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Brewing National Identity: Coffee Consumption as a Marker of Cultural Identity

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By

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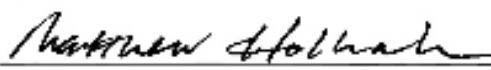
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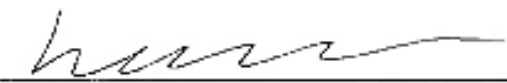
Brewing National Identity: Coffee Consumption as a Marker of Cultural Identity

**A THESIS
APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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By 
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Statement of the Problem

Despite the rich cultural history of coffee, particularly in the Middle East, there is a notable lack of research within the field of rhetoric that examines how coffee functions as a site of cultural identity and belonging. While food studies often explore the symbolic and communicative roles of cuisine, coffee—though globally consumed—remains under-analyzed as a rhetorical practice, especially in the context of Middle Eastern traditions and immigrant experiences. This project addresses that gap by exploring how coffee culture serves as a tool for expressing and negotiating national identity in both local and diasporic settings.

Summary of Literature

Food is deeply intertwined with cultural meaning, embodying a wealth of symbols, metaphors, and rituals that encode social values, norms, and beliefs. From culinary traditions passed down through generations to elaborate feasting rituals that mark rites of passage and religious ceremonies, food plays a central role in defining group boundaries and expressing cultural distinctiveness. In “Food, Identity, and Cultural Reproduction in Immigrant Communities”, Fabio Parasecoli describes food, identity, and cultural representation in

immigrant communities, specifically looking at the ways that people communicate through food practices (24). Studies on the relationship between food and culture have shown that food is much more than sustenance; food is a creation that is sensed, processed, presented, and consumed, having the ability to represent individual and collective identities (Jacobsen 4).

Food is a way for groups of people to share their cultural identities and find a sense of belonging, giving people a sense of tradition and nostalgia, and it can serve for many as a bridge to other countries and cultures (Jacobsen 15). In this way, food can be examined through a rhetorical lens. Malea Powell and her colleagues define cultural rhetorics by highlighting that “*rhetorics* are made through everyday practices, and these systems of practice, conversely, constitute cultural rhetorics” (Act I, Scene II). As an everyday practice in all cultures, food is a rich site for rhetorical analysis, which can help us to better understand the ways food creates meaning and shapes identities.

Coffee, in particular, represents a unique intersection between food, culture, and identity. The everyday practices that make up a culture can be examined through the traditions surrounding both coffee itself and the places where it is served. A coffee shop typically takes the form of an informal restaurant that is used to foster conversation over food and beverage (Gaudio 660). For many cultures, coffee shops are traditional meeting places for meaningful collaboration and discourse. They can also be used as a space for individuals to feel camaraderie with fellow customers working on laptops or reading books (Farris 23). However, many franchise coffee shops can also erase cultural traditions or even promote more superficial interactions. Paula Osorio describes the experience of ordering a coffee and walking into a coffee shop, specifically *Starbucks*, as “[a] theatrical performance” (116-117). A rhetorical analysis of coffee culture, from the coffee itself, to the spaces it is served, to the culture traditions

surrounding it, can illuminate the ways in which individuals negotiate identity, status, and belonging through their engagement with coffee culture.

Thesis Statement

Just as food serves as a conduit for cultural exchange and identity, coffee too, as a culturally-infused substance, reflects the intricate ways in which shared beliefs and social practices shape the meanings we attach to everyday rituals. This project investigates the role of coffee in shaping and expressing national identity across different countries, exploring how individuals use coffee consumption as a means of finding a sense of identity and belonging within their cultural contexts. Coffee, as a culturally charged substance and ritualized practice, functions as a rhetorical tool through which individuals and communities construct, express, and negotiate national identity and belonging—particularly within the context of Jordanian coffee culture, where traditional practices and global influences intersect in meaningful ways.

Methodology

This research combines qualitative interviews and site analysis to explore how coffee culture in Jordan and the United States communicates cultural identity. I conducted interviews with family members (who are Jordanian immigrants) to gain a better understanding of traditional coffee rituals and how they are maintained or transformed through migration. Additionally, I analyzed three coffee shops in Oklahoma—representing Middle Eastern, global chain, and local independent models—to examine how identity and culture is expressed through physical space, coffee offerings, and consumer experience. Drawing on frameworks from food

and spatial rhetorics, I evaluated elements such as environment design, movement through space, and presentation of coffee to assess how these spaces reflect or reshape cultural traditions.

Summary of Findings

This research reveals that coffee is deeply imbued with cultural meaning, from the way it is poured and the cups used, to the time, place, and setting in which it is consumed. Each element communicates layers of identity, tradition, and cultural values. Furthermore, the coffee shop emerges as a dynamic crossroads of culture, identity, and coffee itself—spaces where these elements blend seamlessly to create a sense of belonging and cultural affirmation for customers. However, the study also highlights tensions between traditional cultural coffee practices and the homogenizing influence of global chains like Starbucks, revealing the complexities of cultural preservation within a globalized coffee landscape. At the same time, it illustrates how these forces—tradition and globalization—not only clash but also interact, influencing one another in ways that shape the evolution of the coffee industry, from business models to flavor profiles.

Confirmation, Modification, or Denial of Thesis

The research confirms the central argument that coffee serves as a significant cultural symbol for identity and belonging. Both traditional coffee rituals in Jordan and the evolving coffee culture in the U.S. highlight how coffee consumption functions as a tool for expressing and negotiating national identity. The findings also demonstrate that coffee culture, despite globalization, remains an important way for individuals to maintain connections to their heritage.

Significance or the Findings

This research contributes to the fields of cultural and food rhetorics by examining how coffee functions as a marker of cultural identity and national belonging, with a focus on Jordanian traditions and their expression in both local and global contexts. By analyzing coffee's symbolic and rhetorical significance, especially within immigrant communities, this research sheds light on how everyday practices like coffee consumption help individuals navigate identity, belonging, and cultural preservation in the face of globalization. This research also expands existing conversations in food studies and rhetorics by emphasizing the importance of coffee culture in shaping and communicating cultural identity across spaces and borders.

Suggestions for Future Research

Culture studies could explore how coffee culture intersects with other forms of food and drink rituals in immigrant communities, particularly examining the role of beverages like tea or alcohol in identity formation. Additionally, further research could investigate the impact of globalization on local coffee traditions in other countries, comparing the dynamics observed in Jordanian communities to those in other parts of the Middle East or non-Western cultures. It would also be valuable to examine the role of coffee shops as spaces of social and political discourse, particularly in regions where these spaces have become sites for activism or cultural exchange. Lastly, expanding the scope of this research to include a wider range of coffee shops and cultural settings could offer a broader understanding of how global coffee culture impacts national identity across diverse populations.

Brewing National Identity: Coffee Consumption as a Marker of Cultural Identity

SIGNIFICANCE

From its roots in the Middle East to its global presence today, coffee has been more than just a beverage—it is a powerful cultural symbol that reflects identity, tradition, and belonging. There is a lack of research in the field of Rhetoric on coffee culture in general, and Middle Eastern, namely Jordanian, coffee culture specifically. The present research, then, seeks to contribute to the growing field of cultural rhetorics by exploring the multifaceted ways in which coffee consumption serves as a marker of cultural identity and national belonging. While food studies have long examined the ways in which eating practices reflect and construct cultural identities, this thesis specifically shifts the focus to coffee, a ubiquitous yet culturally diverse food product, and its unique role in national identity formation. By analyzing the symbolic meanings, rituals, and narratives surrounding coffee in both local and global contexts, this research advances our understanding of food as a tool for negotiating belonging in contemporary societies.

While much of the scholarship on nationalism focuses on political and historical narratives, this project demonstrates how everyday practices—such as drinking coffee—are central to how individuals and communities construct and communicate national identity. Through its exploration of coffee shops, both local and chain, this study also addresses the tension between globalization and cultural preservation. By focusing on how coffee culture is transmitted, modified, or homogenized in different settings, this research provides insight into the cultural dynamics of a globalized world, where local traditions may be altered or erased by the dominance of multinational coffee brands. In doing so, it invites broader discussions on the impact of globalization on cultural practices and the ways in which individuals and communities resist or adapt to changes to maintain a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, a rhetorical analysis of coffee culture—from the coffee itself to the spaces it is served in, to the cultural traditions surrounding it—can illuminate the ways in which individuals negotiate identity, status, and belonging through their engagement with coffee. This research aims to highlight Middle Eastern coffee culture and traditions, as well as the spaces in which they are enjoyed, emphasizing that the coffee experience extends beyond global chains like Starbucks. By examining Middle Eastern coffee traditions and their representation in coffee shops, this study seeks to contribute to the academic conversation about how cultural identity is expressed through coffee shops today.

Additionally, this research calls attention to the critical role of food practices in immigrant communities, particularly in relation to identity preservation and negotiation. Through incorporating narratives from Jordanian immigrants, this project explores how food can serve as a bridge between cultures, allowing individuals to retain a connection to their homeland while integrating into new communities. This adds depth to the existing body of work on food, migration, and identity, offering a more nuanced understanding of how food practices can foster both continuity and change within diasporic populations.

Ultimately, this project aims to enrich scholarly discourse on food and identity by showing how ordinary, everyday activities such as drinking coffee can hold profound cultural and rhetorical significance. The significance of this research extends beyond academic circles, as it offers valuable insights into how cultural traditions are maintained, transformed, and communicated in contemporary society. In doing so, it underscores the power of food in shaping collective identities and provides a framework for analyzing the rhetorical practices embedded in everyday cultural expressions.

SURVEY OF SCHOLARSHIP

The scholarship surrounding food rhetoric is rich with vibrant conversation and research, offering many different areas of study for exploration. Conversely, the scholarship on coffee culture is equally vast and sparse, depending on the subfield within the research. While there is a considerable body of research dedicated to the history of coffee and the evolution of coffeehouses, coffee cultures specifically related to Middle Eastern—particularly Jordanian—traditions remain underexplored in the academic literature. However, there are related resources available that contribute to the broader conversation about food and identity, which can provide valuable context, even if specific discussions on Jordanian coffee culture are limited. These resources are organized into categories such as rhetorical theory (including cultural, food, spatial, and sonic rhetorics) and the intersection of coffee culture with identity.

Food is deeply intertwined with cultural meaning, embodying a wealth of symbols, metaphors, and rituals that encode social values, norms, and beliefs. From culinary traditions passed down through generations to elaborate feasting rituals that mark rites of passage and religious ceremonies, food plays a central role in defining group boundaries and expressing cultural distinctiveness. In “Food, Identity, and Cultural Reproduction in Immigrant Communities”, Fabio Parasecoli, a professor of food studies at NYU, describes food, identity, and cultural representation in immigrant communities, specifically looking at the ways that people communicate through food practices (24). He emphasizes the importance of food and the meaning it can give for people who are trying to connect with each other and their lives back home highlighting that “communal practices such as food preparation, shopping, and celebratory meals simultaneously strengthen a sense of belonging through specific ingredients, dishes, and practices from the migrants' place of origin” (420). Examining coffee culture through this lens

highlights how coffee serves as a medium for individual expression and a marker of collective identity. Furthermore, Parasecoli highlights that “meals unite and divide; they connect those who share them, and confirm the eaters’ identities as individuals or as part of a collective” which is something that all people, especially immigrants strive for (424-425). Additionally, Parasecoli emphasizes that food practices are vital components of how migrants navigate their identities in a new context, helping them to preserve their cultural roots while adapting to their current surroundings (423). The relationship between food and culture is so meaningful, and studies on this relationship have shown that food is much more than sustenance; food is a creation that is sensed, processed, presented, and consumed, having the ability to represent individual and collective identities (Jacobsen 4). In this way, coffee culture becomes not just a matter of beverage, but a matter of shared experiences, connections, and cultural expressions.

In “The Rhetoric of Food: Food as Nature, Commodity and Culture”, Elvind Jacobsen highlights that food can be an outlet for creating a sense of tradition and nostalgia, and can serve for many as a bridge to other countries and cultures (Jacobsen 15). Food can be examined through a rhetorical lens that reveals how it embodies and communicates cultural values, beliefs, and histories. Coffee culture serves as a compelling example of this phenomenon. Coffee is not just a beverage; it represents a social ritual that brings people together and reflects diverse cultural identities. In many cultures, the preparation and sharing of coffee can evoke memories of family gatherings, community events, or daily routines, reinforcing a sense of belonging. For instance, in Italian culture, coffee is often enjoyed in social settings, emphasizing community and conversation, while in Ethiopian culture, the traditional coffee ceremony involves a detailed and communal process that honors hospitality and heritage. Additionally, coffee shops often serve as modern communal spaces, where individuals from various backgrounds gather, share stories, and

connect over a cup of coffee. This setting highlights how coffee acts as a medium for intercultural exchange, fostering dialogue and understanding between different identities. By analyzing coffee culture through the lens of cultural rhetoric, we can better understand its role in shaping identities, bridging gaps between cultures, and promoting a sense of belonging. Ultimately, coffee is not just a drink; it is a powerful symbol of who we are, where we come from, and how we connect with one another. As we explore the significance of food in shaping identity and fostering community, it becomes clear that coffee culture exemplifies these themes, highlighting how everyday practices create rich, interconnected cultural narratives.

