrons as well as through participant observation. Gaudio argued that conversations at coffee houses require a hierarchy; such that a single person leads the discussion, especially in arguments. This is not conducive to Oldenburg's view that coffee houses should be equal grounds for all people.

Recently, coffee houses and their use as third places were studied in Waxman's (2006) exploration of coffee house sociability. Using a mixed methods approach, Waxman (2006) investigated three different coffee houses to explore the socializing that takes place in these settings. She was looking for community attachment and aspects of coffee houses that increased the chances of patrons visiting (e.g., cleanliness, aroma, adequate lighting, view, and furniture). Her interviews with the patrons revealed personal preferences to socialize at coffee houses where people can linger and feel a sense of ownership. Another interesting finding is that patrons also wanted the opportunity to be productive in these spaces. Some of her respondents, many of which were students, preferred working in coffee houses instead of libraries because they could "avoid what they perceived as a sterile library atmosphere" (Waxman 2009:47). This shared space between work and socializing is not what Oldenburg conceptualizes as a third place. Oldenburg argues that third places should be "unifunctional" spaces, and people who conduct work in these environments can "erode the fabric of society" (Oldenburg 1989: 215).

With only a few studies empirically testing Oldenburg's third place concept there are numerous gaps in the literature. This paper seeks to provide a better understanding of why individuals choose one location over another and goes into great detail about the amenities offered at coffee houses (e.g., Wi-Fi, newspapers, power outlets, and bulletin boards) and how patrons utilize them. The uses of coffee houses have changed over time, as reviewed in the history of coffee houses and throughout the observations for this study. This paper investigates if the popularity and use of personal mobile devices has changed the way in which patrons use coffee houses today.

Coffee House Transitions from Sociability to Technology

As one can see from the history provided, coffee houses have evolved over time to suit

the needs of their customers. Recently, coffee house have started to provide Wi-Fi to their customers to meet the desire for Internet access. The attractiveness of utilizing one's time at a café and being plugged in is a relatively new phenomenon. Today, people go to coffee houses to use free Internet connection to update social networks, complete school-related work, and complete paid work, a recent development associated with the rise of Internet based jobs and telecommunications.

Coffee houses that provide Wi-Fi and snacks, in addition to coffee, have become a popular destination for freelance workers (Cottone 2008). *Freelancer Magazine* (2008) claims that the convenience of being able to purchase snacks and drinks at a coffee house is the reason why coffee houses are on its list of top six alternative workspaces (Cottone 2008). Coffee houses make the list because they offer free Internet connections and a place to meet former co-workers (Cottone 2008). ABC News (2007) reported about a story on the new community of self-employed individuals who patronize coffee houses and how cafés now supply desks, fax machines, phones, and a sense of community to those who can work from any location (e.g., freelance writers, programmers, and small business owners). This article suggested that coffee house patrons seek to separate themselves from “typical corporate farms” (Lee 2007). The emergence of new technology has also resulted in backlash with some independent coffee houses since Kindles, iPads, and various other E-readers (Heffernan 2011). Independent coffee houses are making such restrictions because these devices are turning relaxing cafes into office spaces (Heffernan 2011).

Coffee House Transformation: Locally-owned to Corporate-owned

During the last 50 years there has been a movement in the coffee house world that has changed the used and purpose of coffee houses for individuals. This movement has changed how

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coffee houses use to be which was a place to relax with neighbors, to a place to socialize and compete with the world with the transformation of Corporate-owned coffee houses such as Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, Seattle's Best and so on. Although this all began in the 1960s, when the coffee house industry focused on the quality of coffee instead of just the cost of a cup of coffee, since the quantity of coffee being purchased had been diminishing (Roseberry 1996). Since then, coffee houses began using specialty coffees with different flavors to draw the attention of new customers. Starbucks capitalized on the growth of specialty coffee (Roseberry 1996) and has become the largest chain-based coffee house corporation worldwide. Brewing and purchasing a wide variety of specialty coffee is not something small independently-owned coffee houses can accomplish while still making a profit.

So why do independently-owned coffee houses continue competing for customers? Some researchers have found that individuals are more likely to visit a local independently-owned coffee house rather than a chain-based coffee house because it is a political statement against globalization (Thompson and Arsel 2004). Thompson and Arsel (2004) also shared that patrons are more willing to visit local independently-owned coffee houses over chain-based locations because of the bohemian motifs and relaxing atmospheres. In her work on New York City, Zukin (2010) discussed the loss of authenticity and community in public spaces, specifically distinguishing between cafés that are independently owned or anti-establishment and those that are corporate, chain-based coffee houses, which she viewed as comparatively bland, homogeneous, standardized spaces. Some have gone so far as to suggest that chain-based coffee houses actually undermine the goal of community building as they often displace local shops and co-opt business districts (Blank and Van Vooren 2007; Gaudio 2003).

Blank and Van Vooren (2007) found that most of the individuals they interviewed reported that looking for local independently-owned coffee houses is time consuming. Another challenge for customers of independent coffee houses was finding the beverages customers wanted, which many of are easily located at chain establishments. One respondent in the study made the point that when he sees the Starbucks logo, he knows what it is and that Starbucks has the inventory he is looking for (Blank and Van Vooren 2007). This is an advantage that chains have over independently-owned coffee houses: individuals know what is offered how it is made, which leads to ease of ordering.

Current Study

As chain-based coffee houses have become more ubiquitous and a larger cross-section of people has taken to frequenting such establishments, there is reason to think that the line between independent and corporate places has blurred in many communities, such that residents may frequent their local Starbucks viewing it as their community's coffee house. The purpose of the project is to expand our understanding of coffee houses as third places. I aim to investigate the claims that previous researchers have already stated about the use and function of coffee houses and how cafés service their patrons. Also, looking at the similarities and differences between independently-owned and chain-based coffee houses. I will examine if and how individuals use these separate spaces differently and what independently-owned and chain-based coffee houses offer that will predict how they are used. I observed activities that took place at two different kinds of coffee houses (three independently-owned and three chains) to document the atmospheres of the coffee houses and the activities that take place there. Specifically, this paper aims to explore two recent transformation of coffee houses: 1) Are coffee houses, which are third

Running head: THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF COFFEE HOUSES: THE EMERGENCE OF CHAIN ESTABLISHMENTS AND THE PRIVATE NATURE OF USAGE places, still serving a key social function as the popularity of portable technology increases; and 2) in what way do independently-own and chain-based coffee houses differ?

Methods

Qualitative Observations

This is a qualitative study using unobtrusive observation from three independently-owned coffee houses and three corporate chain-based coffee houses in the Greater Boston Metropolitan Area during the months of July and August 2010. Follow-up observations for missing data (e.g., overlooked aspects of areas and where descriptions of a site were weaker) continued to be collected in the fall of 2010. I focused on five key aspects of a third place, as outlined by Oldenburg (1989): 1) indications of sociability within the coffee house; 2) characteristics of patrons; and 3) the content of activities at coffee houses 4) atmosphere and 5) seating.

Research found that fieldwork is ideal for studying different “social worlds” because researchers are able to immerse themselves to better understand how individuals interact with their surroundings while in the field (Lindesmith, Strauss, and Denzin 1975). The reason behind using this particular research method is to understand how individuals in these settings interact with the symbolic meanings they associate with coffee houses (Lindesmith et al. 1975). Researchers who conduct participant observation collect data about social situations that take place in those specific spaces (Spradley 1980). For the study, these social situations take place in coffee houses.

Oldenburg defines a third place as *Gemütlich*, a German word which describes a setting as “communicating the coziness and diffusing friendliness of certain settings... what it may lack in exuberance it makes up for in the strong neighborly imperative that it captures”(Oldenburg

Running head: THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF COFFEE HOUSES: THE EMERGENCE OF CHAIN ESTABLISHMENTS AND THE PRIVATE NATURE OF USAGE 1989 p.56). During observations I first focused on the different patrons who visited the coffee houses and the activities they conducted while there. If patrons were talking to someone else I categorized as socializing. Patrons who interacted with the baristas beyond ordering food, coffee, or specialty products they sold (e.g., discussing weekend plans, shared acquaintances, or similar hobbies and interests were so coded as socializing.) In fact, many times just the patrons were there just to talk to the baristas. Generally, the rest of the patrons at the coffee houses were working (e.g., reading textbooks, writing either in pen or typing on computers, or working on computers in general). Lastly, some individuals were neither socializing nor working, these patrons were classified as leisure customers and they completed tasks such as reading the newspapers, books, E-readers, as well as knitting, and people-watching.

The second aspect of café life I focused on during the data collection periods was atmosphere and different types of seating at the cafés. Oldenburg's concept of a third place requires that the environment of a coffee house must be welcoming to all. Individuals must feel free to come to these places and not worry about exclusive behavior from regulars in cliques or being treated as an outsider. While conducting observations, I was an outsider to every coffee house that I visited because they were not places I visited on a regular basis. While there, I paid attention to the way the employees treated me and the other patrons and to any cues of being treated as an outsider (e.g., people staring at me, baristas getting agitated when I asked questions about specialty drinks, and individuals muttering about what I was doing at their café), as well as attitudes people had toward me being in their space.

