Identity and place: a critical comparison of three identity theories.

Abstract: This review article discusses and critically analyses three theories used to explain how architecture and the natural and built-physical environment influence a person's identity. These theories are (1) place-identity theory, (2) social identity theory, and (3) identity process theory. The place-identity theory has provided important contributions to the field of psychology and to the social sciences of architecture, emphasizing the influence of the physical environment on identity and self-perception. However, there is little empirical research to support the theory and its specific contributions in relation to other identity theories have not been clarified. Despite the lack of awareness in mainstream psychology regarding the built environment, the processes described in social identity theory and identity process theory have been shown to be useful when explaining the relationship between identity and place. Nevertheless, as terminology, "place-identity" may be relevant, if seen as a part of other identity categories. Identity manifests itself on many levels, one of which is place. A new integrative model of place in built and natural environments is proposed.

Keywords: Place-identity, Social identity, Identity process, Theory

Introduction

Does place--the built environment with its connotative meanings--have any particular effect on a person's identity? If so, what kind of effect, and by which mechanisms? Many factors--genetic, social, and cultural as well as the built environment--combine to shape identity. The physical built environment is just one among others. When attachment to place grows, we start to identify ourselves with these places, both at a larger scale (nation, city, etc.) and at a smaller scale (neighborhood, workplaces, homes, rooms; Giuliani, 2003). This results in self-concepts that are based in part on place. For example, people may refer to themselves by describing what country they live in, what city or town they come from, or if they are a "country" or a "city person." These are more than social references; they refer to physical places where people live. The places in which people have lived also influence their environmental preferences and affect the kind of environment they may seek out or prefer. However, the converse is also true: places are also influenced by people's identities. People personalize their homes and workplaces with decorations, so that their houses and gardens reflect and communicate who they are (Despres, 1991; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Nasar & Kang, 1999; Rapoport, 1982).

Home and dwelling are very important in most people's lives, and consequently, they are significant in influencing identity (Relph, 1976). "Home" has therefore been the focus of important research projects. There has been, however, a tendency to categorize, describe and explain the same home- and identity-related phenomena in different terms. "Place attachment" is defined as the feelings we develop towards places that are highly
familiar to us, ie, places we belong to (Altman & Low, 1992; Gifford, 2002). Giuliani (2003) has stressed the difficulty of deciding exactly when place attachment becomes strong enough to be defined as an aspect of identity or "place-identity." Concepts like "place attachment," "place-identity," and "place identification" are theoretically and empirically difficult to separate (Speller, 2000). Identity is also a complex term, especially in interdisciplinary fields. Each discipline has its own definitions, and uses the term differently according to its own traditions. Even within the same discipline, "identity" may be seen as a term with indistinct borders (Breakwell, 1986). The identity term may thus be avoided. Environmental researchers have employed other terms, such as "lifestyle," "values" (Ozaki, 2005), "self," "personality" (Sadalla & Sheets, 1993), "social attributions" (Wilson & MacKenzie, 2000), or "social status" (Nasar, 1989). Sometimes these terms might be more precise. However, does "identity" include factors like these, and would it benefit empirical research and theoretical considerations to have a common term expressing these personal and social aspects? Additionally, what identity theories might be most suitable to explain the impact of the built and natural environment on identity?

The influence place has on identity in this article is seen as a result of a holistic and reciprocal interaction between people and their physical environment; people affect places, and places (and the way places are affected) influence how people see themselves. While identity theories are the focus of this work, perspectives on place will be described briefly to introduce the discussion.

In environment-behaviour studies, three identity theories have been used in recent decades to explain the impact of place on identity: (1) place-identity theory, (2) social identity theory, and (3) identity process theory. These theories will be described in relation to place. A discussion of whether "place-identity" is a relevant theory and concept, and a suggestion for an integrating model follows.

