Designing Retirement Community Third Places: Attributes Impacting How Well Social Spaces Are Liked and Used

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ABSTRACT

Retirement years are a time of shifting social networks, in part because workplace relationships are often left behind. This is particularly detrimental for older adults because social interaction has been shown to have a greater impact on health of older adults than younger adults (Lee, Jang, Lee, Cho, & Park, 2008). This positive relationship between social interaction and health outcomes underscores the importance of helping older adults establish and maintain social relationships. To support resident social interaction, Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) commonly provide spaces for social use including recreation rooms and commercial services such as cafes. Accordingly, CCRCs serve as fruitful ground to explore how social space design relates to why some spaces are popular gathering places and others are underutilized. Third places, defined by Oldenburg (1999), are lively gathering places where people can engage regularly in conversation, satisfying social needs. While Oldenburg's study provides guidance about designing third places to host quality interaction among the general population, it does not distinguish social behavior for people of different ages or living contexts. The research reported here takes steps to bridge this gap. Confirming earlier findings, this study of a CCRC's independent living residents ($n = 179$) found social spaces residents characterized as having third-place atmosphere and décor characteristics were more well liked and well used than other spaces designed to promote socialization. This suggests designing CCRC social spaces with third-place characteristics may lead to more use and in turn contribute to healthier resident social lives.

Background of the problem

Understanding the Importance of Social Interaction for Older Adults

Throughout the lifespan, meeting social interaction needs is essential to achieve life satisfaction. While social interaction is a universal human need, it is of particular interest in the context of older adults as the start of the retirement years also marks the time in life when social networks are shifting. Adults meet a portion of their social interaction needs in the workplace, and when they retire, they often leave these social connections behind. Meeting social interaction needs in later life can be a challenge. Aging adults frequently experience physical changes, such as reductions in the quality of vision and hearing as well as reduced mobility that can impact social behavior patterns. These physical challenges make it more difficult and sometimes even less desirable to make trips beyond the home for social or other purposes. Thus, many older adults tend to spend more time at or nearer to home.

Social interaction is important because it has been shown to have a strong influence on life satisfaction (Street, Burge, Quadagno, & Barrett, 2007), plus is a valuable tool in supporting mental and physical health (Glass, Mendes De Leon, Bassuk, & Berkman, 2006; Krause, 2006; MacNeil & Teague, 1987; Ybarra et al., 2008). Many studies have shown a link between social interaction and specific health outcomes. For example, research indicates a link between mental sharpness and gratifying social interaction (Ybarra et al., 2008). Another study found quality social interaction can help prevent depression (Glass et al., 2006). This connection between

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social interaction and health demands that this body of research is moved forward by examining how interior designers might enable older adults to have more quality social interaction opportunities.

The quality of social interaction is not the only important component in producing these positive outcomes. Existing research shows, "Interaction with friends tends to bolster feelings of self-worth, but interaction with family members fails to have a similar effect" (Krause, 2006, p. 189). In a study of assisted living facilities, "contact with family and friends outside the facility did not significantly impact life satisfaction, but positive internal social relationships were associated with significantly higher life satisfaction" (Street et al., 2007, p. 133). Collectively, these studies strongly indicate a need for finding ways to foster and maintain older adults' social lives within their communities.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities—A Fruitful Venue to Study How to Support Older Adults' Social Needs through Design

Older adults have many options for housing and the surrounding communities. More independent older adults may choose to age in place in their homes or alternatively choose from a variety of retirement community types which offer varying levels of care and services. As the aged population grows in the coming years, the number and percentage of older adults living in retirement communities is expected to grow proportionally.

Home for many seniors is a retirement community; it is within those communities that establishing and building social relationships is so important. "Retirement community" is a term that can apply to a "naturally occurring retirement community" (Hunt & Ross, 1990), meaning an area within the general public community where seniors tend reside in unusually high numbers because these areas offer appropriate housing in close proximity to the kinds of services they need such as grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants, theatres, and the like.