Seating was probably the most easily observed aspect of this project. Each coffee house had a different floor plan, various types of furniture, and different furniture layouts. I took notes on where sofas, tables, bars, booths, and cubbies were located. I also took notes on cafés that did

not have any of the furniture listed above. Lastly, on the topic of seating, I observed the placement of seating arrangement locations in the café. In the field notes, I detailed where the location of bars, stools, windows, brick walls, room dividers, and orientation of barista stations. For instance if the seating was the in the front of the coffee house and the barista station was at the very back of the establishment, then the space felt more comfortable with less pressure to make purchases. According to Oldenburg, the atmosphere and seating at coffee houses are important as these two factors alone can influence how a space is used. For instance, if a café has a lot of single seating then it will most likely be used for solitary work instead of a socializing space, which would include more couches, large tables, or even booths.

The third aspect of my field notes was documenting regulars or groups of individuals who would come together and socialize with one another. I classified these interactions or groups as contributing to a sense of community within the coffee house. Oldenburg stressed that group nature of socializing his concept of a third place. To him, coffee houses and other third places needed to be a celebration of the community. He stressed that coffee houses were third places because locals can get together and socialize together in groups.

Boston as a Coffee Hub

Coffee houses in Boston gained popularity as social institutions after World War I, with the U.S. government's passing of the 18th Amendment, which outlawed the manufacturing and sale of alcoholic beverages making coffee houses a replacement for bars as meeting sites (Pendergrast 1999). Twenty years later, between the 1950s and the late 1980s, coffee houses declined in the United States because of inflation increases, job losses, wars, and a steep rise in coffee prices (Chadios 2005). In the late 1980's coffee houses bounced back with the west coast's Starbucks transforming from a locally owned storefront to the corporate giant it is today

Running head: THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF COFFEE HOUSES: THE EMERGENCE OF CHAIN ESTABLISHMENTS AND THE PRIVATE NATURE OF USAGE (Clark 2007). During the same time Boston's City Council's attempt to reestablish city centers for social, economic, and cultural life, coffee houses began to reappearing in city squares and other popular spots around Boston (Chadios 2005). Although coffee houses in the Boston area were not a new thing, much to peoples disbelief cafés were not just a phenomena on the west coast. According to Vrabel (2004) Boston is home to the first coffee house that was opened in America in 1676 by John Sperry.

A 2010 survey produced for the Green Mountain Coffee Company yielded results that explain why Boston is considered a "coffee-crazed town" (PRWEB 2010). This survey, which was conducted as part of "Fair Trade Month" to measure Boston residents coffee consumption, found that one in three participants reported that they "needed" coffee on a daily basis on average, respondents reported that they drink between two and three cups of coffee a day and 17 percent reported that they drink four or more cups every day. Although these numbers are increasing every year, since the Green Mountain Coffee Company survey, 40% of Americans between the ages of 18-24 now drink coffee daily, this rate has increased from 31% in 2010 (NCAUSA.org, 2011).

Researchers from the University of Massachusetts (UMass), Boston have concluded that the people of Boston ingest one thousand pounds of pure caffeine every day (Clark 2007). A comprehensive chemical analysis of Boston Harbor, which is near the site of the observations for this project, found that the waters of the harbor contained a significant level of caffeine. Five percent of which can be found in the waterways around the area leading to the harbor (Clark 2007). The phenomenon has been called "Starbucks Effect" (Clark 2007). Boston, Massachusetts is a good ideal site for this study because of the high intake of coffee here.

Selection of Neighborhoods

I chose several different neighborhoods to conduct my observations because I wanted them to be geographically spread out so I could take a varied view of the findings to the Greater Boston area. I chose study locations based on the availability of neighborhoods containing both independently-owned and chain-based coffee houses in close proximity to each other. After finding multiple locations in several different neighborhoods, I conducted preliminary observations to narrow down my choice of sites. Due to lack of parking public transportation and bicycling are important part of the area. Keeping that in mind I chose neighborhoods and cafés that were in walking distance from each other. The three locations were: 1) Copley Square, which is located in Downtown Boston; 2) Davis Square, which is located in Somerville, Massachusetts; and 3) Central Square, which is located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I describe each neighborhood below.

Copley Square

Copley Square is composed of 9,346 individuals, who are primarily young and renters (2000 Census). The median age of this neighborhood, 22, is very young whereas the median age for surrounding Suffolk County is 31 (as noted in the Table 6). The age difference could be attributed to the numerous colleges and universities in the area (e.g., Berkley School of Music, School of Fashion Design, Boston Architectural College, Boston University, New England College of Optometry, and Northeastern University). This neighborhood has an owner-occupancy percentage of 10%. The majority of the population is white at 72% and the minority population is 7.1% African American, 7.4% Hispanic/Latino, and 13.4% Asian. In contrast, the county is 22.2% African American, 15.5% Hispanic/Latino, and 7.0% Asian. The median household income for this neighborhood is \$27,000 a year, low for this area because of the large

number of college students. Also 65.3% of this the population from this neighborhood has a Bachelor's degree or higher which again is high compared to the county (32.5%), and the country at (24.4%). 85.4% of the population is enrolled in college, compared to 43.5% enrolled in the county. 96.6% of the population from this neighborhood has a Bachelor's degree or higher, which is high compared to the county at 43.6%.

Copley Square is a public square in the Back Bay neighborhood near the central business district as described in Burgess' concentric zone theory (Burgess 1930). In the middle of the neighborhood is Copley Square Plaza, the Copley Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority train stop, and numerous bus stops. Moving away from the center, one finds the Boston City Library and a vast number of retail stores, restaurants, high-end hotels, and shopping malls (e.g., Copley Plaza Mall, and the Prudential Center Mall). This ring also contains both coffee houses I observed in this neighborhood. The housing there includes apartments above storefronts and near by streets are lined with brownstone condos and apartments for which the neighborhood and city are so well known. All of this is located within a four-block area around Copley Square Plaza.

Davis Square

The second neighborhood, Davis Square, comprises 3,139 individuals who are primarily young and live in owner-occupied housing units. According to 2000 Census data, the median age for this neighborhood is higher than Copley Square at 31 years of age, yet still young compared to surrounding Middlesex County which has a median age of 36 (as noted in the Table 6). This neighborhood has an owner-occupancy percentage of 30%, and its racial make-up is less diverse than Copley Square at 88% white. The minority population are 2.3% African American, 3.4% Hispanic/Latino, and 6.1% Asian. Middlesex County has a racial make-up of 85.9% white, 3.4% African American, 4.6% Hispanic/Latino, and 6.3% Asian. The neighborhoods' median

household income is \$55,000 a year, compared to the county is \$60,821 a year. 29.6% of the population is enrolled in college. 65.4% of the population from this neighborhood has a Bachelor's degree or higher, which is high compared to the county at 43.6%.

Davis Square is located in Somerville, Massachusetts, near the city line of Cambridge and five miles southeast from Copley Square. Davis Square is a place to experience the historic atmosphere of Boston (e.g., brick buildings, old marquee theaters, and Victorian houses) alongside newer facilities like movie theaters, underground train stations, and renovated buildings. Davis Square, like many historic squares in the Boston area, is the connecting point for three of the main streets in the community. This conjunction forms the heart of the square and contains a brick plaza that is commonly used by suburban commuters as a waiting area for bus or carpools. Even though this square has evolved around the streets, bicyclists outnumber cars, and bicycle racks and garages outnumber parking spots here. In this neighborhood, the two coffee houses from which I collected data were directly across the street from one another.

Central Square

The third neighborhood, Central Square, comprises 5,246 individuals. Most are young and live alone in owner-occupied housing units. According to the 2000 Census, the median age for this neighborhood is about the same as Copley Square at 25 years, while the median age for Middlesex County is 36 (as noted in the Table 6). This neighborhood also has an owner-occupancy percentage of 24.4%, and the racial make-up is a bit more diverse than the other two neighborhoods. At 75.8%, whites are the majority, along with a minority composition of 4.5% African American, 6.3% Hispanic/Latino, and 13.3% Asian. Middlesex County has a racial make up of 85.9% white, 3.4% African American, 4.6% Hispanic/Latino, and 6.3% Asian. This also seems to be a mostly student-based community. The median household income for this

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neighborhood is \$42,000 a year. 74.2% of the population is enrolled in college, compared to 43.5% enrolled in the county. 96.6% of the population from this neighborhood has a Bachelor's degree or higher, which is high compared to the county at 43.6%.

Central Square in Cambridge is located on the very busy and populous Massachusetts Avenue. The area is culturally diverse, with different eateries and retail stores that cater to various nationalities (e.g., Greek, Korean, Italian, Middle Eastern, Tibetan, Portuguese, Mexican, Arabic, and American). Culturally, Central Square is a great example of the melting pot America. There are a lot of different nationalities in this neighborhood, although they all blend together to give this community a welcoming feel to all. This community is a great example of the diversity in the heart of the city. This area is also similar to the other locations as a hub for public transportation.