Place

The way the interaction between people and place is understood has implications not only for the explanation of the environment's influence on identity, but also for the definition of the interdisciplinary fields of environmental psychology and the interdisciplinary social sciences of the built environment, for research methods, and for the development of theories within the field. At the same time, some of the different theoretical perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and the use of theory depends on the type of research (Bell, Greene, Fisher & Baum, 2001; cf. Moore, 1997a). Environmental psychology has been through a series of developments regarding different perspectives of place. Theories have been criticized, leading to further research and development of new theories. Perspectives on place have gone from "physical determinism", where the environment, dimensions, colors, and shapes were seen as having direct effects on behavior, to a view of the people-environment relationship as dynamic and interactive (Franck, 1984). A dynamic and interactive perspective on the environment includes the social, cultural and psychological meanings of a place, which can also be expressed in philosophical and poetic forms.

The word "place" does not sound like a typical research term, but instead sounds more philosophic or poetic (Speller, 2000). This might be a reason why some environment-behavior researchers have tried to create other terms defining place in their empirical research, especially when employing quantitative research methods. Barker (1968) uses the term "behavior settings," described as bounded standing patterns of human and nonhuman activity. This theory has been critiqued and further developed by Wicker
(1979), who described behavior settings as social constructs developed over time. Canter (1977, 1997) was inspired by both the theory of behavior settings and phenomenology when he employed place as a term, and developed his "psychology of place." In Canter's terms, place is seen as product of physical attributes, human conceptions, and activities.

In comparison with Canter's (1977) "psychology of place," Stokols and Shumaker's (1981) "transactional view of settings" can be seen as a view further emphasizing the interdependent relationship between people and environment. It describes people and place as a unit, highlighting the reciprocal influence between people and places. Transactionalism is based upon the philosophical works of Dewey and Bentley (1949) and Pepper (1967). A transactional view of the relationship between an individual and the environment can be seen as unique because it focuses on the interface between people and environments. It does not focus solely on either the person (perception, cognition, personality) or the environment (e.g., behavior settings in, say, high-rise buildings; Aitken, 1992). This article will use the word "place" based on the transactional view of settings, as Speller (2000) defines it: place is a geographical space that has acquired meaning as a result of a person's interaction with the space.

The term "place" also has been essential in geography since the 1970s (Easthope, 2004), after a humanistic critique in geography in the late 1960s (Patterson & Williams, 2005). Phenomenology, initiated by Husserl at the beginning of the twentieth century, focuses on the subjective experience and perception of a person's life world (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2004; Husserl, 1970). Phenomenology is especially concerned with place and home due to the centrality of these topics in everyday life. "To dwell" has been described as the process of making a place a home (Heidegger, 1962). "Place" gained prominence in phenomenological research, architecture and geography through Norberg-Schulz's (1980, 1971) work on the existence of a "genius loci", meaning the spirit of a place, Relph's (1976) work on "sense of place" and "placelessness", and Tuan's (1974, 1977) work on positive affective ties to place described as "topophilia". Relph (1976) and Tuan (1974, 1977) used the terms "insideness" and "outsideness" to describe people's feelings of being part of a place. Tuan (1974, 1977) separated between "sense of place" and "rootedness," where sense of place is described as an awareness of a positive feeling for a place, and rootedness as a feeling of being home. Place has also been explored in works by Seamon (1979), Buttimer and Seamon (1980), and Hart (1979). Canter's (1977) work on place, Proshansky et al.'s (1978, 1983, 1987) work on place-identity, and Altman and Low's (1992) work on place attachment are other important milestones in the research literature on place. All of the different concepts that have been used in relation to place, such as "sense of place", "place attachment", "place-identity", "place dependence" etc., are difficult to separate, and might have parallel definitions representing mainly positive affective ties to a place. However, the lack of conceptual clarity can be seen as a reflection of the interdisciplinary work on place with different epistemological traditions and focus (Patterson & Williams, 2005). Interdisciplinary work requires openness and dialog regarding concept definitions, and if some concepts are used interchangeably, over time redundant concepts will lose territory. One could argue that the concept of place is vague, and encourage the use of more precise words like "dwelling," "landscape," "city," or "neighborhood." However, there seems to be a need for a common term for the physical environment in relation to the social, psychological and cultural meanings attached to it. It might be harder to see common features in research on different kinds of environments if an umbrella term has not been identified. "Place" is a term that is difficult to replace.