In “Our Story Begins Here: Constellating Cultural Rhetorics”, Malea Powell and her colleagues discuss cultural rhetorics arguing that “there is rhetorical power in building relationships between multiple traditions, multiple histories, multiple practices” (Act I, Scene III). In this article, Powell et al. emphasize that “All cultural practices are built, shaped, and dismantled based on the encounters people have with one another within and across particular systems of shared belief. In other words, people make things (texts, baskets, performances), people make relationships, people make culture” and this can be seen within all aspects of food and coffee – people creating and making this culture surrounding them (Act I, Scene II). Additionally, Powell and her colleagues use the term “constellating” instead of “intersecting” to emphasize the multiplicity of relationships and the fluidity of cultural practices. This suggests a more dynamic interplay between different traditions and histories which can be seen within coffee culture and histories. Furthermore, Powell and her colleagues highlight rhetoric as a practice, rather than a set of texts, that underscores the active nature of meaning-making, saying “...*rhetorics* are made through everyday practices, and these systems of practice, conversely, constitute cultural rhetorics” (Act I, Scene II). When thinking about this definition of rhetorics in

the realm of coffee, coffee culture is made of the daily practices and traditions around the preparation, service, location, etc. of coffee. As an everyday practice in all cultures, food is a rich site for rhetorical analysis, which can help to better understand the ways food creates meaning and shapes identities.

Coffee, in particular, represents a unique intersection between food, culture, and identity. The everyday practices that make up coffee culture can be examined through the traditions surrounding both coffee itself and the places where it is served. *Food as Communication; Communication as Food*, an anthology composed of works from different food rhetoricians in the field, emphasizes the idea that we communicate through food. Specifically, in "Eating the View: Environmental Aesthetics, National Identity, and Food Activism", Anne Marie Todd demonstrates how rhetoric can transform one's relationship with food. She highlights that "as communicators, citizens negotiate national identity through symbols and visual rhetoric", specifically food (304). Furthermore, she goes on to say that "Citizenship is expressed through rhetorical practices grounded in patriotism, or love of one's homeland" (304) echoing Parasecoli who discusses the importance of food and the meaning it can give for people who are trying to connect with each other and their lives back home.

Furthering the conversation around the relationship between food, identity and community, "Competing Identities at the Table: Slow Food, Consumption, and the Performance of Social Style," from the book *Food as Communication; Communication as Food*, discusses the intricate relationship between food, identity, and community dynamics. Carlita P. Greene highlights that "Our identities are rhetorical performances," emphasizing the idea that our choices surrounding food are not merely personal preferences but rather expressions of who we

are and how we engage with the world around us (76). This notion extends beyond the act of cooking or eating; it speaks to the broader social implications of food practices in our daily lives.

Greene's analysis illuminates how food acts as a powerful medium for identity construction and negotiation. Influenced by personal experiences, cultural background, and social contexts, food and coffee play a significant role in forming one's sense of self, as they can symbolize cultural heritage and personal history. It is also important to note that identity is not fixed; instead, it can change based on interactions and contexts. Sharing a meal or coffee cultivates a unique sense of intimacy, creating space for meaningful dialogue and emotional connection that can reshape one's sense of identity by blending the personal and the communal. In these moments, food and coffee transcend nourishment, becoming a powerful medium for connection, self-reflection, and the ongoing process of identity formation. Furthermore, Greene's work encourages readers to consider the rhetoric of food not just in terms of what is on the plate, but also in terms of the narratives that accompany it. Every dish, including a cup of coffee, tells a story, carrying the weight of personal histories, cultural traditions, and collective memories. These stories, shared over meals or over a cup of coffee create a mosaic of identities that evolve and intersect in the context of social gatherings.

To further illustrate the connection between coffee, identity, and community, we can turn to Steven Topik's "Coffee as a Social Drug". While Greene emphasizes how food practices reflect our identities and foster social dynamics, Topik provides a historical and sociocultural lens through which to consider coffee, exploring its role in globalization and its evolution across different cultures. In this article, Topik emphasizes the role of coffee socially and historically through looking at coffee and globalization, the beginning of human use of coffee, coffee history in the Middle East, coffee history in Europe, and coffee history in America. Through this

discussion, he highlights the journey it has taken for coffee to get to where it is today, and the effects it has had on people both internally and externally saying that “Coffee is largely a social drug, and its sociability has greatly shaped the modern world” (85). Furthermore, Topik emphasizes that coffee brings people together saying that “As a social drug, going global has caused coffee to take on different faces, playing strikingly different parts in heterogeneous social worlds, ethnic and religious identities, in symbolic rituals, in different food complexes and cuisines, and in diverse environmental niches” (81). Topik also explores the economic implications of the coffee trade and its role in cultural exchange, employing a multidisciplinary approach that combines historical analysis with sociological perspectives. This work not only sheds light on coffee’s significance in everyday social interactions but also invites reflection on how it shapes and reflects broader social dynamics and identities. While Topik’s work offers a broad historical and sociocultural analysis of coffee, my research focuses more narrowly on specific traditions, particularly those related to Middle Eastern (Jordanian) coffee culture. I aim to highlight the nuanced narratives and rituals surrounding coffee that contribute to identity construction within that cultural context. Furthermore, my work explores how coffee serves as a vehicle for identity and community in modern contexts, focusing on current social dynamics looking at Middle Eastern style coffee shops and practices rather than solely historical developments. This perspective allows for an examination of how coffee culture adapts and evolves in response to contemporary issues, especially within immigrant communities. Ultimately, my research will examine how coffee acts as a symbol in cultural expressions, rituals, and community gatherings, emphasizing the rhetoric of shared experiences.

Building on Topik’s exploration of coffee’s social and cultural significance, we can further expand our understanding of sensory experience in community dynamics through Steph

Ceraso's work. While Topik dives into the historical and sociocultural contexts that shape coffee as a social drug, Ceraso shifts this focus to the concept of "multimodal listening" advocating for a richer understanding of how one engages with their surroundings (which is crucial when looking at the coffee shop as a space for analysis). In her article, "(Re)Educating the Senses: Multimodal Listening, Bodily Learning, and the Composition of Sonic Experiences", Ceraso explores the concept of "multimodal listening," arguing for a broader understanding of listening that engages multiple senses rather than solely the ears. Specifically, Ceraso addresses the "affective, embodied, *lived* experience of multimodality in more explicit ways" and argues that listening should be seen as a bodily practice that includes not only auditory perception but also the material and environmental contexts shaping the experience. This connection between the sensory aspects of coffee culture and Ceraso's insights on listening highlights the complex interplay of identity and community formation through various forms of engagement.

Furthermore, this discussion of multimodal listening can be connected to coffee culture through the shared emphasis on social interaction, sensory experiences, and the environment in which these interactions occur. In coffee shops, conversations often take place in a unique ambiance characterized by the sounds of background music, baristas making coffee, the chatter of patrons, among many other sounds which together create a multisensory environment. Similar to multimodal listening, coffee shop interactions engage multiple senses beyond just hearing—people experience the smell of coffee, the visual aesthetics of the space, and even the tactile sensations of handling their drinks. This enriched sensory experience can enhance the quality of conversations, making them more engaging and meaningful. Additionally, just as multimodal listening encourages individuals to be more attuned to their environments and the nuances of sound, coffee shop culture invites patrons to be aware of the collective atmosphere and the

dynamics of their social interactions within that setting. By analyzing coffee shop culture through the lens of multimodal listening, we can better understand how the environment influences the quality of conversation and social interaction.

Adding to this conversation, Ralph Guadio in his article “Coffeetalk Starbucks and Commercialization of Casual Conversation”, invites readers to think about coffee shop talk exploring how social interactions in [coffee shops] reflect and reinforce cultural ideologies and economic structures analyzing how conversational practices are shaped by various constraints related to their social, spatial, and temporal contexts. Guadio contrasts the causal nature of coffeehouse conversations with other cultural practices, illustrating how the intersection between coffee and social interaction is historically and culturally motivated. Additionally, the author references historical perspectives on coffeehouses as sites for democratic dialogue, linking this legacy to modern practices. Ultimately, the article argues that "coffeetalk" is not merely an informal exchange but is deeply embedded in sociohistorical contexts and the commercialization of social spaces, exemplified by the global presence of Starbucks.

For many cultures, coffee shops are traditional meeting places for meaningful collaboration and discourse. They can also be used as a space for individuals to feel camaraderie with fellow customers working on laptops or reading books (Farris 23). However, many franchise coffee shops can also erase cultural traditions or even promote more superficial interactions. Paula Osorio describes the experience of ordering a coffee and walking into a coffee shop, specifically *Starbucks*, as “[a] theatrical performance” (116-117). This tension between the cultural tradition of coffee shops as spaces of meaningful interaction and the modern, standardized, and often more superficial experiences of franchise chains presents a fascinating dynamic. The global success of Starbucks and similar brands reshapes the coffee shop

experience, blending convenience with cultural change, sometimes enhancing and other times erasing the true essence of the coffeehouse as a community space.

In "Coffee Shop Writing in a Networked Age," Michael J. Faris reflects on his experiences as a writer in coffee shops asserting that coffee shops can serve as valuable sites for creativity and collaboration, highlighting the social aspects of writing. He describes the vibrant atmosphere and the overall space of coffee shops and cafés, which, despite being public spaces, foster a sense of community among writers and patrons. Furthermore, in this article, Faris contrasts this environment with traditional academic settings, emphasizing how coffee shops provide a backdrop conducive to focused writing through ambient noise and social interaction.

In addition to this, Farris emphasizes that coffee shops can also be used as a space for individuals to feel camaraderie with fellow customers working on laptops or reading books (23) and argues against the notion that coffee shops signify a decline in face-to-face interaction, instead positing that these spaces facilitate a unique blend of solitude and social connection. Echoing Gaudio's notion that coffee shops facilitate interaction both socially and culturally.

The exploration of Middle Eastern coffee culture reveals significant gaps in scholarly research. While there is extensive research on the history of coffee, particularly its origins in Ethiopia and the Arab world, there is a lack of focused research on the traditions and coffee spaces specific to Middle Eastern, and particularly Jordanian, culture. This gap has led to a reliance on online articles for further insights. In the article "Coffee Culture in the Middle East", Zoe Bloomfield highlights the cultural significance and origins of coffee, tracing its roots to the Arab world, particularly Ethiopia and Yemen, where it was first cultivated by mystics for spiritual and concentration-enhancing purposes. She tells readers the name "coffee" originated from the Arabic word "qahwa," which spread throughout the Middle East and Europe via trade

routes in the 16th century (para 3). Furthermore, Bloomfield notes that despite its deep cultural roots, the influence of Western coffee culture, such as coffee shops like Starbucks, is changing how younger generations view coffee, making it essential to remember and honor its heritage.

Furthering this conversation in another online article, the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* discuss Middle Eastern coffee culture discussing the different aspects from brewing the coffee, to serving it, as well as the serving methods and order of who gets served first saying that “Serving Arabic coffee is an important aspect of hospitality in Arab societies and considered a ceremonial act of generosity” (para 1). They go on to say that this practice is embraced by both men and women across all societal segments, particularly within the spaces of their homes during social/family gatherings.

There is a lack of scholarly articles on coffee culture in Middle Eastern countries, specifically in Jordan, as well as a lack of research analyzing the intersection of Middle Eastern coffee traditions and identity. This gap highlights the importance of exploring these spaces through firsthand experience, including visits to Middle Eastern-style coffee shops and insights from my background as a first-generation American from a Jordanian household, where I have observed and participated in various traditions. This is a conversation that can and should be furthered, asking the questions “How are the traditions and values of Middle Eastern coffee culture being honored, and how are they being lost in today’s coffee culture?”