The term "retirement community" also applies to continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs), a type of service-oriented and age-restricted planned community. CCRCs offer a minimum of three levels of care—usually independent living (IL) for active older adults, assisted living for residents needing help with two or more activities of daily living, and nursing or memory care services for individuals needing a high level of care and medical assistance. These resident groups commonly consist of a majority of females over 75 years old (Campbell, 2008). These service-oriented planned retirement communities provide a wide selection of social and recreational activities and healthcare services. The formal programming of activities, such as art classes, concerts, or day trips, not only entertain residents, but also support their social needs as well.

CCRCs also foster residents' social lives by offering spaces within the community intended for informal social gathering. How well the attributes of CCRC social spaces support social interaction and whether these spaces have the qualities of third places is not clear. As social spaces are an integral part of CCRCs' design, these facilities offer a unique opportunity to study how the planning and design of such spaces might aid seniors in establishing and maintaining social relationships. Consequently, more research is needed to explore how to meet older adults' social needs in group-living settings.

CCRCs have unique characteristics that may influence the use of social spaces. Commonly these communities mimic small towns by offering their own commercial services, such as convenience stores and hair salons, in addition to residences. Among the commercial services, places such as cafes and coffee shops serve as gathering spaces for residents to engage socially. In addition, this type of facility generally include lounges and lobbies for casual interaction by residents. These spaces are the equivalent of communitywide family rooms. Socializing also occurs at places not intentionally planned as social areas, such as mailbox areas. While these unplanned social spaces are important in their own right, this study focuses

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only on spaces planned, designed, and intended for informal resident social interaction.

One type of venue shown to support rich, informal social interaction is the third place, a social venue named and defined by Oldenburg (1999). Third places are vital social hubs where different people can visit alone or in groups to engage in conversation. Examples of third places can be seen throughout history. Some societies are even known for the success of certain types of social spaces, such as cafes in France or pubs in Britain. By Oldenburg's definition, home is first place and work is second place. Third places are not just any space where people could interact, but specifically those spaces hosting abundant social interaction and enhancing the sense of community.

While Oldenburg examined these spaces for the public and in the community at large, service-marketing research expands upon this line of inquiry by examining a public third place with a senior customer base. Findings from service marketing research indicate the social support older adults receive in third places have a cathartic and restorative impact and also may offset losses of other social support common in later life (Rosenbaum, Sweeney, & Windhorst, 2009). While this research is useful in understanding the value of third places in the lives of older adults, it does neither indicate how the third-place concept applies in specialized senior living contexts, such as CCRCs, nor how designers might create third places specifically suited for the needs of older adults.

Building upon Existing Third-Place Research to Better Meet CCRC Resident Social Needs

To address one way to provide quality social venues and the social interaction opportunities they support, this study examines the concept of third place in a Southeastern Region CCRC. While third places can take many forms—from a hair salon to a café—this variety can easily be misinterpreted when it comes to creating third places. For instance, when suggesting the need for third places in retirement communities, this should not be interpreted as adding a Starbucks

to a CCRC and calling it a third place. This type of misconception can be found in research literature. One example of such a misconception can be found in the study by Thompson and Arsel's (2004) on coffee shops and consumers' (anticorporate) experience of globalization. The researchers misguidedly claim an alternative point of view to Oldenburg's praise of cafes as third places by characterizing modern-day cafes as places of consumerism rather than the places of community engagement that they once were:

> *Contemporary cafes are little more than postmodern simulations of a by-gone communal ethos that emerged in the formative period of modernity when individuals were citizens rather than consumers and when communities functioned as loci of political and civic engagement rather than lifestyle enclaves (Thompson & Arsel, 2004, p. 639).*

Oldenburg did not deny modern consumerism created these types of places. On the contrary, he recognized the problem and made the case for establishing social places, such as cafes, that were infused with the inclusive and lively spirit of authentic third places so human social needs may be met. To state it more simply, Oldenburg was not saying, "Yes, a Starbucks on every corner will solve our collective loneliness!" but rather social spaces need to offer the genuineness and warmth marking the spirit of third places. Furthermore, Oldenburg (1999) pointed out "in" places will prompt patrons to be " … inhibited by shyness; others will succumb to pretention … (and) commercialism will reign" (p. 37). And he described his vision for third places as " … intimate, even cozy settings, designed more for the immediate neighborhood than a horde of transients and sometime visitors … " (p. 125).