In sum, these locations share common population characteristics, spatial proximity to major public transportation and have similar neighborhood architectural features. This makes them ideal for comparison so that differences are less likely to be artifacts of population or location differences. At the same time they are also very distinct in location and spatial proximity to one another. The first distinction is location. Copley Square is right in the heart of Boston and is considered a major tourist destination. Central Square is further away from the city, but still has a very transient population because of the universities in the immediate area. Davis Square is the least transient and draws the fewest tourists. The three different locations differ slightly in the proximity between the independently-owned and chain-based matched coffee houses in each neighborhood. At Davis Square, the two coffee houses were directly across the street from each other, while at Copley Square, the two coffee houses were down the street from each other. Finally, at Central Square the coffee houses were around the corner from each other.

Selection of Coffee Houses and Criteria of Inclusion

I monitored coffee houses in the three areas to scout for sites, taking notes at various times of day to learn the best times to conduct observations without interference of lunch hour and after-work rush. This study used purposive sampling. The Greater Boston Area has a very large amount of coffee houses. After preliminary observations at many of the coffee houses I was able to decide on six coffee houses by selecting which ones were paired (i.e., a Starbucks located near a locally-owned coffee house.) and had seating. In total, I chose three sets of matched coffee houses where independently-owned and chain-based coffee houses were in close proximity to each other.

I first selected the independently-owned establishments and then paired them to the chain-based coffee houses in the same neighborhood. In order for a coffee house to qualify for my study, it had to serve coffee and tea drinks as well as light food options. The chain-based coffee houses I selected were Starbucks. Starbucks is one of the two largest chain-based coffee houses in the Greater Boston Area and several Starbucks locations could be found near each independently-owned location. When choosing the Starbucks locations, I made sure that they corresponded with the independently-owned coffee houses. For example, if there were multiple Starbucks locations in the vicinity of the independent coffee house, I chose the one that best fit the criteria of inclusion. The other major chain, Dunkin Donuts, was a poor fit because these cafés rarely had the comparable “third place” design and were more similar to fast food chains in that they were much smaller and had very small amount of seating available. Also, many Dunkin Donuts have signs that state time limits the customers must follow if they decided to stay and enjoy their purchase.

All locations had to have seating and space for individuals to socialize and spend time. I

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excluded the establishments that focused on food. Coffee houses were excluded based on three criteria: 1) they only catered to carryout, 2) they did not focus on the serving of coffee beverages and small snacks, and 3) they were “cafés” that served mainly meals and had wait staff.

I decided to use the following coffee houses for this study: 1) Copley Square: Pavement Coffee House compared to a Starbucks a few blocks away; 2) Central Square: 1369 Coffee House compared to a Starbucks down the street; and 3) Davis Square: Diesel Café compared to a Starbucks across the street.

Observations and Procedures

I used unobtrusive observation to collect the data for this study. Unobtrusive observation allows the individuals being observed to continue their normal activities as if they were not under the watchful eye of the researcher. Unlike laboratory setting observations the researcher is obvious to the participants being observed. The benefit of unobtrusive observation is that it allows the researcher to record and analyze information and actions that are happening in a place, as they are occurring. Collecting the data in this fashion allows for high internal validity (Emerson 1981), such that observations more accurately represent the features of sites, in this case coffee houses as a third place (Hammersley 1987). I found that the best place to observe the coffee house was from inside, but I made an effort not to draw the attention of the patrons or employees. Using a laptop to record the observations, I tried to blend into the coffee house setting, and dressed and acted in ways similar to many of the patrons.

The use of unobtrusive observation enabled me to note the norms at the location and any unusual behaviors that took place. This helped me to better answer the research questions because I was able to visualize and understand the spaces and the ways people interact within the establishment. Being in the coffee houses while conducting the data collection helped me to

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understand how important these spaces were to the patrons who utilized them, because at the time, I too utilized them for my own work¹.

In addition to the observational data, I collected documents (e.g., business cards, flyers, frequent shopper cards, and website documentation) and took photographs of seating arrangements and activities to better understand the social settings. These documents provide a deeper understanding of what the café owners believe is important to the patrons. Though first intended as an aid to help me note characteristics of the locations and activities there, photos of seating, people, bulletin boards, websites, and signage conveyed what the owners of the coffee houses seek to communicate to the community. Photos are an important aspect of observational research because photos help attain the researcher's goal for vivid description. Photos also helped me to revisit some analysis of observations, as I was able to further analyze décor, lighting, room design, and furniture later at home. They also freed me up to focus my attention on which activities in the coffee house in real time¹.

During participant observations, I took notes on five aspects of the coffee houses that address that past research on third places 1) friendliness of the patrons and employees; 2. amenities cafés offered; 3) activities taking place; 4) atmosphere; and 5) seating. The friends that one finds in third places are those that one would not usually find in any other setting.

¹ There are drawbacks to observation. Since I was a newcomer attempting to learn and observe I had to be careful not to overlook important matters or events or to place too much importance on events that are marginally significant. In an attempt to overcome this, I returned to the locations multiple times and at a point in time to minimize the chances that I missed information that might be important to the study.

Individuals go to third places in order to meet people who “encourage harmony” and gather in the sole purpose of sociability. Oldenburg wrote about people who live in suburban areas and how their large homes and all the amenities’ it offers allows them to retreat from the community and stay home more often. Although if coffee houses and other third places offer the same amenities or more, these people would be more interested in joining the community again. Oldenburg believes that conversation should be the only activity in which the patrons take part in while at a third place. He believes in the celebrations of community by individuals coming together and making this community space a unifunctional space just for conversing. The atmosphere at a third place should be inviting, relaxed, and playful. Oldenburg (1989:38) believes that in a third place “joy and acceptance should reign over anxiety and alienation.” Therefore conversations should be pleasant and not something that would anger or make someone unpleasant. Lastly, seating is almost like a form of crowd control in third places. A place with larger tables will have a higher noise level, although places with smaller tables, will have quieter more intimate conversations. Oldenburg believes that seating is the second most important factor when determining a third place to patronize, the first being the conversation. I took specific notes of events that took place in these establishments and who was involved. Some examples include group discussion, working on laptops, and socializing with acquaintances. I also documented the sociability and the welcoming atmosphere of the coffee houses. Oldenburg (1989) writes: “What urban life increasingly fails to provide, and what is so much missed, is convenient and open-ended socializing – places where individuals can go without aim or arrangement and be greeted by people who know them and how to enjoy a little time off.” (p. 61-62.) Sociability is the focus of Oldenburg’s concept of a third places as he views them as third places. When one chooses a third place sociability is the most important factor that should be

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considered in determining where to go.

Seating, atmosphere and décor and Wi-Fi are important. I looked at the way the seating was arranged, including whether there were couches or tables and chairs, whether outside seating was available, and how many people the establishment could seat. The atmosphere observations included notes about décor around the establishment (e.g., whether local art was displayed) marketing, music, ambiance, and the volume of patrons' discussions. The amenities offered were particularly important to observe because they could be one reason patrons chose a specific café over another.

To aid in the data analysis, I created coding sheets to measure both of the research questions and categorize the data by each of the research question topics. The first coding sheet (Table 2) categorizes the different types of seating offered at the six locations. Using the field notes, I was able to complete the coding sheet and systematically determine which coffee house offered which types of seating. I used photographs to supplement my field notes after leaving the cafés. A second coding sheet measured the amenities that the different coffee houses offered. Table 3 shows whether the six different locations offered Wi-Fi (free or fee-based), newspapers (local and national), bulletin boards, power outlets, and time limits on services or stays. Table 4 is a summary of the third coding sheet, which measured atmosphere at the different locations. Included was the type of music, the volume of music, the volume of chatter, wall color, lighting, and décor. This coding sheet also details the location of the barista station and location of seating, which are important for creating a welcoming environment.

I visited each coffee house on three different occasions for the same amount of time. Each visit lasted from one to three hours. The visits were during morning or early afternoon, mid-afternoon, and evening. I varied the times of the observations throughout the day to

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document the extent to which the crowd changed according to the time of day, (e.g., between commuters in the morning and regulars in the evening) and to document whether the activities changed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing throughout the period of data collection. I recorded field notes in a systematic way through the use of coding sheets as to organize the data into different themes and patterns. I used open coding to analyze, contrast, and compare the field notes to each other as I collected the data. To understand the events taking place at the coffee houses my field notes were dissected and categorized (Strauss and Corbin 1990). In doing so I discovered themes and motifs about third places by using the open coding method of data analysis. This method allows the researcher to analyze the data by brainstorming all possible and potential meanings and by looking at the context in which the data is collected. Open coding also allows researchers to compare the data collected from different individuals (Corbin and Strauss 2008). I coded field notes to categorize the actions and settings into sociological explanations and themes (Giorgi 1997).