Identity
One of the most notable things about human beings that distinguish us from other species is our self-awareness and ability to self-reflect. Many psychological theories in some way or another deal with self(-perception) and identity, but their focus of interest tends to be different, which thereby results in different definitions of "identity," "self" or "personality." Psychological literature that tries to introduce perspectives on self often categorizes theories by their focus of interest, and whether that focus is more or less detailed. One way of doing this is to divide the literature into five broad categories. The most well known psychological identity theories among the public at large are psychodynamic theories (with Freud's psychoanalysis as one of the main origins). However, these theories are often seen as the most controversial in academic psychology (see for example Frosh, 2006). Psychodynamic theories focus on unconscious conflicts and motivation, inferiority feelings, defense mechanisms, and psychosocial crisis. Cognitive theories focus on how self-relevant information is stored, structured and retrieved (Leary & Tangney, 2003). Social learning theories focus on agency, self-efficacy, locus of control, and self-regulation. Humanistic/existential theories focus on self-actualization, personal constructs, meaning, responsibility, and personal myths (McMartin, 1995). The last main group of identity theories focuses on the interpersonal aspects of identity, the social and cultural influence on how we see ourselves (Leary & Tangney, 2003). The borders between these rather broad categories are vague, and there are many common features across the groups. The theories that will be described in this article belong to this last category. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981, 1982) is perhaps the most significant of the interpersonal identity theories. Breakwell's (1983, 1986) identity process theory also draws upon important aspects from cognitive and social learning theories. Lalli (1992) recognizes the influence of cognitive identity theories in Proshansky et al.'s (1978, 1983, 1987) place-identity theory.

"Identity" can be described as the distinguishing character or personality of an individual. "Self" is a concept often used in a more abstract and global context, whereas "identity" is linked to specific aspects of self-definition (Deaux, 1992). However, others believe that personality and self are synonymous (McMartin, 1995). The unity of a person is not a natural given. Based on personal temperament, personhood is formed in relationship with other people. It has to be attained psychologically (by identification) and maintained (as identity) in a continuous and often conflictive process of socialization (Grauman, 1983). Identification is a process, and identity is a condition (Lalli, 1992). How broadly identity is defined depends on theory. This concept will be further explored when the three identity theories are discussed in the following sections. All identity theories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and may be chosen according to the interests of a particular research endeavor. The interest of research in this article is place. Casey (2001) states that identity is created both internally in the mind, and through the body's interaction with the outside world--there is no place without self, and no self without place. The question is, can well known psychological identity theories cover this aspect of identity, or do we need to create identity theories solely to explain the place aspects of identity?

Theories of Identity and the Built Environment

Place Identity

Aspects of identity linked to place can be described as "place-identity." The term has been in use since the late 1970s (Proshansky, 1978), and is here, as originally, typed with a hyphen. Place-identity has been described as the individual's incorporation of place into the larger concept of self (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983), defined as a "potpourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas, and related feelings about..."
specific physical settings, as well as types of settings" (1983, p. 60). Place attachment is considered a part of place-identity, but place-identity is more than attachment. Place-identity is a substructure of self-identity, much like gender and social class, and is comprised of perceptions and comprehensions regarding the environment. These perceptions and conceptions can be organized into two types of clusters; one type consists of memories, thoughts, values and settings, and the second type consists of the relationship among different settings (home, school, and neighborhood; Proshansky & Fabian, 1987).

Identity develops as children learn to differentiate themselves from people around them, and in the same way, place-identity develops as a child learns to see her or himself as distinct from, but related to, the physical environment. Among the first identity determinants are those rooted in the child's experience with toys, clothes and rooms. The home is the environment of primary importance, followed by the neighborhood and the school. Here, social and environmental skills and relationships are learned, and the "lenses" are formed through which the child later will recognize, evaluate and create places. Place-identity changes occur throughout a person's lifetime (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). Five central functions of place-identity have been depicted; recognition, meaning, expressive-requirement, mediating change, and anxiety and defense function. Place-identity becomes a cognitive "database" against which every physical setting is experienced (Proshansky et al., 1983).