This research shows successful third-place atmospheres as welcoming, friendly, and informal. In this type of atmosphere, conversation could comfortably be the main activity taking place. While not contesting Oldenburg's definition of a third-place atmosphere, Hickman (2013) argued that the value a patron gains from frequenting a third place is not limited to conversation as Oldenburg suggested but extended to a more

Social interaction is important because it has been shown to have a strong influence on life satisfaction.

passive, observational type of engagement in which a social benefit is gained from simply seeing familiar faces or watching the action. Hickman expanded Oldenburg's definition of third-place social "interaction," though the welcoming and friendly third-place atmosphere is still essential in supporting both passive and active engagement in third places. For instance, Hickman's (2013) findings identify unfriendliness as one of the main barriers to third-place social interaction.

Whether considering passive or active engagement in a third place, the character of the third place is essential to its success. Oldenburg (1999) further explained the unpretentious character found in third places:

> *The character of third place is marked by a playful mood, which contrasts with people's more serious involvement in other spheres. 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 Oldenburg (1999, p. 42).*

Extending from this classic work, more recent research explored the concept of third place being psychologically similar to home. Rosenbaum (2006) studied the role of third places in consumer's lives. He described third places as serving three separate roles: place-as-practical, place-as-gathering, and place-as-home. Place-as-practical spaces serve only a basic consumer need. The place-as-gathering concept is broader in that in addition to serving a consumer need, this type of place also serves as a venue to meet and interact with people to satisfy companionship needs. Place-as-home spaces are those in which users associate the place with the ability to satisfy personal and emotional support needs in addition to consumption and companionship needs. Rosenbaum asserted that customer loyalty increases as the place plays an increasing role in companionship and then personal and emotional support needs.

These place roles could be translated into the context of a retirement community in that how well retirement community residents like and use spaces could correspond to the level of fulfillment they enjoy there. For instance, a space near an elevator only used to sit and wait (meeting a consumer need) would not build the same attachments as a place where a mutual regard exists between the resident and the wait staff in a café (meeting companionship or perhaps emotional support needs). Logic follows that the more emotional value individuals find in a place the more likely they are to use and like that space.

In addition, social attachments people build while in a space affect how emotionally attached they become to spaces themselves (called place attachment) (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001). This finding regarding place attachment is useful in understanding the importance of social spaces and the interaction that takes place there, but it stops short of addressing the connection between the qualities of social spaces supporting social interaction, which support the building of those social attachments. However, it is still necessary to identify what characteristics of those spaces support social interaction.

Oldenburg (1999) studied third places in the context of American towns. Similarly, CCRCs have a townlike organization—offering shops, cafes, groceries, pubs, and many other amenities. Although CCRCs are smaller than most towns, this becomes an advantage because this facility type is intentionally scaled to be walkable for residents. Unlike most American suburbs, community life is just a few steps away. Consequently, CCRCs have excellent potential to provide third places to residents. This underscores the importance of examining social space design in this particular context.

Oldenburg's third-place research indicated that there are many advantages to engaging in third-place social interaction. One of the benefits is receiving psychological support individually as well as enhancing the sense of community. While Oldenburg built a case for the need for third places, his research stopped short of examining how third-place social interaction as well as the third-place buildings themselves support more vulnerable populations such as CCRC residents.

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Social Space Design as Preventive Medicine for Older Adults

By focusing on understanding design characteristics that support CCRC residents' social lives, this study is a step toward furthering building design to support health and well-being. Additionally this research seeks to link social interaction research and therapeutic design research. Typically centering on healthcare environments, therapeutic design research focuses on using the built environment to improve patient outcomes. A health care environment is considered therapeutic when it:

- supports clinical excellence in the treatment of the physical body
- supports the psychosocial and spiritual needs of the patient, family, and staff
- produces measurable positive effects on patients' clinical outcomes and staff effectiveness (Smith & Watkins, 2008, p. 3).

A connection between social interaction research and therapeutic design research can be made by considering environmental characteristics therapeutic to the continued wellness of relatively healthy older adults in CCRC IL, rather than the unwell in hospitals. Another way to think of this is that environmental attributes could possibly be used as a preventive medicine tool.