Results

My findings are presented in terms of the two different research questions. Some results overlap across the two research questions.

RQ1: In the era of portable technology, do coffee houses still serve the social purpose of a third place?

To help understand if coffee houses still serve the social purpose Oldenburg (1989) conceptualized in this work, I divided the six coffee houses into three groups: social space, (where people are mostly socializing and not using electronic devices) multifunctional space, (where people are both socializing and using electronic devices), and non-social space (where people are mostly not socializing because of the use of electronic devices). I used observation field notes to comprise these groups. The groups are as follows: social space: 1) Starbucks, Central Square; multifunctional spaces: 2) Pavement Coffee House, Copley Square; 3) Diesel Café, Davis Square; 4) Starbucks, Davis Square; 5) Starbucks, Copley Square; and non-social spaces 6) 1369 Coffee House, Central Square.

The Starbucks located in Central Square conforms to what Oldenburg (1989) called a “celebration of the community”. Oldenburg refers to this as an instance when individuals in a community (including a community made within a coffee house) enrich the public life, encourage sociability, and promote companionship in a relaxing and distinct informal gathering place (Oldenburg 1989). This Starbucks space was very small, which encouraged the act of socializing. It also had all of the standard characteristics and amenities that Starbucks customers expect, including space ideal for working (e.g., free Wi-Fi, plenty of tables and chairs, and newspapers). Working, however, was not the dominant activity undertaken here. The cozy atmosphere forced people to sit close together, encouraging socializing. During every observation period at this coffee house, all seats were occupied. This led to people to carry on conversations while standing and for table space. A common occurrence at this coffee house was that there was never enough open seating for everyone to sit down and relax, socialize with

friends, or, on the rare occasion, to work. This location was especially crowded during high traffic times, which coincided with the workday rush hour.

Many people were socializing while seated at the smaller tables in this Starbucks. In fact, the majority of the people who patronized this location appeared to be there for the purpose of conversation, whether with people they knew from before or people they had spontaneously met at the coffee house. During the first visit, I observed a couple that sat in the middle of the crowd conversing and enjoying their beverages (as seen in Figure 10). Interactions like this were a common occurrence at this location. During the second observation period at this location, two middle-aged women enjoyed a conversation while also drinking the beverages they purchased. Their conversation seemed to be light-hearted and carefree with an occasional burst of laughter and their moods brightened the atmosphere. These are just two examples of the ever occurring socializing that took place in this Starbucks coffee house.

Notably, this Starbucks coffee house had a special feature which no other coffee house in this study had: friendly baristas. During the second observation period, I sat near the barista station and was astonished by how many customers the baristas knew on a first name basis and how familiar they were with orders and their personal information. One customer spoke with the baristas about her newborn baby, telling him about the baby's milestones and even showing a few pictures. On another occasion, a customer came in and had a conversation with the barista about mutual friends and weekend plans.

Even though conversation dominated this location, it was not the only activity to be undertaken at this Starbucks. During both observation periods a few patrons sat drinking their beverages and reading newspapers and paperbacks (as seen in Figure 10). During the first observation period, a man sat by himself and was so engaged in reading a book that when he

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went to pick up his drink, he always almost knocked it over with his hand because his eyes never left the pages. During the same observation period, another man read the newspaper and seemed frustrated at the size of the tables because he could not fit the open newspaper on the table. There was a point when he actually put his beverage on the floor near his chair so it would be easier to lay the paper out on the table. I am sure this gentleman would have preferred one of the few larger tables or a seat at the bar, (which wrapped around the inside of the buildings window-paneled outside walls) but they were full.

While conversation was the dominant activity at this Starbucks, a small number of individuals were productively using personal electronic devices. It seemed that the bar seating was reserved especially for these people because all of the power outlets were located in that area. However, the majority of the people sitting there were facing each other and conversing rather than working. Of the two people using computers during the second observation period, one was checking his email account and the other had on headphones and was working on what appeared to be a music-editing program. Other than these two individuals, the only other person in this establishment who was using a personal electronic device was a woman speaking on her cell phone. Because of the lack of people working and the large number of conversations taking place in this location, the Central Square Starbucks belongs in the sociable group. This location was, by far, the best example of a third space as proposed by Oldenburg (1989). As Oldenburg (1989:62-63) explains in his book, this café is a socializing place where people can go without plans, but still be able to carry on a conversation, and enjoy time away from the home and work environments.

Pavement Coffee House (Figure 3) is an independently-owned coffee house located in the Copley Square neighborhood. The Berkley School of Music campus is located within this

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neighborhood, which keeps this coffee house filled with students who work on computers, study out of textbooks, and use the large tables and living room areas for study group sessions. Even though the majority of students were completing school-related work, they were also conversing on a regular basis, often about their studies. A couple of patrons at this location worked on computers alone. The infrequent occurrence of individuals working alone led make this the first coffee house in the mixed space group. Working alone or being alone at Pavement Coffee House was rare on all visits. This coffee house differed from the Central Square Starbucks, because it is a larger space and has no shortage of seating. Having more space than the Starbucks location gave Pavement a relaxed feeling because patrons were not sitting on top of one another, and could spread out and take up as much space as they wanted or needed.

During my first observation at Pavement, students used this coffee house as a place to socialize with their professors. This was evident by the content of the conversations between the students and their professors, who wore school identification cards on their lapels. It was my impression that exam time was approaching since a large group of people sat at the long table in the center of the café and focused on a study guide and textbooks. During the same data collection period a long table slowly filled with students and their books, bags, and laptops. Their discussion was quiet when only a few people were seated there, but as the table filled up with more students, the conversation grew louder and students began pointing out details and photographs in their textbooks. They were not writing a lot of information down nor reading from the textbooks quietly to themselves, but were talking to one another to better remember the detailed information they were studying.

Pavement is separated into many smaller sections with wall dividers throughout the establishment, making small living room settings. These small sections are different than

Starbucks because real half-walls separate the small spaces from one another, where as Starbucks' furniture is used to separate different spaces. These sections are designed to foster socializing and offer couches, armchairs, and coffee tables. The individuals I witnessed enjoying these small areas would sit back in the armchairs, cozy up with one another on the couch, and speak quietly in semi-private sections. One group of individuals talked to each other about their summer plans, and another group recanted a wedding that a couple of them attended that a fellow acquaintance missed. These small sections are what Oldenburg (1989) describes as places like the home, where friends can get together to share memories and have a drink or snack, but where nobody has to play hostess or work to celebrate socializing with others.

Pavement offered customers very few work-related amenities, which contributed to its being a multifunctional space. It had a small number of outlets for those wanting to charge laptops, on which few people were working. Especially notable was the four-hour daily limit on the Wi-Fi at this location, as bluntly stated on the signs posted on the walls and on cards placed at tables. Newspapers and other sources of media (e.g., news channels on TVs, or local flyers) were not available to patrons. People who wanted to work usually congregated at the computer bar area, which seats five and has a few power outlets. During my observation sessions the bar was completely occupied by five patrons who seemed to be working on computers, two of which were sitting and working together.

Pavement bustled with students who were strictly socializing and those who were both working and socializing. The many small tables meant for two to four people were occupied each time I was there. During the second observation period, these tables were occupied by a couple intimately talking to one another. Additionally, there were groups of two working on school-related work, looking over notes and discussing the material on the page or computer screen. I

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only saw on one or two occasions a single individual claiming space and covering the table with papers, computers, or notebooks.

This location is a good example of a multifunctional space coffee house. There are large areas where groups can meet and socialize, as well as smaller areas that are specifically designed for semi-private conversations. The coffee house was welcoming to all, meaning that it did not have signs about time limits. However, there was a limit for the Wi-Fi use. Even though there were a few instances of individuals working alone, this was not the norm.

Diesel Café, located in Davis Square (Figure 7) was a location that fostered socializing, but was also a place where working alone was common. When a person enters this location, he or she will pass metal chairs and tables. Those who wish to work or socialize in the natural light that comes through the large glass-paneled garage doors sit at these tables. Here, people sit with drinks and socialize with others. The first two occasions I was at this location, a woman was seated at small table knitting and appeared to be a regular because the baristas called to her by name, and she sat in the same seat both times.

The second room in Diesel was where all the fun took place during the evenings. It had a bar, two red felt pool tables (Figure 8), and a black and white photo booth. During the day, however, this room was the place where patrons worked. Again, Davis Square is also in the middle of a college campus, which is why I observed large groups of students working from textbooks, writing in notebooks, and typing on computers. During the day, when the pool tables were not in use, the bar in the middle room was completely occupied by single individuals on computers, plugged into the power outlets in close proximity to the seats. The two most common applications opened on patrons' laptops were word processing programs and email accounts. Most did not have additional notebooks or paperwork, so it was hard to tell if they were

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completing recreational work, paid work, or school-related work. On the opposite side of this room were a few booths standing alone. Single individuals who were claiming space, working alone on computers, and eating occupied these booths.