In the time since the term "place-identity" was introduced, the theory has been the model for identity that has dominated environmental psychology. Place-identity theory does not provide much detail regarding structure and process (Twigger-Ross, Bonaiuto & Breakwell, 2003), but refers to "schemata" that Neisser (1976) and Piaget (1954) describe as perceptions and ideas that also concern the physical environment. The cognitive structures tend to be remote from the awareness of the individual, even more than social and personal cognitive structures, because physical settings are "backdrops" against which events occur (Proshansky et al., 1983).

Social Identity Theory

The phrase "self concept" is often used when referring to the answer to "who am I?" Our "self concepts" contain both statements about what makes us similar to other people, and what makes us dissimilar. People construct a perception of themselves and others by means of abstract social categories, and these perceptions become part of people's self-concepts. We define ourselves with qualities that characterize the groups to which we belong. Tajfel (1972, cf. Hogg & Abrams, 1995; Tajfel, 1982) explains "social identity" as the individual's knowledge of belonging to certain social groups, as well as the emotions and values this conveys to him or her. Social identity therefore depends on the quality of the groups or entities we belong to or have as a positive reference, such as nationality, culture, religion, family, neighborhood etc. The social identity we acquire as a member of social groups might produce group behavior. In any given situation, different combinations of the self-concept will be central to the individual, producing different self-images. Some parts of our identity will then be silent. In some contexts our cognition or behavior is more influenced by group membership than in other contexts, for instance when experiencing inter-group conflicts or discrimination (Turner, 1982).

Social comparison theory assumes that people see themselves and their group in a positive rather than a negative light. Positive characteristics are more likely than negative characteristics to be perceived as in-group attributes. This occurs because we are motivated to win and preserve a positive self-esteem. People will join other groups if
positive self-esteem is not preserved. If people cannot leave a group, they will deny the negative characteristics of the group, or reinterpret them as positive self-concepts (Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1982).

Within the field of social psychology, theories on identity have been constructed, tested and modified, but the element of the physical environment has largely been neglected. Twigger-Ross et al. (2003), however, found that social identity theory is easily transferable, and can be further developed to include aspects of place. A place can be defined as a social entity or "membership group" providing identity. A place is often associated with a certain group of people, a certain lifestyle and social status. In relation to maintaining a positive self-esteem, this means that people will prefer places that contain physical symbols that maintain and enhance positive self-esteem, and, if they can, they will avoid places that have negative impacts on their self-esteem (Twigger-Ross et al., 2003).

Identity Process Theory

Breakwell (1983, 1986) formulated an identity process theory that has been useful for research on identity with respect to the built environment (cf. also Speller, 2000). Identity in this view is seen as a dynamic, social product of the interaction of the capacities for memory, consciousness and organized construal. Identity can thus be seen as both a structure and a process. The structure of the identity is manifested through thought, action and affect. This model does not make any distinctions between personal and social identity, but differentiates between the content dimension and the value dimension. The content dimension contains both personal and social identity, and the value dimension contains the positive or negative value of these categories. The organization of the content dimension is hierarchical, but not static. The organization of elements changes according to inputs and demands from the social context. The identity structure is also regulated by an accommodation-assimilation process, absorption of new components, and adjustments in the existing identity structure.

The formation processes of identity are guided by different principles according to culture, and within a culture, these principles will vary over time and across situations. In Western industrialized cultures, Breakwell (1986, Twigger-Ross et al., 2003) sees the current guiding principles as continuity, distinctiveness, self-efficacy and self-esteem. Korpela (1989) argues that in much of the research literature on identity and place there are implicit principles that fit with Breakwell's theory. These principles are in general well documented in cognitive and social learning psychology (Korpela, 1989).

Breakwell (1983, 1986; Twigger-Ross et al., 2003) argues that places are important sources of identity elements. Aspects of identity derived from places we belong to arise because places have symbols that have meaning and significance to us. Places represent personal memories, and because places are located in the socio-historical matrix of intergroup relations, they represent social memories (shared histories). Places do not have permanent meaning; their meaning is renegotiated continually and therefore their contribution to identity is never the same. Breakwell (1996, see Twigger-Ross et al., 2003) also argues that being in new and different places affects identity through attenuation/accenation, threat and dislocation. She also emphasizes that places are nested (from room to country). The nesting may be defined as a product of social and personal meanings, not necessarily as a product of geographical hierarchy.