To address the preventive medical use of environmental design attributes, this report comes from a portion of data collected in a larger study of IL social spaces. This part of the study involved IL subjects and sought to provide insight into the applicability of third places in CCRCs. The research framing this paper addressed the relationship between third-place characteristics, as defined by Oldenburg (1999), and how well CCRC social spaces studied are liked and used, which constituted the markers of social space success. In addition to providing better understanding the role of third places in retirement communities, the study's findings could be used to inform the design of CCRC's IL social spaces in order to support a lively social scene that supports the residents' social needs.

Oldenburg (1999) defined the following qualities of third-place atmospheres as lively, playful, and welcoming. In addition, he described third-place décor characteristics as casual, well-worn, and homelike. While Oldenburg identified these characteristics in third places, these qualities have not been investigated to assess their relative impact on how well social spaces are liked and used.

Although third-place atmosphere characteristics can be created, in part, through other organizationally driven aspects (e.g., providing a friendly staff), they can be supported further through the designed environment. As third-place décor communicates a welcoming, homeyness, and informality, the social space décor must communicate this ambiance to the particular resident group it is serving. For some, a homey space might include comfortable seating and stone fireplaces.

The attributes that make spaces preferable have been addressed in other studies. In research on interior space attribute preferences, Scott (1993) established that "warm," "relaxing," and "comfortable seating" were terms used by respondents when describing preferred spaces. In nursing care units for Alzheimer's residents, Zeisel et al. (2003, p. 709) found, "The environmental features associated with both reduced aggressive and agitated behavior and fewer psychological problems include … residential character." Both of these studies further support Oldenburg's point that social spaces should have a casual, homelike design aesthetic. While this research focuses on facilities for more vulnerable individuals, the increasing trend toward aging in place in IL means that the findings research may have applicability in an IL setting, which is intended for healthier individuals.

As a case study conducted among IL residents at a CCRC to better understand how to design social spaces to support quality social interaction for older adults, the following research question was addressed:

> *Are the atmosphere (lively, playful, and welcoming) and décor characteristics (casual,*

homelike, and well-worn) of third places as defined by Oldenburg's (1999) predictors of how well-used and how well-liked social spaces are by residents?

Methods

Participants and Procedure

The CCRC used for this case study is located in Gainesville, Florida and consists predominantly of upper middle-class, Caucasian residents. Although the CCRC offers IL, assisted living, and Alzheimer's care, IL residents were the focus of this study. The IL resident group reflects a broad range of ages and levels of functioning.

This study's primary data source was resident ratings collected from resident surveys. Of the 445 IL residents eligible to participate in the survey, 179 completed surveys, a 40% participation rate. Respondents were aged 60–99 years and included 58 men and 121 women. Participants were predominately (64%) between 80 and 89 years old. It was assumed that these IL survey respondents were mentally capable of providing accurate responses to the survey.

Residents were informed about the upcoming survey through announcements and posted notices. Research team members administered surveys in-person, one-on-one, using Survey Monkey on iPads. There were multiple advantages to this surveying method. Being able to read along on the iPad as they were surveyed was particularly helpful to residents with hearing impairments. In addition, text could be enlarged for residents with visual impairments. One unintended benefit of this face-to-face survey procedure was that it resulted in little missing data as residents tended to complete the survey in its entirety.

Instrument

This study was modeled after an earlier study (Campbell, 2014b). The original survey instrument was modified for this study to accommodate the names of the selected social spaces in this study's

CCRC. Because the survey instrument was previously tested, construct validity was already established. Even so, the survey was pilot tested to ensure question clarity.

The survey involved collecting resident responses to six social spaces within their CCRC. A resident and staff focus group identified the three social spaces within the community they believed were most successful and the three they believed were the least successful. "Successful" spaces were defined as spaces well liked and well used by residents for informal interaction. The chosen spaces were located throughout the CCRC campus and varied in size and amenities offered. Images of these spaces can be seen in Figure 1.

During the survey, color photographs of the six selected social spaces were displayed to help ensure respondents were correctly considering the spaces referred to in the survey questions. In addition, six versions of the survey were created, which listed the six social spaces in a different order so order would not unfairly bias the responses. These six survey versions were used randomly.

The survey was composed of two sections: a demographic and social preferences section as well as a third-place section. The demographic and social preferences section inquired about age, gender, mobility, and how much social interaction the respondent preferred. The questions were in multiple choice format.

