

In 2017, editors Carol Bosman and Joanne Pasco collected contributions for the book "Rethinking Third Places: Informal Public Space and Community Building." This video project aimed to reexamine Ray Oldenburg's 1989 theory on "third places," which are informal public spaces that enhance social capital and neighborhood safety. Oldenburg categorized places into three types: first places (home), second places (work), and third places (cafes, parks, etc.).

The book addresses the evolution of third place theory in light of the digital communication revolution and highlights new contexts and examples. It features various chapters covering feminist perspectives, child-friendly spaces, and the connection between third places and social capital.

The author discusses their interest in the role of third places in enhancing neighborhood safety and explores the concept of "eyes on the street," popularized by urbanist Jane Jacobs. Jacobs argued that active public spaces create natural surveillance that can deter crime.

A significant part of the research involves analyzing the Gold Coast, Queensland, through eight case studies that examined different urban forms and socio-economic profiles. It highlights that while third places can foster community, perceptions of safety can differ from actual safety, with high activity not always correlating to lower crime.

The findings indicate that more secure environments often have preferable physical conditions (like good lighting and surveillance), but can also promote reclusiveness, as seen in gated communities. Conversely, busy shopping streets may have third places that offer eyes on the street yet still experience high crime rates, suggesting a complex relationship between the presence of third places and safety.

The author emphasizes the need for tailored urban planning strategies to create effective and safe community spaces, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Further research is called for to assess the impacts of digital environments on social cohesion and safety, particularly post-COVID-19, highlighting the importance of physical places in fostering community interaction.