Discussion

The theory of place-identity was established because mainstream psychology had
ignored the physical built environment as a factor of importance in identity development. The theory has been analyzed, discussed, and critiqued since the late 1970s when it was first introduced (for example Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Korpela, 1989; Manzo, 2003; Speller et al. 2002; Twigger-Ross & Uzzel, 1996; Twigger-Ross et al., 2003). The critiques have mainly focused on the weak empirical and theoretical foundation for the place-identity construction.

Empirical and Theoretical Foundations

The construct of place-identity (Proshansky and colleagues, eg., 1978, 1983, 1987) is less well developed than the two other identity theories, from both an empirical and theoretical point of view (Bonaiuto et al., 1996; Speller et al., 2002). The hypotheses have not been adequately theorized to fit with general psychological theories of identity, nor do they describe the guiding principles for developing a place-identity. The five functions of place-identity described by Proshansky (1978) are not defined in relation to other identity categories, or other identity theories. It is not clear if these functions are seen as unique to place-identity theory or not. There has been a lack of empirical documentation to validate the theory. Empirical work has not yet been described in relation to place-identity, nor has empirical work been used to modify the concept (Twigger-Ross et al., 2003). This might be due to the difficulties posed by making the term operational. Research on identity and place has often used the place-identity theory as a heuristic starting point rather than a theoretical framework. Examples of this are Feldman's (1990, 1996) work on settlement identity, and Lalli's (1992) work on urban identity. Lalli (1992) also gives a critical review of psychological research on the "place-identity" concept, and describes the scarcity of empirical work and the problems with fragmented formulations, and lack of adequate instruments for measuring the concept. He also criticizes the place-identity theory for neglecting the social dimensions of identity. Even if the term "place-identity" is used (now mostly without a hyphen), it generally does not refer to the theory by Proshansky et al. (1978, 1983, 1987). Hull et al., (1994) examine the contribution of place to identity by using the term "place-identity" without Proshansky's theoretical constructions. "Place-identity" refers here to the contribution of place to one's identity through the meanings and values symbolized by place features. "Place-identity" seems to be used in general to describe a subjective feeling of identification with home and neighborhood (Twigger-Ross et al., 2003). The widespread use of the concept demonstrates, however, that there has been a need for such a term to describe the dimensions of identity with reference to the physical environment, but not necessarily a need for a theory that only explains the relationship between place and identity.

Social identity theory has traditionally treated place as neutral context. If place is in focus, it is treated either as social marker (a label providing group identity), or as symbol of an ideology or group (Speller et al., 2002). Spencer (2002) argues that the focus on place in environmental psychology should be seen as complementary and not in opposition to the standard social psychology approach to self and identity. If place is seen as a social category providing identity, social identity theory can easily include aspects of the physical environment and the meanings attached to it as well. Place-related functions can be mobilized to achieve positive self-esteem and place can also act as a trigger for identities to emerge (Twigger-Ross et al., 2003). Identity principles and coping strategies operating in the case of social identification with a group can be similar to those processes operating in relation to identification with place (Bonaiuto, Breakwell, & Cano, 1996; Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). Bonaiuto et al., (1996) used social identity theory to examine attitudes towards polluted beaches compared to place attachment. Denial of pollution was interpreted as a strategy used to cope with a threat to identity.
from an out-group. The stronger attachment people had to a place, the less they thought
about the negative aspects of the place (Bonaiuto et al., 1996). Social identity theory has
also been used to explain "sense of place" (Stedman, 2002), the symbolic meaning of
buildings (Sadalla & Sheets, 1993), attitudes towards environmental sustainability
(Carrus et al., 2006), and identification with place (Uzzel et al., 2002). However, not
enough research has been done to clarify whether identification with places always
happens in the same way as identification with groups. However, as early as 1950,
physical proximity had already been identified as a component supporting social
cohesion generating shared social identity (Festinger, Schacter & Back, 1950). For
example, social relationships in residential areas are seen as important for developing a
sense of belonging to a place (Gerson, Stueve & Fisher, 1977), illustrating that the link
between social cohesion and the place-aspects of identity is strong (Uzzel et al., 2002).