Coffee acts not only as a beverage, but as a catalyst for social interaction, cultural exchange, and personal identity formation. While significant work has been done to explore the historical and sociocultural contexts of coffee, particularly in Western settings, there remains a notable gap in the literature concerning Middle Eastern coffee traditions, especially in a

Jordanian context. This underexplored area presents an opportunity for future research to dive into how these traditions shape identities and foster a sense of belonging amongst the pressures of globalization and commercialization. The intersection of coffee culture with food rhetoric, multimodal listening, and the nuances of social interaction highlights the importance of considering sensory experiences and cultural practices in understanding how communities negotiate their identities.

INTRODUCTION

Food is a way for groups of people to share their cultural identities and find a sense of belonging, giving people a sense of tradition and nostalgia; it can serve for many as a bridge to other countries and cultures (Jacobsen 15). Just as food serves as a conduit for cultural exchange and identity, coffee too, as a culturally-infused substance, reflects the intricate ways in which shared beliefs and social practices shape the meanings we attach to everyday rituals. “Coffee is a material substance, but culture infuses coffee with social and symbolic meanings” (Tucker 10). Culture is made up of the practices, beliefs, and relationships people create and shape. In 'Our Story Begins Here: Constellating Cultural Rhetorics,' Malea Powell and her colleagues emphasize that “All cultural practices are built, shaped, and dismantled based on the encounters people have with one another within and across particular systems of shared belief. In other words, people make things (texts, baskets, performances), people make relationships, people make culture” (Act I, Scene II) and for the purpose of this project, I will be using this definition of culture, which can be seen and applied within all aspects of food and coffee. This is why coffee can be seen as a reflection of identity—because of the practices and rituals surrounding it, and how it has been shaped by different cultures around the world. Coffee becomes a powerful symbol of identity because it is not just a drink, but a product of tradition, stories, and values passed down through generations. People create culture, and in turn, the coffee they make carries the essence of that culture.

When I first embarked on this journey into coffee culture, I had a general idea of what to expect, but I did not realize how deeply connected coffee and food in general is to societies, cultures, and countries. In talking about these traditions and practices, it brought me closer with

my family and kept the traditions alive – through drinking the coffee and telling stories, this project was a joy to write. So, I invite you to take a seat, grab a cup of coffee, and enjoy.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to explore how coffee culture in Jordan and the United States communicates traditions and values related to culture and identity. I began my research by conducting interviews with family members who have lived in Jordan and later immigrated to the United States. These interviews focused on coffee traditions that are upheld in Jordan as well as people's experiences with coffee and how they have kept those traditions as they moved to a new country. This information will offer insight into the continuity and transformation of coffee rituals and their significance to identity formation.

Following the interviews, I analyze three coffee shops in Oklahoma to examine how coffee culture is expressed in physical spaces. Each shop represents a different facet of coffee culture discussed in my research: one Middle Eastern-style coffee shop, one global coffee chain, and one local, independent coffee shop. The analysis of these spaces considers what messages related to culture and identity are communicated through the design of the environment, the coffee offerings, and the overall consumer experience. This approach allowed me to examine how coffee shops serve as intersections between cultural traditions and contemporary expressions of identity. To guide my analysis of these spaces, I employed the frameworks of food rhetorics and spatial rhetorics, which view rhetoric as not just a matter of language but as involving physical spaces, gestures, and other nonverbal cues (Hawhee 163). In particular, at each coffee shop I tried the coffee shop's most popular blend of coffee/drink and also tried a common drink such as a latte. In each space, I evaluated the physical environment, including configuration, color scheme, and layout, and to analyze how patrons/bodies move through the space. Finally, I looked at the coffee itself, including flavors, serving methods, and presentation. Each coffee shop was assessed based on these criteria to shed light on how they either adhered to

or diverged from traditional norms, and the potential implications of this on consumers' sense of identity within these establishments.

To provide context for my research, I engaged with existing literature including academic articles, books, and websites that discuss the cultural, historical, and rhetorical aspects of coffee, as well as the role of food and space in identity formation. By synthesizing this secondary research with my primary data from interviews and coffee shop visits, I aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how coffee culture functions as a medium for communication, both within traditional and contemporary settings.

ORGANIZATION

With the key topics surrounding coffee culture and the theoretical foundations addressed, the present research consists of three related but separate rhetorical analyses. To begin, there will be an examination of coffee as a cultural symbol tied to both national and local identities, with a focus on its significance in Jordan and the U.S. This includes exploring historical practices, social rituals, and the ways coffee preparation, serving, and consumption reflect and express personal and cultural identity.

Following this section, will be a discussion of coffee shops as spaces where identity and community are shaped, focusing on how the environments influence social interactions and cultural belonging. Through case studies of American and Middle Eastern-style coffee shops, this section will examine how soundscapes, design, and customer experiences contribute to the negotiation of individual and collective identities. The third aspect addressed in this research is the globalization of coffee culture and its complex impact on national identities, focusing on the tension between global coffee chains like Starbucks and local coffee traditions, particularly in Jordan and the U.S. Furthermore, this section examines how the commodification of coffee through multinational corporations challenges the preservation of local practices, while also highlighting cases of cultural hybridization where global coffee trends adapt to or incorporate local customs. The project will end with a discussion of future directions for research as well as implications of the research in analyzing not only Middle Eastern coffee culture, but how coffee serves as a site of cultural negotiation and how the intersection of global and local forces shapes national identity in a globalized world.

CHAPTER 1

Coffee as a Cultural Symbol: National and Local Identities

Coffee is more than just a beverage; it is a cultural marker that connects people to their history, values, and sense of identity. Throughout the world, coffee has evolved from a simple drink to a complex symbol of social and cultural practices. The way coffee is consumed, prepared, and shared reflects the unique identities of different regions, and no two coffee cultures are exactly alike. In the Middle East, particularly in Jordan, coffee plays a symbolic role in hospitality and social interaction. The traditional preparation of Arabic coffee—often served in small cups with elaborate rituals—embodies values of respect, generosity, and familial ties. In this region, coffee is not just a drink; it is a ritual that strengthens social bonds and reflects a broader cultural connection to the traditions and history. In contrast, coffee culture in the United States has been shaped by a variety of influences, evolving from the early days of colonial coffeehouses to the rise of global coffee chains like Starbucks. American coffee culture has become synonymous with convenience, socialization, and individualism, with the coffee shop serving as a "third place" where people gather, work, or relax. These spaces offer both communal environments for conversation and connection, as well as personal retreats for reflection or solo work, reflecting a balance between community and individuality. While the U.S. lacks a single, unifying coffee ritual, its diverse coffee culture mirrors broader American ideals of innovation, personalization, and accessibility.

This chapter will explore how coffee serves as a rhetorical act, expressing values of identity, belonging, and heritage. We will examine how coffee practices in both Jordan and the U.S. serve as acts of cultural communication, reflecting national histories, values, and social dynamics. Through case studies and comparative analysis, we will delve into how these distinct

cultural rituals not only represent local and national identities but also act as dynamic spaces for negotiating the complexities of global and local interactions. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to explore the deeper implications of coffee as a cultural symbol—a symbol that transcends the cup to connect people, places, and histories in a shared narrative of identity and belonging.

Coffee History

The history of coffee is both fascinating and complex, beginning with wild coffee plants in Ethiopia. These plants were subsequently transported across the Red Sea to southern Arabia, specifically to Yemen. Most agree that original coffee plants were native to Ethiopia. However, it was in Yemen that these plants were refined and turned into the beverage we know today. By the 15th century, coffee had appeared in Mecca (modern-day Saudi Arabia), and by the 16th century, it had reached Constantinople (now Istanbul) (Myhrvold, Nathan, and Melissa Petruzzello). This period marks the initial integration of coffee into cultural practices, particularly through its universal consumption and use in daily life. “Coffee’s widespread success derives from its ability to adapt to many geographical, ecological, social settings... and its ability to evolve over time through natural mutations and human assistance” (Topik 82). Most notably, the rise of coffee shops played a crucial role, as these spaces emerged as significant social hubs. These establishments “became popular meeting places where men of learning often gathered to converse, play chess or backgammon-type games, sing and dance, listen to music, discuss politics and news of the day, and smoke and drink” (Myhrvold and Petruzzello). During this era, coffee continued to spread, heading to Turkey, where it gained notable popularity with the rise of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire, one of the longest-lasting and most influential empires in world history, facilitated the diffusion of coffee throughout the Middle East, reaching regions such as Israel, Egypt, and Jordan. By the 16th century, coffee had begun

to spread into Europe, initially reaching Italy due to its established trade connections with Africa, the native region of the coffee plant. Over time, coffee culture became deeply intertwined with European traditions, particularly those from Italy and France. In the United States, coffee consumption began to take root in the 19th century but did not achieve widespread popularity until the 20th century, particularly following World War II. During this period, coffee became viewed as a daily necessity and a part of modern life, shaping the American coffee culture that is seen today.

Coffee Culture

Coffee Culture in Jordan

Coffee in Jordan—like in much of the Middle East—has evolved from being a practical necessity to a cultural and social tradition. In an environment where resources were often scarce, coffee served as an affordable and accessible drink, providing both warmth and energy. It was a way for people to extend hospitality without requiring expensive or hard-to-come-by ingredients. The preparation and serving of coffee became an important part of the social fabric, offering a means of connection even in times of hardship.

Coffee in Jordan, and the Middle East more broadly, holds symbolic meaning—serving as a gesture of hospitality, a symbol of respect, and a way of uniting people. Jordan's coffee culture is less influenced by commercialization and more by tradition, hospitality, and social rituals. Arabic coffee, often brewed with cardamom or other spices, holds a central place in communal life. Coffee, or *gahwa*, has been a significant part of Arab culture for centuries. In Jordan, there are two types of coffee that are served in social gatherings. The first is a coarsely

ground arabic coffee brewed in a dallah¹ (traditional Arabic coffee pot), flavored with cardamom, and served without sugar. This coffee is known as *Gahwa Sada* which translates to “Plain Coffee” or coffee without cream, sugar, etc. This type of coffee is commonly offered at special occasions such as weddings, funerals², and large social gatherings and is served in a finjan³ (small white handleless coffee cup with a red and green design). At a gathering when someone sees coffee being served from a dallah, they automatically know that *gahwa sada* is being served. The second type is a finer ground coffee, and is known as Turkish Coffee⁴. This coffee is considered an everyday coffee in Jordan, is similar to espresso, and is brewed in a small stovetop pot commonly known as the Turkish coffee pot. This coffee is typically served in small cups or espresso cups (distinct from finjan cups), and people often add sugar to taste. After asking my parents, aunts, and uncles—who grew up and lived in Jordan before immigrating to America—I learned that in Jordan, Turkish coffee is commonly referred to as *gahwa helwa*, meaning 'sweet coffee.'

¹ A *dallah* is a traditional Arabic coffee pot with a distinctive spout, long handle, and a rounded body. It is topped with a decorative knob or finial on the lid, which adds an ornamental touch and may also make it easier to lift the lid. Furthermore, the *dallah* is a symbol of hospitality and cultural wealth in the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf. It dates back to the Arab Bedouin people and its specific shape became established in the 17th century.

² It is common for coffee to be served at funerals, where it serves as a gesture of support and solidarity, reflecting how coffee is intertwined with both everyday life and significant emotional moments.

³ One notable feature of the serving practices of coffee in middle eastern countries is the small handleless patterned cups known as *finjan* that the coffee is served in. Finjan are small white porcelain coffee cups that most notably have green and red design on them. The size of the finjan stems from historical practices where coffee was consumed throughout the day in small sips, as guests would be offered refills every 10-15 minutes. The small cup ensures that everyone receives a sip, without over-serving, while keeping the coffee hot longer due to the smaller surface area. The concentrated brew, similar to espresso, allows the drinker to savor the strong flavor without it being overwhelming, and the fine coffee grounds settle at the bottom, so they are not consumed.

⁴ Turkish coffee was introduced to Istanbul in the mid-16th century, by traders from Yemen. “After its introduction to the Ottoman empire in the 16th century, Turkish coffee gradually took a central place in social rituals” (Ozerkan). In Istanbul, coffee was initially prepared in a copper pot called a *cezve*, which has a long handle. The preparation technique was refined by the Ottomans and is recognized for its method of brewing finely ground coffee with water and sugar over low heat, creating a thick, foamy, and richly flavored coffee. This style of coffee became known globally as 'Turkish coffee,' reflecting its roots in the Ottoman Empire. Turkish coffee made its way to Jordan since geographically, Turkey and Jordan are located close to each other. By the 17th century, Turkish coffee had spread to Europe and influenced coffee culture globally.

Food Studies scholar Fabio Parasecoli, in his article “Food, Identity, and Cultural Reproduction in Immigrant Communities” highlights that “meals unite and divide. They connect those who share them, confirm the eaters’ identities as individuals or as part of a collective” (424-425). In the context of Jordanian culture, coffee serves a similar function connecting people and reflecting social bonds and hospitality. This can especially be seen in the serving methods of coffee.