The third-place section asked questions related to the dependent variables (DVs), that is, residents' liking and amount of use of the six social spaces. Residents were asked "How well do you like each space? They indicated their response with a bipolar 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Don't like it" (1) to "Love it" (5). Two questions addressed the number of visits and visit length, which together constituted informal usage. The first question was, "For reasons other than to participate in staff-scheduled activities, how much do you visit each space?" The answer choices ranged from "Never" (1) to "Very often" (5). Then, participants were asked, "During casual visits (not including visits

Figure 1. Photographs of independent living social spaces studied in the third-place portion of the study.

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to attend staff-scheduled activities), how would you characterize the amount of time you usually spend in each space during your visits?" This question's answer choices ranged from "None" (1) to "Very much" (5). There were two other response options for these questions, one if the respondent did not use the space or one for the respondent to decline answering.

Subjects were then asked to rate the six social spaces according to Oldenburg's third-place décor variables (casual, homelike, and well-worn) and atmosphere variables (lively, playful, and welcoming). Assessments of these independent variables (IVs) were examined for their relationship with the two outcome variables, (1) social space satisfaction with each space (how much the spaces were liked), and (2) informal usage of each space (how frequently and how long used by respondent).

Data Analysis

The first layer of data analysis included descriptive statistical analysis. The second layer of analysis involved multiple regression analysis to identify variables predicting how well social spaces were liked and used. These analyses were performed using SPSS software R version 2.15. In each analysis layer, all variables were examined to see if they were correlated with the two outcome variables, which were:

- social space satisfaction with the selected social spaces (how much the spaces were liked)
- informal usage of the social spaces (how frequently and how long the residents visited the spaces)

To control Type I error rate, the Holm's method (1979) was used. Accordingly, 12 tests of each IV were conducted including two DVs each across six different spaces. This resulted in the most significant of the 12 p-values being tested at an alpha value of $.05/12 = 0.0042$. The next most significant p-value was then tested at an alpha value of $.05/11 = 0.0045$, where the 11 is the remaining comparison number. Each subsequent comparison was tested similarly until one was not statistically significant. Then, the

remaining comparisons were determined to be not statistically significant.

In the first data analysis layer, atmosphere variables were grouped and the décor variables (except the well-worn variable) were grouped. Then, each variable group was examined for average correlations with like space and usage. Because of the rating scale and its relationship to previous research, the well-worn variable was kept separate. For this question, respondents were asked to rate the spaces from 1 to 5 with 1 being worn and 5 being new. As Oldenburg's (1999) research indicated third places were likely to have comfortably worn décor, a comfortably worn response would generate a rating of about 3. This scale enabled the analysis to identify correlations between worn as well as new décor (which would generate at the lowest or highest ends of the scale) and the outcome variables as well as correlations between comfortably worn (a score of 3).

In the secondary layer of analysis, third-place variables were individually analyzed in a multiple regression analysis. The purpose of the multiple regression analysis was to uncover third-place variables predicting like and use. Also, beta weights were examined. To examine the individual décor and atmosphere variables on equal footing, simultaneous multiple regression was used. While controlling for age, gender, home range (residents' daily path of travel), and how much the residents enjoy social interaction, variables were tested in the regression analysis. As there were two separate DVs, all multiple regression analyses were performed twice—once for each DV.

Missing data were managed using multiple imputation. No outcomes were imputed. In the imputation of the other missing values, SPSS utilized all data to predict what missing data were likely to be. Multiple imputation was chosen because the number of variables and resulting opportunities for missing data made a simpler method, such as listwise deletion, insufficient.

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Results

As this study focused on supporting informal social interaction, it was valuable to know how much these residents liked to socially interact. If residents like to interact they may have both need-based reasons to address supporting social interaction as well as market-based reasons. In other words, residents may not just need social interaction but also want it. The survey question asking residents to rate how much they liked to socialize used a 1- to 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "Not at all" and 5 indicating "Very much." This question had a mean score of 4.1 and a standard deviation (SD) of .972, indicating that participants had a high level of desire for social interaction.

Following the initial assessment, the first layer of data revealed relationships between third-place qualities present in the six social spaces studied and how well the spaces were liked and used by respondents. The multiple regression analysis that followed identified the ci variables predicting how well spaces were liked and used.