Place-identity theory (Proshansky et al., 1978, 1983, 1987) sees place as a part of self-
identity, a sub-identity together with categories like gender and social class. However,
Proshansky (1978) also realizes that some sub-identity categories have "physical world
dimensions" that help to define that identity. He sees the different self-identities that
characterize the various roles people play as a part of the total place-identity of each
individual. Breakwell's identity process theory sees place as part of many different
identity categories, because places contain symbols of class, gender, family and other
social roles. In other words, Breakwell's identity process theory consequently suggests
that we do not need a special identity theory to explain the influence place has on
identity. Place is a component of different sub-identity categories, and can be
incorporated in other psychological identity theories (Tigger-Ross et al., 2003).
Proshansky's place-identity theory would probably have accommodated research on
place in relation to identity more easily than other identity theories, but the theory would
have provided a less structured tool to examine the results than identity process theory
(Moore, 2002). In recent years, Breakwell's identity process theory has been developed
to examine the place aspects of identity. Speller et al., (2002) used Breakwell's identity
process theory to examine if changes in a spatial environment affected the process of
identity among residents in a community in transition. Breakwell's principles of
distinctiveness and continuity were documented in relation to place. Evidence was found
for the important role of place in maintaining and enhancing the principles of identity.
Other studies proving the relevance of Breakwell's identity process theory in relation to
place are Korpela (1989) and Devine-Wright & Lyons (1997). Breakwell's identity theory
has made social psychologists aware of the strong influence place has on identity
(Spencer, 2002; Moore, 2002).

Research on place and identity with a focus on home as a symbol of self has also been
conducted in accordance with psychoanalytic theories inspired by Freud and Jung
(examples are Arie & Hava, 1999; Marcus, 1995). The results have often been
overlooked among researchers in environmental psychology, due to environmental
psychology's origins in social psychology, where psychodynamic theories have little
space. As described in the introduction to this paper, these theories are often seen as
speculative, particularly in relation to research on place and identity (Pratt, 1981).

An Integrative Model--Place-identity as One of Many Identity Manifestations

The term "place-identity" has become popular and has clearly filled a gap in
environmental theory and research. The term is still used in the literature to emphasize
the physical environment's impact on identity, referring to a high degree of "place
attachment." As a theoretical framework, however, the place-identity theory (Proshansky
intellectual construction that is explanatory and testable. A theory can be verified and demonstrated to be useful only through empirical and practical use over time. It is difficult to translate the place-identity theory into a clear research agenda (Speller et al., 2002). Place is not a category of identity next to gender, social class, or family. Rather than being a separate element of identity, all aspects of identity will, to a greater or lesser extent, have place-related implications (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Places contain symbols of different social categories and personal meanings, and represent and maintain identity on different levels and dimensions. There is no social identity that is not also place-related and thing-related (Grauman, 1983). However, instead of defining place-identity as an identity category equal to gender, ethnicity, or social class on a vertical level as Proshansky et al. do, it is possible to think of place-identity as a dimension on a horizontal level, across other identity categories. How we communicate and read information about others and ourselves through environmental clues is only one aspect of how identity expresses itself. Identity communication is done both consciously and subconsciously on many levels. Identity might be examined in relation to how it is manifested through places and objects, in addition to how it is manifested through aspects such as behavior and dialect. Thinking of place-identity as a horizontal line in a matrix of identity manifestations and identity categories makes the term relevant. An example might be how social class is manifested through neighborhood and interior on a "place-level," and language and activities on other levels. However, to make a distinction between place (with both its physical and social meanings) and other dimensions of identity (verbal, behavioral, social) is not an easy assignment, and requires well-prepared analytical clarifications, as well as sophisticated empirical designs. If and how identity manifestations are separated, and the level of detail if they are separated, will be dependent on the focus of research (an example is shown in Figure 1). The categorization of "identity manifestations" is in addition dependent on a selected definition of place. According to a transactional view of settings, it is in any case essential to see the different factors in their mutual relationship to each other.

