

## *The Great Good Place (Third Places) by Ray Oldenburg*

### **The Foundation (chapter one)**

- "Americans are not a contended people" (p. 3).
- "Americans have substituted the vision of the ideal home for that of the ideal city" (p.7).
- "The housing development's (i.e., suburb's) lack of informal social centers or informal public gathering places puts people too much at the mercy of their closest neighbors" (p. 8).
- "In the absence of an informal public life, Americans are denied those means of relieving stress that serve other cultures so effectively" (p 10).
- "Unfortunately, opinion leans toward the view that the causes of stress are social but the cures are individual" (p. 10).
- "...daily life, in order to be relaxed and fulfilling, must find its balance in three realms of experience. One is domestic, a second is gainful or productive, and the third is inclusively sociable, offering both the basis of community and the celebration of it" (p. 14).

### **The Character of Third Places (chapter two)**

- Third places are informal gathering places in which people gather between home and work. In this chapter, Oldenburg explores their characteristics

#### ***On Neutral Ground***

- "In order for the city and its neighborhoods to offer the rich and varied association that is their promise and potential, there must be *neutral ground* upon which people may gather. There must be places where individuals may come and go as they please, in which no one is required to play host, and in which we all feel at home and comfortable" (p. 22).

#### ***The Third Place as Leveler***

- "A place that is a leveler is, by its nature, an inclusive place" (p. 24).
- "The great bulk of human association finds individuals related to one another for some objective purpose... In contrast, what Georg Simmel referred to as 'pure sociability' is precisely the occasion in which people get together for no purpose, higher or lower, than for the 'joy, vivacity, and relief' of engaging their personalities beyond the contexts of purpose, duty, or role" (p. 25).

#### ***Conversation is the Main Activity***

- "Neutral ground provides the place, and leveling sets the stage for the cardinal and sustaining activity of third places everywhere. That activity is conversation" (p. 26).
- Rules of conversation tend to exist within third places. These rules "fit the democratic order, or the leveling that prevails in third places" (p. 28).
  - 1) "Remain silent your share of the time"
  - 2) "Be attentive while others are talking"

- 3) "Say what you think but be careful"
  - 4) Avoid topics not of general interest
  - 5) "Say little or nothing about yourself personally, but talk about others there assembled"
  - 6) Avoid trying to instruct
  - 7) Speak in a low voice as will allow others to hear
- "By emphasizing style over vocabulary, third place conversation also compliments the leveling process" (p. 28).
  - "The conversational superiority of the third place is also evident in the harm that the bore can inflict" (p. 29).
  - "Conversation is a lively game..." in the third place

#### ***Accessibility and Accommodation***

- "Third places that render the best and fullest service are those to which one may go alone at almost any time of the day or evening with assurances that acquaintances will be there" (p. 32).

#### ***The Regulars***

- "The third place is just so much space unless the right people are there to make it come alive, and they are the regulars" (p. 33).
- "Every regular was once a newcomer, and the acceptance of newcomers is essential to the sustained vitality of the third place" (p. 34).
- "Since public life in America is relatively devoid of those connecting rituals that in other cultures serve to ensure the introductions of strangers, the order of welcome is doubly important" (p. 35).

#### ***A Low Profile***

- "As a physical structure, the third place is typically plain" (p. 37).
- "In cultures where mass advertising prevails and appearance is valued over substance, the third place is all the more likely *not* to impress the uninitiated" (p. 36).
- "They fall short of the middle-class preference for cleanliness and modernity" (p. 36).

#### ***The Mood is Playful***

- "Whether pronounced or low key, however, the playful spirit is of utmost importance. Here joy and acceptance reign over anxiety and alienation" (p. 38).

#### ***A Home Away From Home***

- "Though a radically different kind of setting from the home, the third place is remarkably similar to a good home in the psychological comfort and support that it extends" (p. 42).