The back section was where people went for a quieter environment, and to get away from the hustle and bustle of the front rooms. During the first observation period, this section was filled with couples sitting in booths that lined the walls, socializing about personal matters and catching up on gossip. During the observation sessions, individuals also enjoyed the quiet of the back room, reading from textbooks or novels. There was also a man sitting at a table for two, leaning on an elbow concentrating on the book he was reading, which was lying open on the table. Another man was curled up against the side of the booth reading a hardcover textbook.

Diesel Café is not an optimal third place according to the standards set by Oldenburg (1989). Diesel is not just a place for socializing with others, but is a place where patrons are also engaging in activities and socializing (e.g., responding to email, knitting by the natural light, or a place to read a book in a relaxing setting). While Oldenburg (1989) might not consider Diesel a third place, it is a place where people can go to converse with friends. This combination of sociability and productivity is seen again in the next coffee house described, and it may be the new model of the multifunctional third place where people can socialize, work, and relax.

The Starbucks at Davis Square is another example of a new model of a third place, one which is multifunctional in use, where people can go for social purposes or to use personal electronic devices. The observations from this Starbucks showcase how patrons can be both productive and sociable with others at this coffee house. The seating area made this location an ideal place for productivity and completing work, with few sections suited for being sociable. The barista station was separated from the rest of the establishment by an extremely large table

that could easily seat 30. This table ran the length of the establishment, and every time I visited for data collection no seats were available at this table or anywhere else for that matter. Seating filled the front of this café and surrounded a beautiful gas fireplace that was open on both sides so more people could sit near it. On each side of the fireplace was matching furniture, and closest to the fireplace were a pair of overstuffed chairs and a small table. Behind these chairs was a table that could seat four to six people. Moving closer to the windows was a row of small tables that could sit two, though one person with a computer, books, and bags usually claimed these tables. Lastly, this café had a bar where loners sat. It was against the windows and extended the whole length of the café from the front door, around the bend, to the back door.

The activities at this location were mostly related to the use of personal electronic devices. Many patrons worked on laptops; and only a few had supplemental materials, so I assumed that they were not completing school-related work. This location lacked any groups in attendance, large or small, which could be why it was so quiet in this calming atmosphere. All but a few patrons were focused on working and most refrained from speaking to others and listening to headphones (Figure 6.)

Since this Starbucks is another great example of a multifunctional space, with the combination of sociability and productivity, a large number of loners were being productive. Because of the windows, this location had very few power outlets, so the seats closest to those were taken first. Many loners occupied the bar, small tables, overstuffed chairs, and larger tables that could seat six. An uncommon characteristic of this Starbucks location compared to the others was that loners mostly occupied a large communal table, which seemed intended for socializing. This suggests a large number of loners visit at this location, but unlike the individual seating system that the Copley Square Starbucks offers; this location is designed to encourage

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socializing, even though this did not occur most of the time. This location's layout was used for a productive work environment rather than a social one.

A few customers were at Starbucks to socialize and leisurely read books by the fireplace. Some were also scattered around conversing with other customers they met there and with whom they arrived. One couple was sitting in the corner at a table for two, dressed in business attire, socializing and writing memos in portfolios. Another customer sat in the middle of the large table, enjoying a cup of coffee and a pastry (Figure 6,) and another was reading a book on the overstuffed chair by the fireplace.

This location showcases the way in which Starbucks coffee houses better accommodate customers who come to be productive. Instead of this establishment being a unifunctional place, where individuals solely socialize which is how Oldenburg wanted third spaces to be celebrated, this has turned into a space where people come to get work done. These people are seeking cafés to be productive or engaging in leisurely reading.

The Starbucks at Copley Square was the busiest and largest of the three Starbucks locations be observed for this study (Figure 1.) A long, narrow establishment, it was always crowded with tables and patrons (Figure 2.) Most individuals at this location were working alone, being productive in paid, school-related, or recreational work. These individuals usually sat at small tables meant for two patrons, a freestanding bar with stools, or the couch at the front of the establishment. Many patrons had computer screens opened to word processing programs, spread sheets, and email accounts. These patrons who were working alone claimed as much space as they could at small table sets. In one case, a person claimed the whole couch to herself.

Only a few leisurely customers patronized this Starbucks. Those individuals who were not being productive were either seated at small tables by windows, outside, or at the few small

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tables that were not occupied by customers on computers. All leisurely customers socialized with one another in pairs or small groups of three. This location also had one large group of leisurely customers seated at the large table completing a variety of tasks together and dealing with computer problems; they seemed to be regulars who wanted to help each other.

This café changed radically between the periods of my observations in that by my second visit the seating was completely different; the company removed most small tables and a large table that seated 12 people and replaced them with individual seating arrangements with tables that looked like cubbies (Figure 2.) These cubbies were set up in groups of five to nine, one right next to the other. Each had a built-in seat and hooks for bags or jackets. One Saturday, I visited this café to find all the cubbies taken, while the couches were vacant, suggesting that cubbies are the preferred seating choice for those who come to Starbucks. Starbucks is clearly adapting to the fact that it is increasingly common for patrons to use computers to work at cafés.

This location, by far, seemed to accommodate individuals trying to complete work as it made the necessary changes to suit customers' habits. This café was far from what Oldenburg (1989) described as a third place because and fits into his idea of "hostile habitat" to the celebration of community which actually harms socializing because productivity dominates social activities. His view, that productivity harms the sociability of a third place, may be overstated. This is because socializing was still a part of this environment with small groups conversing at tables, and a large table populated by small groups having discussions.

1369 Coffee House's (Figure 11) website explicitly stated under a subheading called "community" that its goal is to be a "third place" for customers. This was the only café that used this language in presenting itself. The building is designed and decorated like a home and has the exterior structure of a residence, it is also the smallest independent coffee house. This location

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had the character, personality, and authenticity of a third place coffee house. For instance, at the front of the building was mural of a coffee mug with steam (Figure 12.) The outside of the building seemed like a house (Figure 11,) and when one walked into the front door it felt like entering a living room.

However, once inside, the walls were dark which made it seem even smaller than it really was. There were two front window seats that let in ample light for reading or working. More seating was at the end of a long hall going down to the back, lined with tables and chairs on each side of the walkway, leading to a huge table in the back that could easily sit 15. Had this coffee house provided more space, it would definitely be considered a third place, but the lack of space was visibly uncomfortable for patrons who were crowded into their chairs and the tables. The service line crowded the tables at the front of the coffee house and the only place to work without the worry of a computer being knocked over was in the back at a large table. Also, the dim lighting and dark walls gave a cavernous feel (Figure 13). Patrons constantly bumped into people sitting on the chairs near the walkway on the way to the restroom located in the very back.

Very few people patronized this café. During the first observation, a college-aged woman worked diligently on her computer and an older woman sat at the window table reading a book. This location was ideal for getting coffee to go, but it was difficult to sit for long and work because of the cramped seating arrangements and the fact that they did not offer free Wi-Fi. Also, I was not permitted to stay for a long period of time to work per order of the 30-minute “loitering limit” sign framed above the large table, asking guest’s not to spend more than 30 minutes during unspecified peak times. The reason for this time limit could be that the shop owners did not want to attract homeless people, which is a problem in this area. Also, another

reason for limiting the amount of time is that the establishment was so small that owners wanted to cater to people who were eating and drinking rather than just sitting and working for long periods of time and claiming the space, which is at a premium.

This was a poor location for socializing; I did not observe any individuals socializing except for the occasional customer who knew the barista and carried on a conversation with him while he prepared a beverage. Even though the website said that the café owners pride themselves on creating a third place, this coffee house lacked the celebration of socializing and community that Oldenburg discusses. This café seemed designed according to what Oldenburg (1989) describes a third place where as it's main function should have been socializing. However, this was not how this space was used. It was a non-social space more for individuals to be productive on personal electronic devices.

After comparing and grouping the six different locations based on the predominant activities their patrons most often engaged in, I was surprised at my findings. Based on the observations, independently owned coffee houses as well as chain coffee houses can still serve the social purpose of a third place, even with the use of personal electronic devices. With the exception of the 1369 Coffee House, which had no socializing and just people who were productively working or leisurely reading alone, all the other locations had multifunctional purposes. This means that instead of just being a celebration of socializing as Oldenburg described third places to be, they have now adapted to being not only places of socializing, but also for the use of personal electronic devices.

RQ2: In what ways do independently-owned and chain-based coffee houses differ as third places?

Sociability

The findings resulting from my observations illustrate that some coffee houses are still serving their communities as places where people can meet and socialize; a key function of third places. An example of this can best be seen at the Central Square Starbucks. The majority of patrons at this coffee house were there to socialize with one another, as seen in figure 10. In this photograph, one can see several couples talking to one another in an intimate, but crowded atmosphere. Not captured in this photograph, but observed by me, was the friendliness of the baristas at this location. During two out of the three observation sessions at this location, I noticed that different baristas would greet patrons by name. Not only did they know what regular customers ordered, but they also chatted about current events and shared experiences while preparing their coffee.