Conclusion

To summarize, Proshansky and colleagues (eg, 1978, 1983, 1987) made an important contribution to the environment-behavior field with their theory on place-identity. They stressed the physical environment as an important factor for identity and raised new questions (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). Nevertheless, it is also relevant to see the theory in relation to other identity theories with stronger theoretical and empirical founding. Even if place is not emphasized in identity theories in mainstream psychology, the constructions and models that are found in social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981, 1982) and identity process theory (Breakwell, 1983, 1986) can, as has been shown, also illuminate the relationship between place and identity. The "place-identity" term may nevertheless be relevant and seen as a part of other identity categories. Identity manifests itself on many levels, one of which is place.

[FIGURE 1 OMITTED]

Decades of theoretical debate in the field of environment-behaviour studies, the interrelation between the interdisciplinary social sciences and the built environment, has resulted in complex models and theories of the people-place relationship (Moore, 1997a, 2002). The use of identity theories that have been well tested in other psychological disciplines will narrow the gap between environmental and mainstream psychology, and research on environmental issues can compliment psychological identity theories with their focus on place. The social sciences of environment and architecture can benefit from research and theories on identity that have been established in other social
sciences. Identity has been particularly well explored in some of the social sciences, in particular psychology and sociology.

If the "identity" term is avoided in environmental studies, the same phenomena will be conceptualized in different terms. The connection between similar topics may thus be overlooked. If the relationship between identity and place is better understood and clarified, it may be easier to use the word "identity" in environmental research areas touching on this topic. It will benefit the field, both in a theoretical and practical manner, to have a framework for identity that has proven to be useful for research on place. Identity theories might be used to explain parts of research that pertain to the meaning of home, residential satisfaction, place attachment, territorial behavior, privacy and related topics. All disciplines were once new, and most disciplines have been influenced by and borrowed theoretical approaches and research methods from other disciplines. Over time, these theories and methods become integrated in the composition of a discipline. This is a slow, but natural process. "Interdisciplinary" and "transdisciplinary" are words that are fashionable in the academic world today. The hope is that researchers will be more interested in learning from other disciplines than in adhering to the boundaries of their own fields.

Because place has been ignored in psychological identity theories, and because studies based on Proshansky's place-identity theory have been few, there is a need for research that explores details related to place and identity. How well do social identity theory and identity process theory explain the influences place has on identity? Speller et al. (2002) argue that some of the deeper aspects of the function of place are left out if place is seen only as a social category. Places are not only contexts or backdrops, but also an integral part of identity. Even small architectural changes affect how a place facilitates different uses or attributes, such as social interaction, which thereby can also alter the meaning of a place. To different degrees, places can be nurturing or challenging in terms of personal and social identity (Speller et al., 2002). In what ways do social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981, 1982) or identity process theory (Breakwell, 1983, 1986) need to be developed further? Answering these questions will both broaden general psychological identity theories, and expand our knowledge of the meaning of place in the social sciences of architecture and environment.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Arnulf Kolstad, Gerda Speller, and two anonymous reviewers for comments on earlier drafts of this article.

References


Ashild Lappegard Hauge

Department of Architectural Design and Management, Faculty of Architecture and Fine Art, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway

Tel: 47 73 55 12 58; Fax: 47 73 59 53 59; Email: ashild.hauge@ark.ntnu.no

Received 23 March 2006; accepted 10 October 2006

(1) [The founding editor, Professor HJ Cowan, announced two innovations in editorial policy in the September 2005 issue (Vol 48.3). The first is based on an increase since the third quartile of the 20th Century in the study of the social aspects of architecture and therefore the openness of this journal to the submission of papers on the social sciences of architecture. The second is the publication of articles systematically reviewing recent work in a particular subfield of the journal’s coverage. This current article stretches the boundaries of ASR in both regards. Like all other submissions, the manuscript was blind refereed by two expert referees from different disciplines from the Editorial Advisory Board, both of whom initially recommended changes and, after the changes were made, recommended the paper be published. We invite our readers and subscribers to comment on the implementation of these two new policies. Please address the editor at asreeditor@arch.usyd.edu.au. Editor]