


THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND  
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There's a bit of a ripple-effect: *A social identity perspective on the role of third-places and ageing in place*

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**Loneliness – a public health issue of our time**

 1 in 4

Australian Psychological Society, 2018

**Mortality risk of loneliness > smoking or obesity**

Holt-Lunstad et al. 2015

**Social isolation - most at risk in the elderly:**

- Retired
- Live alone
- Older 75+
- w/o nearby children, relatives
- Few contacts
- Physically frail

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**A rapidly ageing population ....**

In 2020 : elderly people 65+ > children under 5 years old

WHO, Global Health & Ageing, 2018

**Preference to age in place**

- Stay in own home for as long as possible
- Emotional attachment to home
- Familiarity with neighbourhood.

Australian Government Productivity Commission Research Paper, 2015

**≠ to age well**

... *meaningful social interactions & community engagement*

Rowe & Kahn, 1998

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**Third places ....**

• Libraries, community centres, coffee shops are the 'heart of communities'

Oldenburg, 1989; Klinenberg, 2018

**Build it and they will come?**

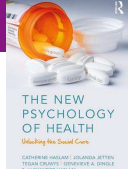
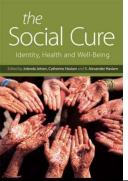
• Only 1/3 at-risk seniors use community centres

Schneider et al., 2014



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**Social identity approach to health**

**SOCIAL GROUPS ARE IMPORTANT FOR WELLBEING**

provides meaning, purpose, agency

positive social identities = psychological resource

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**Case study: Suburban Bridge Club**




Photo credit: Dr Anne Rustall

- Started in 2011 (n=30).
- Non-profit

**439 members**  
**12 - 95 years old**  
**83 % retired**  
**77 % women**  
**28 % lives alone**  
**22 % chronic health issues**  
**22 % > 75 years old**  
**21 % pensioners**  
**6 % require disable parking**

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### The physical context: (shared space)

- Suburban location
- House value 8% above median
- Ageing population.

undercover seating area

Approx. 80m<sup>2</sup>

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### Social interaction: (shared activity)

April 2018 – April 2019  
Sessions p.a. = 700+  
44 hrs a week

Tables in play	Sessions
1	10
2	15
3	20
4	25
5	30
6	40
7	50
8	60
9	70
10	80
11	90
12	100
13	110
14	120
15	130

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### Method (N = 31)

- 6 x Focus group interviews
- Thematic analysis of transcripts
- Member check validation

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### Theme 1 : Structural features enable & restrict participation

physical structure      social structure

permanent clubhouse = ENABLE = club set up

inadequate space = RESTRICT = too focused on bridge

*'So we've got a bridge club that is focused around bridge, but doesn't do very much else. But when there are opportunities, people are keen to participate and enjoy themselves... and it's partly because we don't have the space.'*

Allen, 68

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### Theme 2 : Club support valued social identities

We are...

- bridge players
- club members
- neighbours
- local community members

*It's such a big club, and we're part of a community and it carries all the way throughout this area.*

Judy, 62

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### Theme 3 : Club facilitates older people's ability to age well

physical context (shared spaces)      social interaction (shared activities)

sense of wellbeing

shared social identities (bridge players, club members, local community residents)

*'I've got several reasons why I go to the bridge club five days a week. I'm very competitive as a bridge player, I love meeting people and I don't like to stay home by myself all day.'*

*'I find it very important to come here every day. It's the reason to get out of bed...'*

Peter, 87      Bess, 80

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**3 Key Findings:**

- Community spaces **facilitate** the maintenance of **positive social identities**, which are important for **wellbeing**
- Local group-based social identities **support** ability to **age well** and **age in place**
- Seniors are **capable** of active roles in shaping their **community spaces**

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