While coding my observations and field notes about independent coffee houses, however, an unexpected trend emerged. This trend suggested that because of the lack of corporate standardization to greet and be friendly to the customer, baristas and staff at independent locations were not as friendly as those at Starbucks. During my observations I took the time to note how the baristas would treat and assist a customer who got to the counter and did not know what they were going to order. The baristas at Starbucks would help the customer decide on a drink and explain the many options available. In contrast, the baristas at the independently owned coffee houses would just wait and stare blankly at the customer, and would only give a little assistance in helping the customer find that perfect beverage.

Seating

Oldenburg (1989) argued that seating could facilitate socializing when arranged in away that allows strangers to sit next to each other. He also explains that when seating disappeared on main streets in America, opportunities for interaction between strangers declined. Close seating allows people to overhear conversations that sound interesting and join in, as some patrons did in my study.

The seating at the Starbucks in Central Square was designed to promote socializing. The tables and chairs were too small for computers, and the seating was too cramped for working. This type of cramped environment creates a sociable environment because individuals really have no other options but to speak to each other. In this type of close quarters environment, it is very difficult to isolate one's self to their computer screen. This location's patrons sat around small tables or the bar area that wrapped around the café.

I witnessed many different instances of socializing at Pavement because of the living room style spatial designs. There were three separate living rooms, divided by half-wall partitions each containing a sofa, armchairs, and a coffee table located in the center. In each section, I observed different conversations. They were usually among students and instructors from the local college and other traditional college-aged young adults, chatting while enjoying iced beverages on a hot day. The topics of patrons' conversations may not have been specifically community-related, but both independent and chain coffee houses still created seating that fostered socializing.

Seating not only aided in the sociability of coffee houses, but also in productivity. The Starbucks in Copley Square had seating that was conducive for productivity with the aid of portable electronic devices. This location had ample workspace in the form of tables with chairs,

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stand-alone bars, and individual seating arrangements that looked like cubbies as seen in figure 2. These individual cubbies made for optimal semi-private workstations, like one would see at a library.

Amenities

The amenities offered at coffee houses can determine who patronizes these establishments and their activities there. After careful review of the field notes, coding sheets, and photographs, amenities emerged as a main factor in understanding patrons' behaviors. I expected that local independently-owned coffee houses would be in a losing competition with chain-based coffee houses because of the cost of providing various amenities free of charge. This study looked at amenities such as Wi-Fi and Power outlets, as well as media resources such as newspapers, televisions, and bulletin boards.

Wi-Fi and Power

As mentioned earlier, I used Starbucks as the reference group for coding amenities. Starting in July 2010, Starbucks began offering free Wi-Fi at all locations, with no time limit and no membership or application. Like Starbucks, three independent locations also offered Wi-Fi to customers, as seen in Table 3. Diesel Café had fee-based Wi-Fi service, which charged either by the hour, day, week, or month. Pavement offered four free hours of Wi-Fi, but had a poor connection on my own computer. Lastly, 1369 Coffee House had the capability for Wi-Fi, but like Diesel, patrons were required to register and decide whether they want Internet access for the next hour, day, week, or month.

Another amenity that was plentiful at the Copley Square Starbucks but more difficult to find in other locations was a power outlet for charging laptops and other mobile devices. Only the coffee houses in Copley Square and Davis Square had access to power outlets, as seen in

Table 3. However, these power outlets were available in limited quantities, which made finding a seat near one a valuable commodity.

These two amenities alone, Wi-Fi and power outlets, are probably the leading cause in the patrons transition from using this space as a social gathering to a space where they can use their personal electronic devices. With the freedom to work anywhere with Internet access, it is no wonder that people have started visiting the more relaxing and welcoming social scenes of coffee houses to complete their tasks. Coffee houses offer many of the amenities people need to work other than just Internet connections and power outlets; they offer individuals media resources, chairs, and work surfaces that make productivity even easier in such settings. Also having these amenities available to people who can complete work remotely via personal electronic devices allows them to work in a more pleasant and less isolating setting than the traditional office building or home office.

Media Resources

The third amenity that Starbucks offered at every location was media sources. Every Starbucks had not only local but national newspapers, as seen in Table 3. This was not the case for the independently owned coffee houses. As indicated by Table 3, the independent coffee houses offered neither a local newspaper nor a national newspaper. There were also no other sources of news offered at any of the independent locations. This is an interesting finding because previous research has concluded that one reason that individuals patronize coffee houses is to hear the latest news and gossip (Cowan 2004).

After examining the amenities offered at the six different locations, the independently-owned coffee houses offered their customers fewer amenities and fee-based Wi-Fi. The massive corporate funding for amenities at chain coffee houses contributes to the differences and allows

Starbucks to conduct research on what their customers want, and adapt accordingly. The work environment created by technology-supporting amenities at Starbucks may benefit the growing customer base that desires to use their portable electronic devices. Independent coffee houses, with fewer technology-supporting amenities should be more welcoming for those who want to socialize. However, this is not the case in the coffee houses I observed. Patrons at these coffee houses were able to undertake and complete whichever activities they wanted whether it was to use portable electronic devices or to socialize with those around them.

Novelty

There are not many amenities that the independent coffee houses had Starbucks did not, but novelty is an exception. Oldenburg (1989) declares novelty is important to coffee houses because it gives the patrons a different setting in which to revive themselves. Examining the photographs taken from the six different coffee houses gives insight into the different décor and design themes at independently-owned coffee houses. This stands in contrast to Starbucks décor that conforms to branding guidelines.

The décor in Pavement was delicate and airy. The brick walls were painted white, which lightened the atmosphere of the café. This was an especially important feature since there were not many windows in the back. Pavement had chandeliers hanging just above the tables to illuminate the café and add a touch of elegance to the area. Diesel Café had a bicycle theme, which reflected its location in a bicycling community. It had vibrant red walls with street signs and bicycle parts as decorations. 1369 Coffee House looked like someone's home with wainscoting on the walls, an old weathered wooden floor and small windows throughout the space. These three coffee houses were very unique in their appearance and atmosphere because of the various themes the owners wanted to present to the patrons.

Starbucks was more neutral in appearance and color themes. Two of the three Starbucks had brick accent walls, which were bordered with light brown walls, dark brown ceilings, and a wall of windows facing out to the street. The third Starbucks, located in Central Square, had two walls, with large window paneling and a third wall painted off-white. A shelving unit, holding merchandise, covered the fourth wall, which was the same in all three locations. This unit was a lightly stained wooden bookshelf stocked with coffee, mugs, and brewing equipment.

The differences between the independent and the chain-based coffee houses as third places are in the form of what they offer the customers. The independently-owned coffee houses offered their customers seating arrangements aimed toward socializing, unique atmospheres, and novel décor, which is what Oldenburg found to be the best aspects of a third place. On the other hand, chain-based coffee houses offered patrons free Wi-Fi and multiple power outlets, seating arrangements aimed toward productivity, and media resources for local and national news. This is a polar opposite of a third place because these types of amenities should deter the social aspect. Surprisingly, the data shows that even though independent and chain coffee houses offer different amenities to their patrons, it does not hinder on the socializing or working activities undertaken at such locations.

Discussion and Conclusion

Coffee houses have been celebrated as a “third place” that serve as an alternative to home and work as well as environments that promote social support, friendship, and community (Oldenburg 1989). Yet coffee houses have experienced much change in recent years. The first major transformation deals with the move of ownership of coffee houses from locally and independently based operators to those that are chain-based. This transition has been widely

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noticed by urban researchers who discuss how chain-based businesses care less about the best interests of the community of which they are a part. (Clark 2002; Porter 1995; Thompson and Arsel 2004). According to critics, chain coffee houses, perhaps the most reviled example being Starbucks, are designed with bleak branding that lacks creativity or artistic vision. Those who go to chain coffee houses do so to for the comforts of an upscale environment without regard for or interest in aesthetic distinctiveness, cultural themes, or the details of how and why the coffee house runs the way it does (Roseberry 1996).

In recent years another transformation has taken place inside coffee houses. The activities that patrons undertake while at a coffee house have transformed from that of being a social hub, to that of a Wi-Fi hub where people can use their portable electronic devices with ease. This has lead to the transformation of a unifunctional third space, that being a space where only socializing is taking place to a multifunctional place where people can socialize, use personal electronic devices, or shoot a game of pool.

This research empirically addresses these two transformations using the concept of the third place. Two major questions guide the discussion that follows: 1) In the era of portable technology do coffee houses serve the social purpose of a third place; and 2) In what ways do independently-owned and chain coffee houses differ as a third place?

The first major finding, which addresses the first research question, is that while Oldenburg champions the coffee house as a third place where people primarily socialize, the rise of portable computing devices and E-readers have transformed the activities found in coffee houses, for better or for worse. I classified all coffee houses as either a social space, (where people are mostly socializing and not using electronic devices) multifunctional space, (where people are both socializing and using electronic devices), or a non-social space. Surprisingly, I

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found the majority of the coffee houses were multifunctional spaces. I would have thought that in this era of portable technological devices that there would be hardly any socializing at coffee houses, although this was not the case. What I found was that patrons still go to coffee houses because they are a social hub, where people can feel free to carry on conversations with complete strangers if they want.