When looking at Jordanian hospitality, the act of serving coffee plays an important role and carries significant meaning. During social or family gatherings, coffee is typically served by the head of the household, and traditionally, there are four distinct servings of coffee. The coffee serving begins with the *Finjan al Haif* which translates to “the first cup”. This is when the head of the household tastes the coffee before giving it to the guests to see if the coffee is hot enough/good enough as well as showing the guests that the coffee is safe/good to drink. This is also a moment for the host to check the coffee. Offering cold or watery coffee would be considered disrespectful. The second pour or serving of coffee is the *Finjan al Daif* which directly translates to “the cup of the guest”, but is more commonly known as the “welcome cup”. This cup says, “welcome to our house” and signals the host’s warm welcome to their guest, and by accepting it, the guest implicitly acknowledges that they are happy to be present at the gathering. The third serving of coffee, the *Finjan al Kaif*, meaning “the cup of enjoyment”, asks the guest if they are enjoying their time at the host’s home. If the guest accepts, it signifies that they are enjoying their time at the host's gathering. If the guest does not accept the coffee, this is them saying that they are not enjoying the time spent with the host or their company, or that something in the atmosphere is not to their liking. However, there are exceptions in some cases—such as if the guest is physically unable to drink the coffee or if the guest has a specific personal reason for

abstaining. In those instances, it's important for the guest to explain their reasons politely to avoid misunderstanding. The final cup of coffee is known as the *Finjan al Saif* (Saif translates to sword) known as “the cup of loyalty”. Accepting this cup symbolizes the guest's loyalty and commitment, as if saying, “I stayed long enough to truly know you, and I would go to battle for you and fight by your side”. In Jordan, the act of serving coffee in specific rituals is a rhetorical performance that communicates respect and acknowledgment of the guest's importance. This is not just about the coffee itself, but about creating a moment where the host demonstrates care and cultural identity. It is also important to note the eldest guest is always served first as a sign of respect. In all serving processes, especially coffee, the eldest gets served first adding another layer of meaning to Jordanian food and coffee culture. While the four stages of coffee serving may not be as popular today, this ritual continues to be a powerful form of cultural storytelling. Each gesture—whether it is offering the “first cup,” the “welcome cup,” or the “cup of loyalty”—tells a story of familial and societal expectations, creating a connection between the past and the present and reinforcing a sense of belonging and community.

A fascinating aspect of coffee culture in Jordan also includes the practice of using the grounds or dregs at the bottom of the cup for fortune-telling. After drinking the coffee, specifically the Turkish Coffee, *the* cup is turned upside down, and the remaining grounds settle into patterns. The reason we use this coffee over the *Gahwa Sada*, /the coffee served in a dallah is because of the type of grounds. The finer grounds work better for reading fortunes, forming a sludge or dregs at the bottom of the cup. These patterns are then interpreted by the person performing the reading, who offers insights into the future or the present, often weaving in elements of personal intuition and experience. This ritual is a form of tasseography⁵, but in

⁵ Tasseography is a method of fortune-telling that involves interpreting patterns in tea leaves, coffee grounds, or wine sediments

Jordan it is called “Fateh bil Finjan” which translates to “open the cup” which is the act of looking or opening the cup and reading the fortune, and adds an extra layer of cultural mysticism to the coffee-drinking experience. It’s an informal, yet deeply engaging, way of connecting with others over coffee, and often sparks conversation and laughter. While not practiced by everyone, it remains a tradition that symbolizes the belief that even something as simple as coffee can offer deeper meanings and connections in everyday life. Today, my cousins and I will “read our futures” from our coffee cups, getting a good laugh, but also reminding ourselves of the traditions that our parents and grandparents have done in the past.

Coffee has indeed become a medium for socializing in Jordan. Whether served at home, in cafés, or during events, coffee brings people together. This is true in both formal (as described above) and casual settings. People gather over coffee to discuss important matters, share stories, and strengthen bonds. It's common for friends and family to spend hours in conversation, and coffee often serves as the backdrop for these interactions.

When my grandparents first immigrated to the United States in 1974, they settled in Chicago, Illinois. Although there was a large Arab community in the city, it was still difficult to find the ingredients needed to make traditional Arabic foods and more specifically coffee. They made do with what they had brought with them from Jordan—things like their dallah (coffee pot), cardamom, and other key items to make Arabic coffee. My uncle, Omar Sweis⁶, who was in his 20s when the family arrived, shared stories with me of how they adapted. He recalled that when they ran out of Arabic coffee, they had to improvise. They’d buy regular coffee from the

⁶ Omar Sweis was born in 1954 in Fuheis, Jordan, and lived there for 19 years before immigrating to the United States in January 1974 with his parents and siblings. They first settled in Chicago, before relocating and settling in Oklahoma in 1976. As a teenager in Jordan, Omar frequently visited local coffee shops. Although he didn’t drink the coffee himself, he observed the cultural traditions and interactions that took place in these spaces, giving him a unique perspective on their significance in Jordanian society.

store, then grind it finely enough to make *gahwa helwa*. Cardamom was another challenge.

When I asked him if this spice was easy to find, he chuckled and said, “When the family would ask what do you want from Jordan, cardamom was what we asked for” among other things.

Despite these obstacles, my uncle said that it was easy to keep the traditions alive, because they were together as a family. Even though the ingredients weren’t always available, they found ways to make do—whether it was grinding coffee or finding substitutes—and kept the rituals that connected them to Jordan. The act of preparing and sharing coffee became a comforting way to hold onto their roots, even in a new country.

When I set out to learn about Jordanian coffee traditions, I turned to my family for insight. What I quickly realized, however, was that by asking them questions and recording their answers, I was actively helping to preserve these traditions. We sat together, discussing the flavors, the ways coffee is served, and the stories behind each ritual. Although there isn’t a clear starting point for when these traditions began, they highlight the lasting impact that food and coffee have had—and continue to have—in Jordanian culture. While these coffee practices may not be as commonly done today in 2025, they remain a vital part of Jordanian life, reflecting the values of community and hospitality. When looking at my family, even though my grandparents, parents, aunts, and uncles immigrated from Jordan to America, these coffee practices and traditions continued and are still done today in my family. We drink and serve Arabic and Turkish coffee to guests, use a dallah when serving and pour the coffee in traditional finjan cups. We have the same flavors, serve the eldest guest first, and continue these practices. Food practices are vital components of how migrants navigate their identities in a new context, helping them to preserve their cultural roots while adapting to their current surroundings (Parasecoli 423). The coffee in these moments serves as a reminder of where our family came from and as a

reminder of our heritage. As a first-generation American myself, these coffee traditions also reflect for me the blend of two worlds—honoring our traditions while adapting to new ones. In that simple act of serving and sharing Arabic coffee, we preserve a part of who we are, passing it down to future generations, ensuring that no matter where we are, we remain connected to the history and legacy that shaped us.

Coffee Culture in America

In the United States, coffee culture is often tied to both individualism and social connection, though with a less formalized ritual compared to countries like Jordan. While coffee is consumed as a personal daily necessity—often as a productivity booster—it also serves as a social act, whether shared with friends in a café, with family at home, or during a brief encounter in a coffee shop. In this way, coffee becomes a ritual of connection, offering both personal solace and a space for social interaction.

Coffee in the U.S. reflects the country's cultural emphasis on individualism, convenience, and efficiency. "Individualism is baked into American culture," where independence, creativity, and self-expression are highly valued (Sanchez and Carroll). This is evident in the way Americans approach their coffee habits. Coffee is consumed not just as a beverage but as part of a personal routine. Whether it's a quick cup at home, a mid-morning office break, or a "to-go" coffee grabbed on the way to work, it is often tied to productivity, helping individuals start their day or maintain focus throughout their tasks. While American coffee culture is often tied to speed and efficiency, it has also evolved to embrace moments of relaxation and connection. The ubiquity of coffee machines at home, such as drip makers, espresso machines, and pod systems like Keurig, has made brewing coffee quick and easy. However, the rise of chains like Starbucks

and independent third-wave coffee shops has introduced a more experiential side to coffee culture.

Along with these more accessible brewing methods, there's a noticeable trend in coffee preferences across the country. According to a study done in 2020 by the National Coffee Association, "Medium Roast is, overall, America's favorite" ("Daily coffee consumption"). This preference speaks to the broader cultural emphasis on balance and moderation that many Americans seek in their daily routines—coffee that's strong enough to provide a pick-me-up but not too intense to overpower the experience. This speaks to both the pragmatic and the pleasurable aspects of American coffee culture, which blends the need for efficiency with the desire for enjoyment.

Today, coffee's ubiquity is undeniable: "More American adults drink coffee each day than any other beverage, and coffee supports 2.2 million U.S. jobs—operating in every U.S. state and territory and contributing nearly \$350 billion to the U.S. economy every year" ("Daily coffee consumption"). This remarkable statistic highlights coffee's central role not just in American daily life but also in the economy, reinforcing its deep cultural ties. However, historically, coffee did not gain popularity in America until the late 1600s. In contrast to Jordan, drinking coffee wasn't popular in America until later in the 1670s when there were more efficient ways of trading (discovered by the English) leading to more popularity in the drink and the opening of the first coffeehouse in Boston, MA in 1689. Although coffee houses began to appear in America, it wasn't until the events of the Boston Tea Party in 1773, when a revolt against the British tea tax shifted public preference toward coffee ("The History of Coffee"). After this historical event, coffee continued to be a popular drink in America and around the world with

coffee trees being planted worldwide. Since 1689, coffee shops have come a long way in America becoming commonplace, offering a respite from the hustle and bustle of urban life.

In the latter half of the 20th century, American coffee culture underwent a significant transformation with the rise of specialty coffee. Inspired by European café culture and fueled by a desire for higher quality and greater variety, entrepreneurs began to roast their own beans, experiment with new brewing methods, and introduce more sophisticated coffee drinks. This movement reached its peak with the emergence of companies like Starbucks, which revolutionized how Americans viewed and consumed coffee. Starbucks blended the European café model of sitting and savoring coffee with the American preference for speed and convenience. Today, American coffee culture is a mix of both traditions: some coffee shops offer a more leisurely, quality-driven experience reminiscent of European cafés, while others, like Starbucks, focus on speed and customization, catering to the fast-paced American lifestyle. This duality of relaxation and convenience represents the most common conception of American coffee culture: “one of speed and quantity” (Nescafé).

Starbucks, in particular, has played a significant role in shaping the modern American coffee experience. Founded in 1971, the brand's transformation under Howard Schultz was inspired by his visit to Milan in 1983, where he encountered Italy's café culture centered around espresso and social interaction. Schultz's vision was to bring that warmth and artistry to America, blending the Italian tradition of sitting down to enjoy a coffee with the American penchant for speed and convenience (“About Us”). Today, Starbucks embodies both of these aspects, offering people a place to linger over a latte or grab a quick coffee on the go. Its success paved the way for countless other independent coffee shops and roasteries, each adding their own interpretation of the coffee experience.

Despite its focus on individual preferences and efficiency, American coffee culture is also deeply social. Whether shared in a quiet café, a bustling coffeehouse, or at home with loved ones, coffee continues to play a role in fostering connection. While American coffee rituals may not carry the same formalized structure as those in Jordan, the act of sharing coffee still holds cultural significance—serving as a bridge between personal identity and social interaction.

Conclusion

Coffee serves as more than just a beverage—it is a powerful cultural symbol that transcends borders and connects people to their history, identity, and social values. As illustrated through the distinct coffee cultures of Jordan and the United States, coffee rituals are shaped by unique cultural practices and social dynamics. In Jordan, coffee embodies deep values of hospitality, community, and respect, with its traditional serving rituals strengthening social bonds and reflecting a rich heritage. In contrast, American coffee culture, while rooted in efficiency and individualism, has also evolved to embrace spaces for relaxation, socialization, and personalization. Both cultures, though differing in their approaches, use coffee as a medium to communicate identity, heritage, and belonging. Ultimately, coffee's significance lies not in the drink itself but in the rituals, practices, and stories woven around it, making it a universal yet deeply personal symbol of cultural expression. As we continue to navigate an increasingly globalized world, coffee will remain a powerful tool for understanding and bridging cultural differences, helping to preserve tradition while adapting to modern life.