The atmosphere variables (i.e., lively, playful, and welcoming) were positively correlated with the DVs. The average median correlation of atmosphere with liking of space was $r = .33$ and for usage was $r = .31$. In comparison, the décor variables showed an average median correlation across spaces of $r = .28$ with how much residents reported liking spaces and $r = .13$ with resident reported usage. These indicate atmosphere variables have a stronger positive relationship with usage than the décor variables.

In analyzing the relationship between the worn/new variable with space like and use, all spaces showed a low to moderate positive correlation ($r = .22$) between how much spaces were liked and how new the décor appeared. A consistent relationship was not found between the worn/new variable and social space usage. This finding indicates there is no evidence in this study suggesting distinct usage differences for new décor compared to worn décor.

Because of concern that these results may be confounded by other important factors driving like and use, a multiple regression analysis was conducted as a second layer of analysis. The multiple regression investigated whether these third-place characteristics were significant while controlling for age, gender, home range, and how much the residents enjoy social interaction. Table 1 shows the regression results summary.

Looking closer at these relationships, atmosphere variables explained an average of 28% of the variability in both how well the spaces were liked and used. Comparatively, two of the décor variables (homelike and casual) explained an average of 15% in how well the spaces were liked and 4% of the variability in usage. These results indicate third-place atmosphere characteristics explain substantially more variability in usage and a small amount more variability in how well spaces were liked.

In general, some atmosphere and décor variables were better predictors of like and usage than others. Categorically, the atmosphere variables were better predictors than the décor variables. Overall, the subdued versus lively variable, an atmosphere variable, was the best predictor. For four of the six spaces, subdued versus lively was a significant predictor of use. For one of the six selected spaces, subdued versus lively was a significant predictor of how well spaces were liked. This means that even while controlling for other variables, the subdued versus lively variable was the most dependable predictor of like and usage.

Discussion

Implications for Design and Research

Practically every civilized country in the world has some sort of equivalent—a place where people can go to eat, relax, and talk things over without worrying about what time it is, and without having to leave as soon as the food is eaten … "You're important. Relax and enjoy yourself." That's the message … (Hoff, 1982, p. 106–107).

Table 1. *Multiple regression analysis—Third-place characteristics predicting like and use while controlling for age, gender, home range, and residents' preference for social interaction*

Social space name	Outcome variable	Third place variable group	Third place individual variable name	*B*	*SE B*
Lake House Commons (Successful)	LIKE SPACE	Atmosphere	**Subdued/Lively**	**0.222***	**0.06**
			Serious/Playful	**0.177***	**0.06**
			Unfriendly/Welcoming	0.183	0.070
		Décor	Form/Casual	0.136	0.060
			Institutional/Home-like	**0.216***	**0.06**
		Separate décor variable	**Worn/New**	**0.239***	**0.07**
	USAGE	Atmosphere	**Subdued/Lively**	**0.622***	**0.17**
			Serious/Playful	**0.598***	**0.18**
			Unfriendly/Welcoming	−0.016	0.205
		Décor	Form/Casual	0.127	0.185
			Institutional/Home-like	0.139	0.163
		Separate décor variable	Worn/New	0.086	0.203
The Back 9 Lounge (Successful)	LIKE SPACE	Atmosphere	Subdued/Lively	0.110	0.134
			Serious/Playful	0.298	0.128
			Unfriendly/Welcoming	−0.058	0.143
		Décor	Form/Casual	0.033	0.149
			Institutional/Home-like	0.356	0.208
		Separate décor variable	Worn/New	−0.031	0.144
	USAGE	Atmosphere	Subdued/Lively	0.187	0.264
			Serious/Playful	0.364	0.308
			Unfriendly/Welcoming	**−0.967***	**0.25**
		Décor	Form/Casual	−0.041	0.321
			Institutional/Home-like	0.588	0.482
		Separate décor variable	Worn/New	−0.287	0.391
Tower Club Café (Successful)	LIKE SPACE	Atmosphere	Subdued/Lively	0.092	0.079
			Serious/Playful	0.049	0.078
			Unfriendly/Welcoming	0.174	0.093
		Décor	Form/Casual	−0.076	0.079
			Institutional/Home-like	**0.250***	**0.07**
		Separate Décor Variable	Worn/New	0.174	0.089
	USAGE	Atmosphere	**Subdued/Lively**	**0.578***	**0.16**
			Serious/Playful	**0.486***	**0.17**
			Unfriendly/Welcoming	0.012	0.203
		Décor	Form/Casual	−0.141	0.182
			Institutional/Home-like	−0.125	0.153
		Separate décor variable	Worn/New	0.020	0.184
Lake House Pool Area (Unsuccessful)	LIKE SPACE	Atmosphere	Subdued/Lively	0.264	0.190
			Serious/Playful	0.110	0.156
			Unfriendly/Welcoming	0.029	0.116
		Décor	Form/Casual	0.378	0.233
			Institutional/Home-like	0.025	0.214
		Separate décor variable	Worn/New	−0.143	0.1949
	USAGE	Atmosphere	**Subdued/Lively**	**0.472***	**0.17**
			Serious/Playful	**0.612***	**0.16**
			Unfriendly/Welcoming	**−0.880***	**0.17**