The second major finding, which answers with the second research question, finds the differences between independent coffee houses and chain coffee houses. The major differences in the two different types of coffee houses are what they offer the customers. In terms of seating, Internet connections, power outlets, uniqueness, and social atmospheres. Starbucks offers customers amenities geared towards productivity, such as power outlets, Wi-Fi, and media resources. Independently-owned coffee houses, on the other hand, offer customers amenities that encourage conversing with others, like seating arrangements designed for socializing, novel atmospheres, and uniqueness.

The Central Square Starbucks was the only social space where patrons did not utilize personal electronic devices. Patrons came to this coffee house to converse with friends, co-workers, and classmates and not worry about having to play hostess in their own homes, which is how Oldenburg (1989) conceptualized third places coffee houses over 20 years ago. The coffee house provides food choices for many different tastes, and beverages of all sorts from water to exotic coffees and teas. On occasion, people worked on computers at this coffee house, but they did not seem disturbed by the large numbers of patrons who were there for social purposes.

The second group included the four locations that were multifunctional spaces in which a combination of sociability and the use of personal technological devices took place. These coffee houses were Pavement Coffee House, Diesel Café, Davis Square Starbucks, and the Copley

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Square Starbucks. These locations had approximately equal shares of individuals who were there to work or to be social with others. Diesel and the Pavement Coffee House offered seating that was conducive to both productivity and socializing, whereas Starbucks offered a limited amount of seating for socializing and reserved the majority of seating for work. Oldenburg (1989) has referred to this type of multifunctional space as a “hostile habitat.” An environment that harms the sociability of individuals by offering activities that detracts from conversation. However, my observation of patrons at Pavement, Diesel, and Starbucks was that they did not seem to mind those individual who were there to work.

1369 Coffee House did not seemed to be a space that was designed for a working environment, although their patrons always seemed to be typing on computers. Theses were surprising results as this was the only coffee house in the study which self-proclaimed to be a third place on their website.

Oldenburg’s work began over 20 years ago when desktop computers were the norm and mobile phones were not readily accessible. Since his written work on coffee houses, portable technology has advanced tremendously and gained popularity; it is no wonder that there has been a recent transition in the use of coffee houses away from sociability towards productivity at both independently owed and chain establishments. A new addition to the concept of a third place must incorporate the addition of technology and productivity since it is such a large activity undertaken at coffee houses. In today’s day and age it seems that people are on their portable electronic devices mostly because they can be used for so many different things like internet access or even a 30,000 piece literally library in the palm of your hand. This being said it only stands to reason that these devices be integrated into present day third places. Third places can no longer be unifunctional places; they need to incorporate the use of portable electronic devices.

Technology has taken over the realm of personal conversations. People use cell phones constantly for talking, sending e-mails, text messaging and surfing the Internet. Older generations have adopted the habits of younger people and joined social networking sites that they update all day instead of meeting in person. With this being said, it is harder to make these important connections with friends, family, and strangers in a multifunctional coffee house, which many cafés have adapted to being.

To help measure sociability, I also noted customer types that visited these locations. The first customer type and most prevalent in all coffee houses was the loners. Two different groups of loners were the most common: those who were productive and working, and leisurely loners who were enjoying themselves with a book or knitting project. The first group of loners were either completing work or just socializing and sending emails. Leisure loners were visible at all locations. These patrons do not seek social conversation as much as they desire to be alone and sitting with a beverage or snack, while reading the paper, a book, E-reader, or just knitting. Leisure loners are customers who want to get away from the home environment to a novel place where they could enjoy themselves in a public setting near others while not necessarily interacting with them. Leisure loners usually sat by themselves at small tables, in armchairs, or at larger tables where they could still be separated from others.

Lastly groups of customers were observed during data collection times talking to one another in semi-private conversations or working together on school-related work. However, these groups were also seen working separately on laptops at the same table, but not socializing with each other. My theory is that small groups and couples who patronize the coffee houses together are doing so not to socialize, but to complete work. They do this to claim a large table if

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available and not be concerned with larger groups judging them for claiming more space than one person needs.

The amenities (e.g., free Wi-Fi, electrical outlets, newspapers, sofas), ample and placement of seating, and spatial arrangement (larger buildings) are highly conducive to attracting customers to come in and stay for long periods of time. They can complete a variety of tasks, and all at a relatively low cost and with no time limitations. Starbucks locations can serve multiple purposes for customers. They can be places for comfortable leisure in the form of reading (e.g., the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *The Wall Street Journal* are sold there), socializing with friends on leather sofas, and for eating meals and drinking a variety of beverages included but not limited to coffee. In addition, Starbucks locations also offer the benefits of an office: power for electronics, dark wood working surfaces, and free unlimited Internet access. Starbucks almost seems designed to be a work environment that is less isolating and distracting than many home offices. It offers a pleasant work atmosphere to accomplish work tasks for jobs, school, or social networking with its neutral décor, art in the form of motivational quotes, and soft, unobtrusive music.

In addition, Starbucks is able to offer this core of amenities at most locations. It is this reliable, standardization that is part of its allure. While the independent coffee houses offer local flavor that Starbucks cannot because of strict self-imposed branding rules, they are largely characterized by limitations placed on customers. These can be in the form of time restrictions, lack of workspace and outlets, and fees for Wi-Fi. All of these present barriers to attracting customers and meeting their needs in our modern, connected culture.

Locally-owned cafés offer specially designed seating that allows many people to sit together if they want to allow for conversations to be possible. In this study, however, these

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seating designs were more widely used for personal electronic devices. Locally-owned cafés also can cater to the neighborhood that they reside in because it is not held to stringent branding like Starbucks. This allows the patrons to feel more comfortable and maybe even a little at home with locally made furniture, art, or even just pictures from around the area.

Future Research and Limitations

As the literature review for this research project shows, large gaps remain in the knowledge about third places. Further research in this area of study should use in-depth interviews with the patrons of coffee houses, as well as employees and owners. The use of interviews would allow researchers to understand why people visit coffee houses. Also, it could help the coffee house owners to understand the needs customers have and what they might need to change to better their stores for future business. For instance, just because a patron is on the computer does not mean that he or she is completing work for pay. Future research should better measure what people are doing on computers at coffee houses by the use of a survey, a small interview session with patrons, or even a focus group.

Unobtrusive observation is a useful tool for collecting data regarding to how individuals use a particular space, and their interactions inside that space. The researcher can be involved with the space and experience how others use it. This was one aspect of my study that allowed me to understand how the loners used this space, and what the individuals who go to cafés to be productive require. The main limitation of this work, which would allow for more knowledge and depth to the subject, is the lack of interviews from the patrons and employees. Without the use of surveys or interviews, I was left to make educated assumptions about patrons' motivations. Another downfall of Unobtrusive observation is that the one researcher cannot see nor note everything that happens during a visit. The human eye can only see so much at one

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time. The busy coffee houses in the Greater Boston area from which the data was collected are large establishments, some with more than one room or section. These large spaces make it hard to record everything that is happening, and at the time of data collection the researcher might be paying attention to one matter, when on the other side of the room a social phenomenon may be happening that the research fails to notice. In order to correct this error one might set up a time-lapse video system in a coffee house. This would allow the research to see everything that is happening, see how the coffee houses functions throughout the day, and aftertime become aware who the true regulars of the café are.

When conducting research on the topic of activities in a coffee house, one of the most important factors that should be considered is the use of technologies. This has been the biggest transformation that coffee houses have been through in the past 20 years, ever since the establishment of Starbucks in the early 1990's and the introduction of chain cafés in the United States. The use of technologies in cafés has altered Oldenburg's work since these third places are no longer unfunctional.

Future work should investigate a larger number of coffee houses, and in a broader area instead of the span of a few cities. This study was sampled by purposive sampling, as I looked at the large number of coffee houses in the Greater Boston Area, and had to select a small number based off preliminary observations. Although by using a random sample, and increasing the sample size it would allow for the expansion of the present literature on coffee houses, as well as coffee houses as a third place. If the future sample will allow, the findings may assist in the debate between which coffee house is better for the community: chain or independently owned.