CHAPTER 2

The Coffee Shop: A Crossroads of Identity, Culture and Coffee

Coffee shops are much more than places to grab a quick cup of coffee. Coffee shops serve as a crossroads, where culture, identity, and coffee are celebrated and brought together in a shared space. Whether in the bustling streets of Amman, Jordan, or the suburban landscape of Edmond, Oklahoma, coffee shops offer unique spaces where people can connect, express their identities, and participate in cultural rituals. Coffee rituals themselves—deeply personal yet inherently social—serve as markers of identity, belonging, and cultural exchange. As the global coffee culture continues to evolve, it is important to explore how different environments shape the coffee experience and how coffee serves as a mirror to the values, customs, and aspirations of those who consume it.

In this chapter, I will analyze the role of coffee shops in both the Middle Eastern and American contexts, focusing on three distinct establishments: Mocha House in Edmond, OK, a Middle Eastern-style coffee shop that highlights the intersection of Arabic coffee traditions and American tastes; a Starbucks in Oklahoma City, OK, representing the globalized and standardized nature of modern coffee culture; and Ellis Island Coffee and Wine Lounge, a local coffee shop that emphasizes community engagement and cultural history. Each of these coffee shops offers a distinct space for customers to experience and perform their identities, blending local traditions with global influences. By examining the physical spaces, coffee offerings, and customer experiences in these environments, we will see how coffee shops function as sites of cultural negotiation, where personal and collective identities intersect and evolve.

The History of Coffee Shops in Jordan and America

Before diving into the broader cultural significance of coffee shops, it's important to understand the historical evolution of these spaces in both Jordan and the United States, as their histories inform how people engage with them today.

Coffee Shops in Jordan

While coffee culture has deep roots in Jordan, modern coffee shops only began to emerge in the late 20th century, particularly in the capital of Jordan, Amman, during the 1990s and 2000s. There is limited information about the original or first coffee shops in Jordan, possibly due to the limited access and number of these spaces at the time, or because most people traditionally drank coffee in their homes, leading to coffee shops not being extensively documented. However, after speaking with my aunt, Balgees Sweis⁷, and my uncle, Omar Sweis, who lived in Jordan during that time, I was able to gather some insights and information on the evolution of the coffee shop in Jordan.

The first coffee shops in Jordan, known as *Gahwa* or "Coffee," began appearing in the 1940s. These shops were rare, with only one in each town. The space offered a place for socializing, playing games like backgammon and chess, and discussing politics, news, and daily life over cups of coffee. In the early *Gahwa*, only one type of coffee was served, and the sweetness was the only customizable element. These shops were simple, with an open room

⁷ Balgees Hasna Sweis was born in 1950 in Fuheis, Jordan. She lived in Jordan for 33 years before immigrating to the United States on July 21, 1983, with her husband, Muhsen Sweis, and their four children, settling directly in Oklahoma with her family who had immigrated a few years earlier. She learned the traditions and values of coffee seeing them firsthand from her mother, and from the women in her life. Although she was not able to enter the coffee shops in Jordan, due to cultural norms, her father, husband, and her brothers would go and through their experiences and stories, she gained knowledge of the coffee shops and the broader coffee culture in Jordan.

featuring a table and chairs, a radio, and a small stove called a primus stove⁸ for brewing the coffee – “the person running the *Gahwa* would sit in the corner sometimes with three or four stoves in a line making coffee” (O. Sweis, interview). There were no kitchens, and no food was served. These spaces were dedicated solely to coffee and conversation.

The coffee shop served as more than just a place to drink coffee—it was a social hub. In the 1940-50s, the radio became an important feature, and men⁹ would gather to listen to the news, share stories, and play games like backgammon and mancala. The radio helped create a sense of community, as it was the primary way to stay informed and entertained. Patrons would stay for as long as they wanted, engaging in conversation, listening to the radio when it was playing, and enjoying the lively atmosphere. During this period, storytelling was also central to social life. People would gather at the coffee shop to see the *Hakawati*— meaning storyteller — who would tell captivating stories to the crowd. Additionally, to pass the time, they would also read their fortunes looking to their *finajan* for entertainment. Jumping forward, in the late 1960s, television arrived in Jordan, with the first station broadcasting black and white programs in April 1968 (“Jordan Radio and Television Corporation”). As television was not yet available in most homes, men would gather at the local coffee shop to watch shows and the news. This period also saw the introduction of hookah¹⁰ in Jordan and were made available at the town *Gahwa*. During

⁸ A Primus stove is a small, portable stove that burns liquid fuel, like kerosene or paraffin, for cooking. Primus stoves are often used for camping and outdoor cooking. The Primus stove was the first pressurized-burner kerosene stove. Primus stoves can run on gas, liquid fuels, or both. And some Primus stoves have adjustable flames and dual burners.

⁹ Jordan is a predominantly Muslim country, and during the time of the first coffee shops (1940s), cultural and religious norms placed strict limitations on women’s public movements. Women were often restricted from visiting public spaces, including coffee shops, due to societal expectations regarding modesty and gender roles. As a result, men were the primary individuals who frequented such establishments, while women typically enjoyed their coffee at home. However, in recent decades, these traditional norms have evolved, and today, women in Jordan enjoy greater freedom and can go wherever they choose, reflecting significant shifts in societal and cultural attitudes.

¹⁰ “Hookahs are waterpipes that are used to smoke specially made tobacco mixtures that come in a wide variety of flavors. They usually work by passing charcoal-heated air through the tobacco mixture and ultimately through a

this time, sodas also began to be sold in the town coffee shop adding more options to their menu. It is also important to note that during this time, children were never served coffee in these spaces. The reason for this “was to ensure that they understood the significance, history, and value of coffee before they were allowed to drink it” (B. Sweis, interview”).

In the 1970s, pool tables and table tennis were added to the mix, along with ice cream. Recounting this time, my uncle noted that even though he never purchased a cup of coffee, “it was probably a penny or two for a cup of coffee”, he continued on to say that “I used to spend my money on ice cream. A cone of ice cream sold for [the equivalent of] half a penny”, while his brothers and father would buy and drink coffee (O. Sweis, Interview). The addition of new games and menu items brought more people into the shops. However, coffee shops still remained exclusively for men. By the 1990s, coffee shops began to spread across Jordan and gradually, it became more acceptable for women to visit. By the 2000s, coffee shops had become popular social spaces for both men and women. Today, Jordan’s coffee shop culture has undergone significant transformation, reflecting changes in both social norms and the role of coffee in daily life. Once exclusively for men, coffee shops are now inclusive spaces where all people gather to enjoy coffee, socialize, and engage in conversations. The traditional *Gahwa*, once defined by simplicity and a focus on coffee and conversation, has evolved into modern cafés that blend local coffee traditions with international influences like the introduction of espresso-based drinks and lattes, cappuccinos, and so much more.

Furthermore, the spaces themselves have become more comfortable and inviting, featuring cozy seating, artwork, and sometimes live performances as noted by my aunt, Heyam Sweis, who visited Jordan in 2024. While the sense of community fostered through storytelling

water-filled chamber. A user then inhales the smoke through a tube and mouthpiece” (Association). Hookah is very popular in the country and is considered a deeply ingrained part of the social culture.

and shared news on the radio remains, today's coffee shops often host discussions on politics, art, or daily life, creating a modern space for cultural exchange. The digital age has also reshaped coffee shop culture, with many cafés offering Wi-Fi and attracting students, professionals, and people who use them as workspaces. As coffee shops in Jordan have evolved into inclusive spaces for socializing and cultural exchange, the history and development of coffee shops in America presents an intriguing contrast, marked by its own shifts in social norms and cultural significance.

Coffee Shops in America

Coffee has a rich and unique history in America, with the first recorded sale of coffee taking place in 1670 at a tavern in Boston, Massachusetts, owned by Dorothy Jones, the first licensed coffee trader. Although coffee was introduced to New Amsterdam (later renamed New York) by the Dutch in 1640, early settlers struggled to make the most of the beans, often finding the coffee unpleasant due to its age. Coffee drinking didn't gain widespread popularity in America until the 1670s, when improvements in trade, pioneered by the English, made the beverage more accessible. This led to a surge in popularity and the establishment of the first coffeehouse.

The first coffee-house was opened in Boston, MA in 1689 by Benjamin Harries, who also sold books in his coffee house ("Sip Sip Hurrah!"). These early coffee-houses, or more accurately, coffee taverns, served as gathering places for intellectuals, merchants, and politicians, fostering lively discussions and debates. During this time in history, coffee-houses also played a prominent role in the upcoming American Revolution being used as centers for political discourse. Although coffee-houses became increasingly popular, coffee did not overtake tea and beer as the preferred drink in America until the Boston Tea Party (1773), when colonists revolted

against the tax imposed on tea by King George III, which forever changed the American drinking preference from tea to coffee (“The History of Coffee”).

Coffee continued to be a popular drink in America and around the world with coffee trees being planted worldwide. New nations began establishing coffee economies and by the “end of the 18th century coffee had become one of the world’s most profitable export crops” (“The History of Coffee”). It wasn’t until the mid-19th century, however, that coffee consumption truly began to grow, thanks in part to the invention of commercial coffee roasters and the rise of coffee plantations in Central and South America. As a result, coffee shops became even more widespread. In the latter half of the 20th century, America witnessed a significant shift in coffee culture with the emergence of specialty coffee. Inspired by European café culture and fueled by a desire for quality and variety, entrepreneurs began to roast their own beans and create unique blends. This movement was epitomized by the rise of companies like Starbucks, which transformed the way Americans viewed and consumed coffee.

The creator of Starbucks, Howard Shultz, took inspiration from a trip to Milan in 1983 where he experienced Italy’s coffeehouses and after he returned to Seattle, WA, was “inspired to bring the warmth and artistry of its coffee culture to Starbucks” (Starbucks). Starbucks is important to discuss when looking at American Coffee Culture because it combines the Italian coffee culture of sitting down where coffee is about relaxation and enjoyment and the idea of the “to-go” coffee culture (which America is most known for). Taking inspiration from Italian coffee conventions, Starbucks also played a pivotal role in popularizing espresso-based beverages and introducing Americans to terms like “latte” and “cappuccino.” Its success paved the way for a wave of independent coffee shops and roasteries across the country, each offering its own distinct take on the coffee experience.

Today, global coffee chains like Starbucks as well as local coffee shops continue to thrive in cities and small towns across America, providing spaces for community engagement and personal connection. They are now more than just places to grab a quick drink—they've become hubs for creativity, collaboration, and even local activism, with each shop reflecting the unique tastes and values of its neighborhood. In these spaces, coffee shops also play a crucial role in shaping social interactions and fostering a sense of belonging—whether through one's neighborhood community, cultural identity, or shared appreciation for coffee.

Coffee Shops as Sites of Identity and Belonging

While coffee rituals are deeply personal markers of identity and tradition, the spaces where coffee is consumed—particularly coffee shops—play a pivotal role in shaping social interactions and community bonds. The Cambridge Dictionary defines “coffee shop” as “a small, informal restaurant where drinks and small meals are served,” but this definition barely scratches the surface of what a coffee shop truly represents. Coffee shops are much more than casual eateries; they are gathering places where people come together to chat, laugh, cry, go on first dates, do homework, cram for exams, engage in creative activities, and more. These spaces offer comfort and safety, providing a sense of belonging where people from all backgrounds can connect, find solidarity, and feel part of something larger while sipping their favorite beverages. More than just places to enjoy coffee, they are dynamic environments where people engage with both their own identities and those of others, creating shared experiences of connection and belonging.

As the Cambridge Dictionary defines the environment of the coffee shop, this definition aligns with the idea that identity is shaped by our interactions with others and the spaces around

us. “Identity refers to our sense of who we are as individuals and as members of social groups... We develop ideas about our identities and the identities of others through our interactions with people close to us, like our family and friends, our schools and other institutions, the mass media, and our encounters with other individuals” (“Exploring the Concept of Identity”). In the coffee shop, identity is not only expressed through personal preferences—such as the choice of drink or style of consumption—but also through how individuals interact within the space. From the way a coffee shop is designed to the atmosphere it fosters, these spaces shape and are shaped by the identities of those who frequent them. For instance, the decor, music, and even the types of conversations heard within the space can communicate a lot about the values, culture, and social dynamics present in a given coffee shop. In this way, coffee shops become arenas where personal expression and cultural narratives overlap, allowing customers to feel both seen and heard, or, conversely, to blend into the background and engage in quieter forms of reflection.