Table 1. *Continued*

Social space name	Outcome variable	Third place variable group	Third place individual variable name	*B*	*SE B*
Cypress Lobby (Unsuccessful)	LIKE SPACE	Décor	Form/Casual	−0.271	0.357
			Institutional/Home-like	0.105	0.313
		Separate décor variable	Worn/New	−0.295	0.283
		Atmosphere	Subdued/Lively	0.022	0.091
			Serious/Playful	−0.023	0.132
			Unfriendly/Welcoming	0.161	0.144
	USAGE	Décor	Form/Casual	0.013	0.128
			Institutional/Home-like	0.146	0.219
		Separate décor variable	Worn/New	0.040	0.147
		Atmosphere	Subdued/Lively	−0.030	0.091
			Serious/Playful	−0.041	0.096
			Unfriendly/Welcoming	−2.069	0.307
Tower Villas Lobby (Unsuccessful)	LIKE SPACE	Décor	Form/Casual	0.026	0.069
			Institutional/Home-like	−0.073	0.116
		Separate décor variable	Worn/New	0.013	0.134
		Atmosphere	Subdued/Lively	0.190	0.118
			Serious/Playful	0.253	0.112
			Unfriendly/Welcoming	0.132	0.116
	USAGE	Décor	Form/Casual	0.127	0.099
			Institutional/Home-like	0.186	0.113
		Separate décor variable	Worn/New	0.165	0.150
		Atmosphere	**Subdued/Lively**	**0.671***	**0.25**
			Serious/Playful	0.512	0.214
			Unfriendly/Welcoming	−0.501	0.213
		Décor	Form/Casual	0.086	0.182
			Institutional/Home-like	0.117	0.191
		Separate décor variable	Worn/New	0.077	0.337

Note: Test if significance: $^*p < .05$ (using the Holm method for controlling family-wise error rate).

Third places are social spaces that address users' emotional needs and become an individual's social home-away-from-home. Hosting rich social interaction, third places potentially enhance the sense of community and the quality of social engagement in the CCRC thus making this an important topic for study. This study's findings confirm those of an earlier study (Campbell, 2014a), which also found that third places are supportive of residents' needs for social interaction.

While this study offers important contributions, this study was not without challenges. For example, even though the residents surveyed reported a very strong desire for social interaction, it is likely that residents who tended to be more social were more likely to participate in the survey. As a result, the data may imply a higher preference for social interaction than actually exists in the whole resident population. In addition, this study used self-reported data to assess length and frequency of space use. As self-reported data are known to suffer inaccuracies, future research would strengthen these findings with the addition of observation data regarding levels of space usage.

This research found features characterizing third-place atmospheres (being more lively than subdued, more playful than serious, and more welcoming than

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unfriendly) were positively correlated with how well social spaces were liked and used. In other words, the social spaces studied that offered third-place atmosphere characteristics were more successful than spaces whose atmospheres were without those characteristics. This further supports Oldenburg's (1999) research identifying these characteristics as important to third places and suggests that designers should facilitate lively, playful, and welcoming atmospheres in CCRC social spaces to increase likelihood of having their be liked and used.

