

Old macdonald's essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



The article “ Old McDonald’s,” written by Stacy Torres, a Doctoral Candidate at NYU, offers an interesting view on the value of public spaces in anchoring the lives of elderly who are no longer working and often distant from families and family responsibilities. The article discusses scenes common to places like McDonalds and Starbucks, “ public dawdling,” as she calls it that serve a valuable role in the lives of elderly people. Torres calls these places “ third places.” These are places outside of work and family institutions and serve as meeting places to foster a sense of community through watching people, interaction and involvement in bustling surroundings rather than the isolation of retirement experienced by many. Torres concludes that rather than discourage people from congregating at third places, that companies should encourage it; offering perks to the customer and company for the overall good of the community and its individuals.

This article was interesting and made me think if a “ third place” existed in my own life. I still have the benefit of a family and school structure that allows me a scheduled life and pre-arranged social interactions with my family members and fellow students. However, a special third place for me would be a library in my hometown. Growing up, I would often walk to this library after school where I would meet friends, get on the computers and just spend time removed from school and family. This place is very valuable in many ways. First, it is a place that I can go to find solitude and peace without being completely isolated. It brings about a paradoxical feeling of being alone and able to withdraw into my thoughts, yet not completely alone to the point of feeling lonely. I can hear people talking and watch people without being bothered.

My third place is very similar to the experience of the elderly people mentioned by the author. They are undoubtedly lonely. At one time they probably had children that depended on them, spouses to come home to and jobs that gave them an identity and a sense of self worth. They may not long for all of the investment and energy that forging new relationships take, only happy to be in the presence of moving and living people; in an environment of vitality. Similar to the library, I do not go there to be around people as I do when I hang around friends. It is often exhausting to maintain the necessary energy of these contacts, but I also do not want to be completely alone. The third place is a where I can feel like I am part of something while being quiet and at peace.

This place has helped me grow as a person because it is in these moments of silence that I am often able to understand new things about myself and reach different ways to understand and approach difficulties that I am having. It is necessary to have this place because work, school and family often bring a certain pressure to perform according to certain social roles. At the library, I can just worry about myself and not how I appear to others. I may be able to find another if this place was taken away. But the point is not so much the place itself, I don't think, as much as it is the experience of it and the types of encounters it creates. You see this in the article. For example, the populations the writer discusses have no doubt went through transformations in where they go. Twenty years ago, there was probably no Starbucks, and there may not have been a McDonalds. Their neighborhoods have transformed I am sure, the names of the places and even the buildings. But the essence and the purpose of these places need to continue. This third

place is a place within their neighborhood where they can foster a sense of community and explore themselves without sinking into isolation. If the library closed, it might be beneficial in some ways. It would force me to explore new places, but this would be a high anxiety situation at first.

At the library I go to, I often see elderly people sitting around, looking at magazines. Previously, I often looked at them with an annoyance voiced by some of the people in the article. However, I now see that my space that gives me comfort, is probably that much more important for them. We all need a place to find an identity outside what we are as an employee or student, but when these things leave us, it is difficult.

The article by Torres was very well written and thought provoking. I often see the people at McDonald's that she speaks of and I wonder why they sit there all day. But, I now realize they maybe do not have anything else. To send them away would exasperate the problems they are feeling. It is a responsibility of society to not just care for the elderly in terms of finances and medicine, but also in terms of dignity and community. They need human contact, respect, conversation and everything else they experience at a third place.