Coffee shops serve as modern-day ‘third places’¹¹ providing neutral spaces for social interaction where personal and collective identities are shaped and expressed. The concept of third places has long been a key component of social life. Coffee shops have increasingly become emblematic of ‘third places’ in modern society, blending individual rituals with collective experiences. In these spaces, the act of consuming coffee serves as both a personal and cultural marker, reflecting identity and social dynamics. Whether through the choice of coffee, its preparation, or consumption, these settings allow individuals to express who they are and how

¹¹ “Third Places” is a term created by American sociologist Ray Oldenburg “to describe the places outside of the home (the first place) and the workplace (second place) where people go to converse with others and connect with their community” (Roberts-Ganim). This is a relaxed and social setting where attendance is completely voluntary, and cost is not a barrier for anyone to join. It's a space where we can connect with fellow community members and even make new friends out of strangers. A "third place" is where you might hang out with friends, run into familiar faces unexpectedly, or meet people you've never crossed paths with before. It serves as a gathering spot to foster relationships beyond the boundaries of home or work.

they relate to others. Coffee shops thus become sites of cultural negotiation, where local customs meet global trends, and where the rituals of coffee consumption can reveal broader social shifts.

The rituals of coffee consumption are powerful markers of both personal and collective identity. For many, the way they drink coffee—be it a meticulously crafted espresso or a simple, home-brewed cup—serves as an expression of their tastes, social status, and even their personal philosophy. These rituals can be deeply rooted in cultural traditions, like the communal coffee traditions in the Middle East, or influenced by the global influence of modern coffee culture, epitomized by the rise of Starbucks and the ubiquitous cappuccino. Coffee shops, then, act as stages for performing and negotiating identity. As people engage with the coffee ritual, they participate in both personal expression and collective cultural narratives. This performance of identity is not static but constantly evolving, influenced by the local context of the coffee shop, as well as global coffee trends that shape the offerings and experiences. The blend of local and global, traditional and contemporary, allows individuals to express both their individuality and their connection to broader cultural movements, making the coffee shop a dynamic space for identity performance and cultural negotiation.

Building on the idea that coffee shops serve as spaces where identity and cultural negotiation intersect, the experience of an exchange student, Gavin, who traveled to Amman, Jordan in 2023 and lived with a host family, provides a vivid example of how coffee rituals and hospitality embody the values of a culture. His firsthand encounter with Jordan's coffee culture highlights how these spaces serve not just as places to enjoy a beverage, but as living expressions of cultural identity. His encounter with the local coffee culture in Amman was an eye-opening moment that brought the deep connections between hospitality, tradition, and community into focus. He recalls:

“I first experienced this culture on one of my first mornings, when I walked to what was labeled as “Starbucks” on Google Maps. When arriving I quickly realized that this was not in fact a Starbucks, but instead one of the many hole-in-the-wall corner stores that can be found around Amman. I had no Arabic essentially at this point and asked in English for a coffee. He made a thick Arabic style coffee and I took out my card to pay, but was quickly denied, he only took cash. Defeated and worried, I was ready to just leave, but instead he pushed the coffee towards me and said welcome to Jordan, my first taste of the wonderful hospitality I’ve received in this country” (T. Gavin).

In that moment, Gavin experienced more than just the hospitality of receiving a coffee—he was welcomed into the heart of Jordanian culture. The rich, bold coffee mirrored the country’s values: strong, traditional, and full of meaning. What could have been a simple transaction became a memorable exchange, with the barista’s generosity leaving a lasting impression. In Jordan, coffee is not just a drink; it’s an expression of deep-rooted cultural values, and by offering it without payment, the barista demonstrated hospitality at the core of Jordanian identity. In that small café, Gavin wasn’t merely served a drink; he was embraced by a culture that places community and friendship at its center. Through such acts of generosity, coffee shops in Jordan become spaces where cultural identity is shared, forging connections and offering a sense of belonging. Coffee shops can serve as cultural hubs, reflecting and shaping the values of their communities. To explore this concept further, we can examine how different coffee shops can embody cultural identities and rituals.

Coffee Shop Analyses

Introduction

In this section, I will explore three coffee shops in Oklahoma through the lenses of culture, identity, and coffee itself. Each establishment offers a distinct experience, shaped by its unique approach to both the physical space and the beverages it serves. The first is Mocha House in Edmond, OK, a Middle Eastern-style coffee shop that reflects traditional cultural values through its offerings and ambiance. Next, I will examine a Starbucks in Oklahoma City, a globalized coffee chain that has become synonymous with modern coffee culture and a standardized, yet culturally impactful, experience. Finally, I will analyze Ellis Island Coffee and Wine Lounge, a locally-owned coffee shop in Edmond, OK that emphasizes artisanal coffee and community engagement. Through this analysis, I will explore how each shop creates a sense of place, and cultural identity, while also examining how coffee functions as both a commodity and a cultural expression within these unique environments.

Mocha House - Edmond, OK

When I first embarked on this research project in April 2024, there were three Middle Eastern-style coffee shops in Oklahoma. Now, in February 2025, only one remains: Mocha House, located in Edmond, Oklahoma. This shift highlights the challenges faced by niche cultural establishments in a rapidly evolving market. While Mocha House remains a beacon for those seeking authentic Middle Eastern coffee culture, the closure of other similar businesses speaks to the struggles of maintaining cultural representation in an area with relatively smaller Arab American communities. Oklahoma's Arab American population, while growing, remains modest in comparison to states like Texas and Michigan, where Arab Americans are more

heavily represented. Despite this, the state's growing diversity speaks volumes about the intersection of immigrant populations with the local cultural fabric. Oklahoma's Arab American community may be smaller, but it still plays a crucial role in enriching the state's multicultural identity. While there are a few Middle Eastern-style grocery stores and restaurants in Oklahoma, Mocha House, by serving as a local anchor for Middle Eastern coffee culture, is a symbolic space where both Arab and non-Arab Oklahomans can explore the shared experience of coffee as a cultural touchstone.

Mocha House itself is a testament to this blending of cultures. This coffee shop draws a diverse crowd—ranging from Middle Eastern immigrants seeking a taste of home to curious American customers eager to explore a new coffee culture. It is important to clarify that Mocha House is a Yemeni-style coffee shop, a distinction worth noting, as it represents a specific subculture within the broader Arabic coffee tradition. While my research primarily focuses on Jordanian coffee methods, Yemeni coffee traditions bear a remarkable resemblance and serve as a valuable representation of Arabic coffee culture in Oklahoma. Through this space, patrons have the rare opportunity to experience the depth of Arabic hospitality and coffee-making traditions that are often overlooked or misunderstood.

Mocha House is particularly adept at striking a balance between preserving cultural traditions and integrating familiar American coffee shop staples. The coffee menu at Mocha House features traditional Arabic offerings, such as Turkish Coffee and Yemeni varieties like Muffawar and Qishr, all rich and spiced with cardamom and sometimes saffron. In addition to these authentic brews, the café also offers a range of American-style beverages, including lattes, cappuccinos, and espresso-based drinks. This duality allows Mocha House to cater to both those seeking an authentic Arabic coffee experience and those looking for a more American-style café

menu. Additionally, Arabic-style desserts such as baklava¹² and kunafa¹³ are offered, alongside American desserts like cheesecake and chocolate chip cookies, creating a bridge between the Middle Eastern and American culinary traditions. This thoughtful blending of the two cultures is not only practical but serves as a unique point of cultural exchange that enriches the coffee shop atmosphere.

As someone who is surrounded by the traditional coffee culture of the Middle East, visiting Mocha House is an opportunity to witness my heritage being celebrated in a way that resonates with my identity, even if it is not specifically Jordanian. And for those who are not of Middle Eastern descent, Mocha House offers a unique chance to experience the intersection of coffee, culture, and identity. They are introduced to the customs, rituals, and hospitality that are intrinsic to Arabic coffee, all within the context of a coffee shop.

During my visit to Mocha House, I decided to try two signature beverages: the House Latte and the traditional Turkish coffee with cardamom. The Turkish coffee was served in the authentic style, presented on a tray with a small Turkish coffee pot and delicate finjan cups. This presentation allowed me to enjoy pouring the coffee at my leisure. This was a nice touch, keeping that cultural authenticity with the comfort of modern coffee shop convenience, offering a cultural experience to those who visit. The flavor profile of the Turkish coffee was rich and aromatic, with the distinctive warmth of cardamom balancing the robust, slightly bitter coffee—

¹² Baklava is a rich, sweet pastry made from layers of thin phyllo dough, filled with chopped nuts such as pistachios, walnuts, or almonds, and sweetened with honey or sugar syrup. The layers are baked until golden and crispy, creating a crunchy, sticky texture. Often flavored with a hint of cinnamon or rose water, baklava is a beloved dessert in many Middle Eastern and Mediterranean countries, typically served in small, diamond-shaped pieces. It's known for its indulgent sweetness and is a popular treat during holidays and special occasions.

¹³ Kunafa (or Knafeh) is a popular Middle Eastern dessert made with a base of shredded phyllo dough or semolina, soaked in a sweet syrup, and often layered with a filling of cheese or a mixture of semolina and sugar. It is typically baked until golden and crispy, then drizzled with fragrant rose or orange blossom syrup, giving it a sweet, floral flavor. Kunafa is often garnished with crushed pistachios and served warm, making it a rich and indulgent treat enjoyed across the Middle East.

offering a truly traditional taste of the Middle Eastern coffee culture. The House Latte, on the other hand, was a unique twist on the classic latte, made with Mocha House's signature "house spice." This spice blend featured notes of pistachio and cardamom, creating a warm, subtly sweet flavor profile that was both comforting and distinctive. The combination of the aromatic spices with the smoothness of the espresso and steamed milk made for a truly delightful fusion of Middle Eastern and American coffee traditions.

The space itself reflects the blend of tradition and modernity. It is an open concept space with a combination of tables and booth seating, creating an intimate yet inviting environment. The booth seating features a bold red, white, and black pattern, a visual nod to traditional Arabic design, which adds a sense of cultural authenticity to the space. In addition to the design, Arabic music plays softly in the background, further immersing customers in the atmosphere of a Middle Eastern café. While Mocha House does not use a *dallah* (traditional Arabic coffee pot) to serve coffee—likely due to practical concerns such as space and convenience—the essence of traditional Arabic serving methods remains intact. The coffee is brewed and served with the care and attention to detail that are central to Middle Eastern hospitality, allowing customers to experience a genuine sense of what it means to share a cup of coffee in this part of the world.

In this way, Mocha House stands as a cultural crossroads, where diverse communities meet, share experiences, and celebrate coffee not only as a beverage but as a vital part of cultural identity. By blending Middle Eastern traditions with American coffee culture, it offers an invaluable space for cultural exchange and community building, all while fostering a deeper understanding of how coffee can shape and reflect cultural identity.

Starbucks - Oklahoma City, OK

Starbucks is a global coffee company with “over 32,000 stores in 80 countries, Starbucks is the premier roaster and retailer of specialty coffee in the world” (About Us). Synonymous with American coffee culture, Starbucks is a space where people can gather and engage in their own activities—whether it's catching up with friends, working, or simply enjoying a cup of coffee. Despite coffee not always being the most popular drink, the atmosphere draws people in. The mix of brewing teas, frappuccinos, and the familiar coffee aroma creates an inviting space, with warm colors, a constant hum of activity, and soft jazz music. The music actually plays a key role in shaping the store's ambiance and solidifying the Starbucks experience. Depending on who is working that day, the playlist can vary, but during my visit, a relaxing, jazz-inspired set with artists like Michael Bublé filled the space, contributing to a calm and cozy environment. This carefully curated soundtrack complements the visual elements of the store, creating a subtle yet powerful mood that reinforces the comfortable, casual atmosphere. Whether it's mellow acoustic tunes or soft jazz, the music becomes an extension of the store's personality, inviting customers to relax and stay a while or take their coffee on the go.

This environment aligns with Starbucks' mission: "To inspire and nurture the human spirit—one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time" (“Our Mission”). It's a place where customers feel inspired to relax, study, or socialize, leaving them feeling better than when they arrived. The interior design of Starbucks also fosters this experience—with minimal distractions. The artwork, which is simple and coffee-themed, complements the neutral, earthy tones of greens and browns—colors reminiscent of coffee beans. These tones create a calming atmosphere while allowing the menu to stand out. Large windows open the space, providing a connection to the outside world and creating a light, airy environment. The warm colors and

varied textures of the furniture—ranging from leather to wood—enhance the cozy, home-like atmosphere, reflecting the casual nature of American coffee culture. The diverse seating options, from long communal tables to round tables and single seats, encourage socializing and cater to individual preferences, fostering community interaction in line with American values of connection and freedom of expression. The seating arrangement is also unique because all of the tables have a clear view of the coffee making area giving all the customers in the space a view of the baristas making coffee. This is an interesting choice. The seating arrangement and the overall design encourage an immersive experience, allowing customers to visually engage with the coffee-making process. This emphasis on the visual connection between customers and baristas mirrors how Starbucks also focuses on the customization and personal experience of its coffee offerings.