Although décor variables (casual and homelike) were positively related with how well spaces were liked and used, the décor variable group was not as highly correlated with the outcome variables as were the atmosphere variables. Nevertheless, the CCRC social spaces residents characterized as having third-place décor (casual and homelike) were more highly used than spaces less characterized as such. This again supports Oldenburg's (1999) work. In addition, this provides added support to Scott's (1993) research identifying "warm" and "relaxing" as preferable social space attributes as "warm" and "relaxing" are both descriptors of homelike and casual social space decor. These findings may also indicate that Zeisel et al.'s (2003) research, showing homelike settings to be positively related to better health outcomes in specialized nursing care for Alzheimer's residents, may have applicability in IL settings as well.

Oldenburg's findings regarding third-place décor as being comfortably worn was not confirmed in this study. Instead, this research found décor characterized as new had a positive correlation with how well a space was liked. However, no association was found between new décor and space usage. This finding indicates these residents prefer new décor as compared to the comfortably worn décor, which Oldenburg observed in the general population's third places. This contrary finding is likely due to a characteristic of this particular cohort of individuals. One potential explanation could be that it is possible CCRC residents may view the CCRC communal social spaces as an extension of their homes and thus have different feelings regarding the appearance of the spaces compared to

how the public felt regarding the public commercial social spaces Oldenburg studied. Other explanations for the residents' preference for new décor versus comfortably worn décor could be due to the high socioeconomic status of this resident group, a generational quality, or some other characteristic unique to the residents in the study. Despite the preference for décor that appears newer, it is important to note a significant relationship was not found between new décor and space usage. This indicates new décor may attract residents but has not been shown to affect how much residents use the space.

As third-place characteristics were related to how much spaces were used and liked, incorporating these features is an important strategy for supporting retirement community residents' social lives. In previous research on Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, a type of unplanned retirement community, Hunt and Ross (1990) found a lively social scene increased the retirement community's desirability as a housing option. They also found that a lively social scene can help support resident satisfaction with the retirement community. Considered along with resident health and well-being, these reasons are further incentives for retirement community organizations to adopt third-place characteristics when including social spaces in their facilities. In turn, these environmental design characteristics may be used as a preventive medical intervention to aid the health and well-being of IL residents.

The study's findings have several design practice implications. Because social spaces with third-place atmosphere (lively, playful, and welcoming) and décor characteristics (casual and homelike) were more used and liked than spaces with less of those characteristics, the following are possible ways to support social interaction via CCRC social space design.

Suggestion 1: To develop a lively, playful, and welcoming atmosphere, cluster social spaces together in the floor plan. Centralizing the action in this way keeps social spaces more lively throughout the day and condenses the action, which make chance

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encounters more likely. In spaces within the cluster, provide areas suitable for residents to comfortably sit and engage in conversation with other residents or CCRC staff (i.e., incorporating table-height bar seating near the barista in a coffee shop). Integrating socially comfortable ways to engage with other people gives residents more reasons to visit and stay longer in the social hub.

Suggestion 2: Social interaction will further be encouraged through the implementation of third-place décor, which is casual and homelike. To do this, the designer's programming process must include identifying what "casual" (i.e., comfortable seating, wood floors, stone fireplaces, etc.) and "homelike" (i.e., avoiding an institutional appearance by specifying various furniture types, lighting, colors, textures, patterns, etc.) mean to current and prospective residents then translating those meanings into an attractive design aesthetic.

Suggestion 3: To promote a space that is well liked, finishes and décor made of materials that maintain a new appearance for as long as possible could be specified. This indicates the need to use durable materials and finishes, so they will be less prone to showing dirt or wear for the longest time possible.

While this study exploring the third-place concept in IL within a CCRC starts to fill a gap in the research literature, there are many opportunities for further research on this topic. As these case study results confirm results from an earlier case study of a similar facility in the Midwest, these findings are likely to have applicability to CCRCs with similar resident populations. Still unknown is how third places and their characteristics affect how well these spaces are liked and used in CCRCs with different population profiles. For example, residents of different socioeconomic statuses, ethnic backgrounds, group-specific differences such as urban or rural experience, or more extensive physiological disabilities

might respond differently to such places and characteristics. Furthermore, do these results hold value with regard to older adults in the greater U.S. population and living in a variety of other residential contexts? Clearly the topic is filled with questions that suggest value of further research, perhaps involving mixed methods and tools, to explore the applicability of third places.

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