Another possible limitation that I realized is that many individuals who patronized these coffee houses were enrolled in college, as Boston also functions as a large college town. Further

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research should compare cafés that cater to fewer students and university workers. With this population included in the sample it seems more likely that there would be a larger group of people in the coffee houses for work related means. With a larger and more diverse

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Appendix

Tables

Table 1: Date and time of observations

	Davis Square		Central Square		Copley Square	
	Starbucks	Indie	Starbucks	Indie	Starbucks	Indie
Time 1						
Date	Mon. July 8	Wed. August 4	Thur. August 5	Wed. July 21	Mon. July 8	Tues. August 3
Time of day	10:00 AM	1:30 PM	4:00 PM	5:00 PM	10:00 AM	10:30 AM
Duration	2:30 hrs.	2:30 hrs.	2:00 hrs.	2:00 hrs.	3:00 hrs.	3:00 hrs.
Time 2						
Date	Tues. August 3	Wed. August 8	Thurs. August 11	Mon. August 9	Wed. July 10	Mon. August 9
Time of day	2:30 PM	10:00 AM	10:30 AM	1:00 PM	6:00 PM	4:00 PM
Duration	3:00 hrs.	3:00 hrs.	2:00 hrs.	2:00 hrs.	3:00 hrs.	3:00 hrs.
Time 3						
Date	Fri. October 29	Fri. October 29	Mon. December 20	Tues. December 28	Tues. November 23	Sat. November 27
Time of day	10:00 AM	2:00 AM	9:30 AM	3:00 PM	1:30 PM	3:00 PM
Duration	1:30 hrs.	1:30 hrs.	1:00 hrs.	1:00 hrs.	2:00 hrs.	2:00 hrs.

Table 2: Code sheet for seating

	Davis Square		Central Square		Copley Square	
	Starbucks	Indie	Starbucks	Indie	Starbucks	Indie
Outside	X	X			X	X
Window seating			X	X	X	
Sofas		X			X	X
“Cubbies”					X	
Large tables (8 seats)	X			X	X	X
Tables (4 seats)		X	X		X	X
Tables (2 seats)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Oversized upholstered chairs	X				X	X
Bars w/ stools	X	X	X		X	

Running head: THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF COFFEE HOUSES: THE EMERGENCE OF CHAIN ESTABLISHMENTS AND THE PRIVATE NATURE OF USAGE

Table 3: Coding sheet describing the amenities offered at coffee houses

	Davis Square		Central Square		Copley Square	
	Starbucks	Indie	Starbucks	Indie	Starbucks	Indie
Newspapers						
Local	X		X		X	
National	X		X		X	
Free Wi-Fi	X		X	X	X	
Fee-based Wi-Fi		X		X		X
Power outlets	Very Few locations	Varies locations	None	None	Varies locations	Varies locations
Time limits				X		

Table 4: Coding sheet on atmosphere

	Davis Square		Central Square		Copley Square	
	Starbucks	Indie	Starbucks	Indie	Starbucks	Indie
Music	X		X		X	
Volume of Music	Soft		Soft		Soft	
Volume of Chatter	Low to none	High	High	Low, to none	Low	Low
Wall color	Neutrals	Red and Brick	Neutrals	Robins eggs blue in front, dark stained wood in the rear	Mostly window, but neutral wall color	White painted bricks
Décor	Corporate Art	Bicycle Motifs	Minimal Corporate Art	No Art	Local Art	Tapestry on walls No Art
Barista Station	Back of the shop	Front of the shop	Back of the shop	Front of the shop	Back of the shop	Front of the shop
Seating	Front of the shop	Back of the shop	Front of the shop	Back of the shop	Front of the shop	Back of the shop
Lighting	Bright	Bright	Daylight, Bright	Dull	Bright	Bright

Table 5: Coding sheet of activities

	Davis Square		Central Square		Copley Square	
	Starbucks	Indie	Starbucks	Indie	Starbucks	Indie
Loners						
Reading	X	X	X	X	X	
Working on computers	X	X	X	X	X	X
Talking on cell phones	X				X	
Only eating and drinking coffee	X				X	
Other	Knitting					
Groups of two or more						
Reading						X
Working alone not on computers	X				X	X
Working alone on computers	X				X	X
Working together not on computers	X					X
Working together on computers					X	X
Socializing	X	X	X		X	X
Only Eating and drinking		X	X		X	X
Other					Computer lessons	

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Table 6: U.S. Census table (based on 2000 U.S. census data)

	Davis Square		Central Square		Copley Square		Metropolitan Area	Country
	Tract 3509	Middlesex County	Tract 3537	Middlesex County	Tract 104.01	Suffolk County	CMSA*	United States
Total Population	3,139	1,465,396	5,246	1,465,396	9,346	689,807	3,406,829	281,421,906
% Female	53.3	51.6	50.3	51.6	49.3	51.8	51.9	50.9
Median Age	30.8	36.4	24.6	36.4	22.4	31.7	36.3	35.3
% White	88.1	85.9	75.8	85.9	72.4	57.8	82.5	75.1
% Black	2.3	3.4	4.5	3.4	7.1	22.2	7	12.3
% Asian	6.1	6.3	13.3	6.3	13.4	7.0	4.9	3.6
% Hispanic/Latino	3.4	4.6	6.3	4.6	7.4	15.5	5.9	12.5
Average household size	2.08	2.52	1.65	2.52	1.76	2.34	2.48	2.59
% Owner-occupied housing units	30.0	61.7	24.4	61.7	10.1	33.9	59	66.2
Median Household Income	54,779	60,821	42,178	60,821	26,576	39,355	55,183	41,994
% High School graduate or higher	92.0	88.5	96	88.5	91.3	78.1	24.8	80.4
% Bachelor's degree or higher	65.4	43.6	75.4	43.6	65.3	32.5	22.6	24.4
% Enrolled in College or Graduate School	29.6	20.1	74.5	20.1	85.4	43.5	30.8	22.8

* Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area, as defined by the 2000 Census data. This area includes the Greater Boston communities, the North Shore communities, South Shore communities, and communities just over the New Hampshire boarder. Also included in this area are populations from eastern Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Photographs

Figure 1: Outside view of Copley Square Starbucks. From the design of the building one would never believe that this Starbucks is relatively new to the area. The architecture of the storefront blends into the area very well.

Figure 2: Inside of Copley Square Starbucks. Cubbies are located along each of the walls.

Patrons here are more likely to utilize the personal cubbies along the walls before they would claim the space of a huge table where others could join them.

Figure 3: Outside view Pavement Coffee House, Copley Square. The outside seating was never a popular spot at this café, probably because the inside had inviting seating with overstuffed couches.

Figure 4: Inside view of Pavement Coffee House. This coffee house resembles more of a student union rather than a coffee house in Copley Square. Here students are working on laptops, reading textbooks, and working in groups studying for upcoming exams.

Figure 5: Outside view of the Davis Square Starbucks. This photo is a prime example of what goes on at a third space, and the variety of activities which can take place. Near the entrance to the coffee house there is a man using his computer sitting on a ledge. There is also a woman sitting under the umbrella talking on her cell phone. She is temporarily using this space as a place to sit, relax, and finish her conversation on the phone. Also in the same space in the far right of the photograph is a group of young men gathered around talking with one another.

Figure 6: Inside view of Davis Square Starbucks. This is a middle table shot of the large table that could easily seat 30 individuals. Here the transformation from socializing at a third place to the use of portable electronic devices can be seen.

Figure 7: Outside view of Diesel Café, Davis Square. Bicycles here are the main mode of transportation for patrons.

Figure 8: Inside view of Diesel Café. Pool tables are located in the middle of the establishment.

As one can see this photograph shows all this establishment has to offer. There are booths in the back for couples or groups to eat and socialize in a quiet setting. There are pool tables in the middle of the coffee house for use by the patrons. In the foreground of the photograph (which is the front of the coffee house) one can see people in line for the barista station.

Figure 9: Outside view of the Central Square Starbucks. This location is near a train stop, and can also be accessed by various other modes of transportation.

Figure 10: Inside view of Starbucks located in Central Square. This location was the busiest and most social coffee house that I visited for this study. This was the usual atmosphere of this establishment. Few people were by themselves in this social hot spot. Most individuals spoke with coworkers, acquaintances, or strangers.

Figure 11: Outside view of 1369 Coffee House, Central Square. This coffee house had the most unique exterior, seeing that it was a first floor of a house. The benches out front allow for customers to sit in the sun and watch the world go by while they enjoy a snack, beverage, or socialize.

Figure 12: Mural out of 1369 Coffee House, Central Square. The unique painting allows customers to follow the trail of steam from the coffee cup to the front door of the establishment.

Figure 13: Inside view of 1369 Coffee House, Central Square. This picture depicts a smaller coffee house interior. If one looks closely they can see that all the patrons working on laptops. Also, the individuals in this coffee shop are by themselves, not socializing with others around them.

¹ Many sociologists have declined to use photography as part of their research, in part because sociology became more of a science over time just as photography became known as more of an art form (Becker 1974). Yet integrating photography into sociology helps in explaining social phenomena (Becker 1974) and increasingly sociologists are incorporating photographs and videos to help tell social stories. Becker (1974) described the method of

evaluating a photograph as sociological evidence and looking at every minor detail of a setting through images. He argued, that in order to really see a photograph, researchers needed to be able to memorize the small aspects so they can recall the whole image days, if not weeks, later. The greatest advantage of photography is that one can record a photograph out in the field one day and return later to that picture to continue gathering data from it (Becker 1974). This method of data collection helped tremendously in studying details of such small spaces while also taking ethnographic field notes to make sure that I recorded aspects of the space and not just the activities.