Starbucks' menu offers a vast array of drinks, from espresso classics to seasonal concoctions (like their iconic pumpkin spice latte), which have become synonymous with American coffee culture. Starbucks has shaped the American coffee palate—moving from a focus on simple black coffee to indulgent, sweetened, and highly customized drinks. The shift towards more sweet and flavored coffee drinks aligns with broader American preferences for convenience and customization. Starbucks has made coffee less about ritual and more about personal taste, reflecting the country's cultural emphasis on individualism, convenience, and efficiency. When I visited my local Starbucks, I got two drinks: their medium roast (Pike Place Roast) drip coffee (a classic American brewing style) and an Iced Caramel Macchiato. I chose to get the Iced caramel macchiato because it is a coffee classic that has become a staple on Starbucks' menu. Both drinks are served in to-go style cups as well as all of their coffee staying true to the brand's coffee experience being offered.

The experience of ordering at Starbucks—where customers can personalize their drinks (size, milk, syrups)—also plays into the notion of American consumer culture, which values choice, customization, and control. By offering this level of personalization, Starbucks allows customers to project their own identity through their drink orders. The process of “getting your name on the cup” is another form of individualization, where the customer becomes part of the brand’s narrative. Starbucks encourages customers to craft their own identity through their coffee choice and how they interact with the brand.

Ellis Island Coffee Shop and Wine Lounge - Edmond, OK

Ellis Island Coffee and Wine Lounge offers a stark contrast to the more standardized spaces created by global coffee chains like Starbucks. While Starbucks embodies the globalized, fast-paced coffee culture of convenience and uniformity, Ellis Island focuses on creating a personalized, rich environment that invites customers to slow down and connect. Unlike Starbucks, which features a sleek, modern aesthetic designed for quick, "to-go" consumption, Ellis Island embraces a more specific, narrative-driven design that not only reflects the owner's personal history but also aims to foster a sense of belonging for people from various backgrounds.

Upon entering Ellis Island Coffeehouse, customers are greeted by the inviting aroma of freshly brewed coffee, the warm ambiance of earthy tones, and a sense of nostalgia that transports them to another time and place. One of the first things that catches the eye is an image of the Statue of Liberty, set against a blue background with vintage suitcases. Ellis Island Coffeehouse has a neutral color palette that is aesthetically pleasing with light and dark

woods/browns, dark reds and beiges, blacks – overall very earthy and neutral tones, with a touch of flare with the occasional disco ball.

The space itself is open and welcoming, offering a variety of seating options: half booths lining the walls, couches, tables surrounded by multiple chairs, and longer communal tables that invite larger groups to sit. A few velvet couches and vintage-style rugs add a unique, cozy touch to the atmosphere. In the center of the coffeehouse stands a unique structure—a frame of a house, complete with a couch, chairs, and table underneath. This “space within a space” adds an unexpected and charming element to the design. This openness of the space makes it easy for one to move through, have a conversation and feel comfortable for all ages.

The founder of Ellis Island Coffee house, Murod Mamatov, has shared that as a “As a first generation immigrant myself [he] saw so much similarity in the emotions of those who arrived to the U.S. through Ellis Island at the beginning of the past century, and [himself] when [he] immigrated to the U.S.” which is what gives Ellis Island Coffeehouse its name and design (“About Ellis Island Coffee and Wine Lounge”). This personal history is reflected in the coffeehouse’s name and design, as Mamatov likely saw these images when he entered the U.S. himself and has brought that vision into the space. Along with greenery and plants that are spread throughout the coffeehouse, the walls are adorned with photographs of immigrants at Ellis Island, gazing out across the water at the Statue of Liberty. Through its thoughtful color scheme, configuration, and overall ambiance, the coffeehouse creates a welcoming environment for all patrons, much like the welcoming promise of the Statue of Liberty itself.

During my visit, I tried one of their signature lattes, the Sea Salt Caramel Latte, and a classic drip coffee, both of which contributed to the coffeehouse’s welcoming atmosphere and cultural identity. The Sea Salt Caramel Latte was served in a blue mug and saucer, and its rich,

bold flavor was both comforting and sophisticated. Intricate latte art added an aesthetic touch to the experience, making the drink feel as visually appealing as it was delicious. The drip coffee, a medium roast sourced from local vendors in Oklahoma, was smooth, flavorful, and a perfect representation of classic American coffee served in a classic coffee mug. The menu offers a variety of options, ranging from signature and seasonal lattes to classic staples like the Americano, cappuccino, and of course the drip coffee. These drinks, alongside the Americanized menu, helped to create a holistic environment that balanced coffee culture with an inclusive social experience, inviting patrons to feel at ease whether they were there for a quick drink or a longer, more communal experience.

The atmosphere in Ellis Island further reinforces this American identity. With its inviting décor—featuring neutral tones, vintage elements, and comfortable seating—combined with a lively music backdrop, it creates a space for both intimate conversations and social gatherings. It's a reflection of the modern American coffeehouse, where the emphasis is on community, conversation, and an inclusive, relaxed environment. Whether it's over a craft latte, a glass of wine, or a dessert shared with friends, Ellis Island exemplifies a growing trend in American coffee culture: one that integrates coffee into a broader social and dining experience, making it not just a beverage but a part of a lifestyle.

The coffee shop's soundscape further contributes to this atmosphere, adding another layer to the overall experience. The background hum of conversation and carefully curated music creates the perfect balance—not so loud as to be distracting, yet lively enough to foster interaction. This dynamic soundscape, paired with the aroma of freshly brewed coffee, enhances the space's visual and olfactory elements, offering a comfortable and inviting ambiance. It provides a backdrop conducive to both quiet reflection and social interaction, allowing patrons to

focus on their work or engage in intimate conversations without feeling overwhelmed. In this way, the soundscape helps strike a perfect balance between productivity and community, deepening the sense of comfort and connection within the space.

Beyond coffee, Ellis Island also incorporates an Americanized approach to service, offering not only the expected array of pastries and desserts but also a menu that includes savory food options and alcoholic beverages like wine and cocktails. This expansion of the coffee shop's offerings speaks to the growing trend of coffee shops in America transforming into all-encompassing social spaces. They are no longer just about drinking coffee but also about creating an experience that blends coffee culture with dining and socializing—often well into the evening. In this sense, Ellis Island embraces the concept of "third places," where people can gather, share, and connect over more than just coffee. While Starbucks and similar chains have revolutionized coffee culture by making specialty drinks accessible to a wide audience, Ellis Island adds another layer, providing a multifaceted space that represents American dining and drinking culture. This diversity in offerings mirrors the American tendency to blend different traditions and cultures, with coffee becoming both a drink of comfort and a symbol of sociability and shared experiences.

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Conclusion

It's clear that these environments serve as powerful sites for identity expression and cultural negotiation. From the traditional *Gahwa* in Jordan to the globalized coffee chains of America, coffee shops offer more than just beverages—they act as reflections of cultural values, social dynamics, and evolving traditions. The contrast between spaces like Mocha House, Starbucks, and Ellis Island Coffee and Wine Lounge further highlights how coffee shops in both nations balance local customs with global influences, offering diverse experiences for people to connect, reflect, and express their identities. Through the rituals of coffee consumption, whether in a simple corner café or a trendy lounge, these spaces become platforms for both personal and collective cultural narratives. Ultimately, coffee shops are not merely places of commerce but vital meeting points where community, belonging, and identity are constantly being shaped and shared.

As these spaces have evolved and continue to grow, the forces of globalization and commercialization are becoming increasingly significant. In the next chapter, we will explore the impact of globalization on coffee culture. Specifically, we will examine how the commodification of coffee and the expansion of global coffee chains are transforming local traditions and influencing the ways coffee is consumed and understood worldwide. As we move from local cultural expressions to global practices, it is essential to consider the balance between preserving unique traditions and adapting to the growing demand for convenience and uniformity in coffee consumption.

CHAPTER 3

The Globalization of Coffee Culture: Commodification, Networks, and the Tension Between Tradition and Modernity

The globalization¹⁴ of coffee culture refers to the spread and integration of coffee-drinking practices across the world, transforming how people consume and view coffee. Initially rooted in specific regions, such as the Arabian Peninsula, Ethiopia, and Central and South America, coffee culture has become a global phenomenon. The spread of coffee culture is not limited to the coffee itself; it involves the spaces, rituals, and social contexts surrounding the consumption of coffee, from traditional cafes to international chains.

As coffee consumption grows, it increasingly affects both local and national traditions. The globalization of coffee can be seen as a rhetorical negotiation, where local coffee cultures are repurposed, adapted, or even resisted as they intersect with global coffee trends. As coffee spreads across borders, it takes on new meanings, practices, and identities depending on the cultural, social, and economic contexts it encounters. Rather than being a passive product of globalization, coffee culture actively shapes and is shaped by local values, traditions, and desires, resulting in a dynamic process of cultural exchange and transformation.

Commodification of Coffee

As coffee became a global commodity¹⁵, it shifted from a local, often artisanal, product to a standardized consumer good. This transition has significant implications for local traditions and practices, as coffee is increasingly produced and consumed in mass quantities, with an

¹⁴ *Globalization* describes “the growing interdependence of the world’s economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, and information” (“What Is Globalization?”).

¹⁵ Commodity is defined as “a substance or product that can be traded, bought, or sold” (COMMODITY).

emphasis on profit and efficiency over cultural significance. Traditional brewing methods, which once held deep cultural and familial value, are often overshadowed by commercialized processes designed for speed and mass production.

For local coffee cultures, this commodification means that the personal and ritualistic aspects of coffee consumption can be diluted. In many countries, coffee once had specific regional varieties, preparation techniques, and social roles. With the global market's emphasis on standardization and convenience, many of these local traditions have been threatened by the rising influence of multinational coffee chains that prioritize consistency and speed over authenticity. As food scholar Daniel Phillipon notes, "The food that people produce and eat, therefore, is the most basic expression of both their culture and their relationship to the environment. What individuals and cultures consume is partly determined by the environments in which they live, of course, but food is also a matter of choice, an expression of cultural narratives and desires" (3). There is a deep connection between food and identity—coffee, as a cultural product, carries narratives of place, tradition, and choice. The shift from local, ritualistic consumption to mass-produced coffee reflects how cultural expressions are influenced by global forces, often at the cost of tradition. Furthermore, "Food can speak to class divisions, changing tastes, and regional differences. But it can also signal a deep connection to history, culture, and national pride" (Jackson) and the resulting tension between preserving traditional methods and embracing globalized coffee practices plays out in various ways across different countries.

Coffee Networks

The globalization of coffee culture has created an intricate web of interconnected networks where coffee has transcended geographical and cultural boundaries. This process has not only revolutionized how coffee is consumed worldwide but has also significantly impacted

local and national traditions. As global coffee chains expand, they influence everything from daily rituals to social norms, redefining what it means to "drink coffee" across cultures. This exploration centers on understanding how globalization affects the preservation, transformation, or dilution of national coffee cultures; Jordan and the U.S. provide contrasting perspectives on how coffee is consumed, understood, and adapted in the face of global influences. By examining the way coffee culture evolves within these diverse contexts, we can gain insight into the broader dynamics of cultural globalization and identity formation. "By sampling and enjoying a variety of global foods, individuals gain a better understanding of and greater empathy towards different cultures" (Cao). This principle can also be applied to the global spread of coffee culture—where individuals, through their consumption of coffee from different parts of the world, develop a deeper understanding of cultural practices and values.

In both Jordan and the United States, the rise of global coffee chains, such as Starbucks, has reshaped local coffee cultures creating new dynamics in how coffee is consumed and understood. In Jordan, coffee plays a significant role in social gatherings and cultural practices. The traditional Arabic coffee, often spiced with cardamom, is deeply embedded in Jordanian culture. Globalization has introduced international coffee chains into the Jordanian market, such as Starbucks, and Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf. These chains have created a new coffee culture, particularly among younger generations, who are often drawn to Western-style coffee beverages like lattes, cappuccinos, and espressos. In an interview in 2022, Peter Gaku sat down with Hisham Abubaker, the owner of Dimitri's Coffee in Amman (one of the first specialty coffee roasters in Jordan), who shared his experiences with the changing coffee landscape in Jordan. Abubaker noted, "In 2005, Starbucks opened here, and some other coffee shops began adopting

foreign ways of brewing coffee, such as espresso and sweetened drinks – and people liked it. This was a change from the traditional Arabic coffee that most Jordanians were familiar with.”

While these global chains have been welcomed for offering variety and convenience—such as the "to-go" coffee culture synonymous with American coffee and the introduction of Western-style coffees—they are also seen as a challenge to local coffee traditions. This creates tension, as traditional brewing methods and communal practices risk being weakened. However, Abubakar also noted a positive shift in response to this change, noting, “The traditional and modern forms of brewing are thriving and co-existing... There is a new generation of specialty roasters, cafes and consumers, and a new growing coffee culture. The introduction of specialty coffee to the market is certainly stirring things up. But it’s doing so for the better.” In response to the influx of chain stores, many local coffeehouses in Jordan are emphasizing the importance of traditional preparation and local identity, showing that the local culture can adapt and evolve alongside global trends without losing its essence. Even at home, people in Jordan continue to use traditional brewing methods alongside newer drip coffee makers and espresso machines. The preservation of national coffee traditions has become a way of asserting cultural identity in the face of globalization.

Similarly in the United States, coffee culture has become a blend of regional traditions, innovation and global influence. The rise of global coffee chains, led by Starbucks, has had a major impact on how coffee is consumed. Starbucks, in particular, has turned coffee into a "lifestyle" product, where specific coffee types—like oat milk lattes or cold brews—are associated with personal identity. This shift has led to a more customizable, branded coffee experience, changing the way Americans perceive coffee. Despite the dominance of global chains, local coffee traditions continue to thrive, particularly in artisanal coffee roasteries and

cafes that emphasize local sourcing and brewing techniques. These local traditions are being revived and reinterpreted in response to the standardizing effects of global chains, prompting a broader debate over national identity, authenticity, and the role of global capitalism in shaping culture.

Tension Between Global Coffee Chains and Local Coffee Traditions in Shaping National Identity

The global coffee network presents both opportunities and challenges for national identities. On the one hand, the presence of global coffee chains such as Starbucks offers economic opportunities, promotes cross-cultural exchange, and provides an accessible, standardized coffee experience. These chains have become symbols of modernity and global interconnectedness, often appealing to younger consumers who value convenience and consistency. For many people, especially in countries like Jordan and the U.S., coffee consumption through these global brands represents entry into global trends. “Globalization expands our palates, fosters the sharing of diverse culinary traditions, and enables year-round access to fresh and healthy foods—transcending countries’ often-stark geopolitical, cultural, and ideological divides” (Lincicome and Bagley).

On the other hand, these same global chains can be seen as a threat to cultural heritage and identity. In countries with rich and deeply rooted coffee traditions, like Jordan, the ubiquity of global coffee chains can dilute or even erode the appreciation for local brewing methods and social rituals surrounding coffee consumption. “Food is considered a part of intangible cultural heritage, a way of life that is passed down from generation to generation” (Evans) and the concern is that traditional coffee customs—such as the ceremonial preparation of Arabic coffee in Jordan, or the local variations of coffee in the U.S.—could become less meaningful or even

forgotten, in the face of the globalized, quick-service coffee experience offered by multinational chains.

It is important to note, however, that globalization does not necessarily result in the loss of national identity. Many local coffee cultures have found ways to preserve and adapt their traditions in response to global influences. In Jordan, local cafes are increasingly offering both traditional Arabic coffee and Western coffee options, blending the old and new. Coffee “offers a unique opportunity to learn about different cultures and broaden our understanding of the world” (“The Intersection of Culture and Cuisine”) and it is through this exchange that local cultures can thrive alongside global influences. Similarly, in the U.S., small-batch roasters, independent coffee shops, and even local coffee festivals have emerged, demonstrating that local coffee traditions can co-exist and even thrive alongside the global coffee movement.

Cultural Hybridization: Adapting Coffee Menus, Flavors, and Advertising

Global coffee chains, while bringing with them standardized offerings, often adapt their menus and flavors to cater to local tastes, creating a hybridized coffee experience. This adaptation allows these brands to connect with local consumers by blending global trends with regional preferences, creating a bridge between the familiar global coffee culture and local traditions.

The global coffee chain, Starbucks, serves as a prime example of this. While signature drinks like lattes and macchiatos remain at the core of its offerings, the brand adapts to local tastes by incorporating regional flavors. For instance, Starbucks locations in Amman, Jordan, added Turkish Coffee to its menus, and in 2024, “To mark 25 years in the Middle East, Starbucks introduce[d] Dallah’s Treasure Blend, which pays homage to Arabic coffee culture”

(“To Mark 25 Years”). Although the interior design of Starbucks’ locations stay the same in each country, the menus reflect noticeable regional differences. This strategy allows the brand to connect with diverse consumer bases by offering familiar Starbucks favorites while embracing and honoring local coffee traditions, ensuring both cultural relevance and brand consistency.

When analyzing the online menus of Starbucks locations in Amman, Jordan, and Oklahoma City, OK, several key differences become apparent. While the U.S. menu offers a wide variety of options across multiple categories, the Jordanian menu, although smaller, appears more tailored to regional taste preferences. The U.S. Starbucks menu includes diverse categories such as hot coffee, cold coffee, hot tea, cold teas, refreshers, frappuccinos, iced energy drinks, hot chocolate, lemonade, and more. This wide range reflects the varied coffee culture in the U.S. and caters to a broad spectrum of tastes, from traditional coffee drinkers to those seeking more trendy, sweet beverages like iced energy drinks and flavored lemonades. In contrast, the Starbucks menu in Amman, Jordan, is somewhat more streamlined and focused on local tastes. It includes sections for espresso drinks, frappuccinos, brewed coffee, refreshers, teas, hot chocolates, and a few other beverages. This simpler structure likely reflects local consumer preferences, where the demand for classic coffee drinks such as espresso-based beverages might be higher, while flavored and iced options are fewer. The inclusion of more traditional options like brewed coffee and a focus on espresso drinks also aligns with the general coffee culture in the Middle East, where coffee plays an integral role in daily life.

In regions such as the Middle East, where coffee has strong ties to cultural rituals and history, Starbucks and other global chains can either be seen as champions of cultural hybridization or as threats to the authenticity of local practices. The decision to adapt coffee offerings, like introducing regional beverages or using local ingredients, shows a keen

understanding of how global brands can coexist with, rather than completely replace, traditional coffee culture. This strategy highlights the ongoing negotiation between global and local forces in shaping the future of coffee consumption worldwide.

While Starbucks advertisements and commercials are often produced by the main Starbucks Coffee Company headquarters, they still manage to resonate with a broad, global audience. Although there aren't many ads specifically tailored to regions like the Middle East or the UK, as seen on their YouTube channels and other platforms, the advertisements still reflect universal themes that appeal to diverse cultures. For example, Starbucks ads typically show themes of gathering, hospitality, and celebration— values that resonate strongly with Middle Eastern coffee traditions. At the same time, they highlight the process of creating the coffee and emphasize the convenience of the to-go experience, which aligns with the American preferences for quick and efficient service. So, while there may not be a high volume of regionally-specific commercials, the overarching messages of Starbucks ads still reach and appeal to a global audience.

Another example of Starbucks' cultural awareness through advertisements is its response to Ramadan¹⁶. On the Starbucks website and app, they promote a special opportunity to earn bonus stars¹⁷ with the message, "This Ramadan, make your nights extra rewarding! Visit us between 10 PM - 2 AM and collect Redeemable Bonus Stars" ("Article"). This promotion,

¹⁶ Ramadan is a month when people who practice Islamic religion fast from sunrise to sunset, meaning they don't eat or drink during those hours. It's a period for spiritual reflection, prayer, and giving to those in need. The fast ends each day with a meal called "Iftar" and takes place only after the sun has set. Ramadan is celebrated worldwide and is observed in many countries, particularly those with large Muslim populations. This includes countries in the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

¹⁷ In the Starbucks Rewards program, "Stars" are loyalty points earned through purchases, which can later be redeemed for free drinks, food, and various other rewards. One can earn bonus stars through special offers or events, Double Star Days, and member-exclusive games.

alongside the extended hours, reflects a deep understanding and respect for local customs. In fact, many Starbucks locations in Jordan follow these extended hours year-round, with some staying open until 2 AM or even 24 hours a day. In Jordan, coffee shops are popular evening hangout spots where people gather for conversation and games, making late-night hours a cultural norm. By adapting to this, Starbucks is not only respecting local customs but also representing the hybridization of global and local coffee culture. Additionally, on the Starbucks Middle East YouTube page, the Starbucks locations in the Middle East are shown celebrating Saudi National Day in a video titled “Saudi National Day Celebrations at Starbucks”, showcasing people gathering at a Starbucks location listening to live Arabic music. The staff in the video are wearing hijabs¹⁸ and traditional hattas¹⁹, adding a cultural layer that resonates with Saudi and Middle Eastern traditions in general. In this way, Starbucks adapts its advertising to suit the cultural nuances of different regions, making the brand feel locally relevant while maintaining its global presence.

Cultural hybridization plays a vital role in the success of global coffee brands. As seen with Starbucks, they skillfully blend global trends with local traditions. By adapting their menus, flavors, and advertising strategies, these brands create a coffee experience that feels both familiar and locally relevant, catering to diverse tastes and cultural practices across the world. Starbucks exemplifies this approach by introducing region-specific offerings like Turkish Coffee and Dallah’s Treasure Blend, which honor local coffee cultures while maintaining the core identity of

¹⁸ A hijab is a headscarf worn by many Muslim women as a form of modesty in accordance with Islamic principles. The word "hijab" comes from the Arabic word "ḥajaba," meaning "to cover" or "to conceal." It typically refers to a scarf that covers a woman's hair, neck, and sometimes shoulders, while leaving the face exposed. In many cultures, the hijab is considered an important symbol of modesty, privacy, and morality.

¹⁹ A "hatta" or “keffiyeh” in Arabic, a traditional Arab headdress, often a square scarf worn in the Middle East, particularly in arid regions, for protection from sun, dust, and sand. This is a traditional Arab headdress and can be seen as a nod to heritage and a symbol of national identity.

the brand. Additionally, through thoughtful advertising strategies—such as promoting Ramadan promotions or celebrating local holidays like Saudi National Day—Starbucks connects with consumers on a deeper cultural level. This cultural sensitivity ensures the brand remains relevant and respected, striking a balance between global uniformity and local adaptation.

Conclusion

The globalization of coffee culture is a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon, marked by the intersection of local traditions and global influences. As coffee spreads across borders, it not only becomes a global commodity but also undergoes a process of cultural hybridization, where global coffee brands adapt to local tastes, customs, and rituals. Through adaptations such as customized menus, marketing strategies, and respect for cultural practices like Ramadan, brands like Starbucks are contributing to the ongoing transformation of coffee culture worldwide. However, this process is not without tension, as traditional brewing methods and national identities are both challenged and preserved in the face of globalization. Ultimately, the future of coffee culture will be shaped by the continued negotiation between global and local forces, reflecting the complex ways in which cultures evolve while maintaining a sense of heritage and pride.

CONCLUSION

Coffee is not simply a beverage—it is a reflection of culture, identity, and shared human experiences. From the rituals surrounding its preparation and consumption to the stories and traditions it carries, coffee transcends its role as a daily drink to become a symbol of connection and belonging. Just as food serves as an "an ensemble of texts" that conveys meaning and cultural significance (Parasecoli 416), coffee, too, becomes a medium through which cultural practices, relationships, and beliefs are expressed and passed down. The diverse ways in which coffee is enjoyed around the world show how deeply embedded it is in the fabric of culture, offering a powerful lens through which we can better understand the global exchange of ideas, values, and histories.

In Chapter 1, we explored the coffee traditions in Jordan and the United States, examining how coffee rituals communicate cultural values and identities. We saw that, in both contexts, coffee serves as more than just a drink; it is a vessel for shared meaning and connection, reflecting broader cultural narratives. Chapter 2 took us into the coffee shop as a space where culture, coffee, and identity intersect. Through the analysis of local coffee shops, global chains, and Middle Eastern-style cafés, we explored how these spaces act as crossroads for cultural exchange, where individuals navigate global influences while grounding themselves in local practices. Finally, in Chapter 3, we examined the complexities of coffee globalization, focusing on the tensions between cultural identity and the forces of global capitalism. We saw how coffee becomes a site of cultural hybridization, as traditional practices are shaped and transformed through global networks.

In the course of writing this project, I have come to appreciate the profound impact that coffee and its associated rituals have had in my own life, connecting me to my family and

broader cultural traditions. It is clear that coffee, like food, is much more than a material substance—it is a living, evolving expression of culture. So, as you reflect on your next cup, consider how this humble drink connects us all to something much greater than ourselves, linking us to the past, the present, and the cultures that shape us.

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