PLACE AND IDENTITY PROCESSES

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of place and identity processes using Breakwell's model as a framework. This model suggests that there are four principles of identity which guide action: continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy and distinctiveness. These principles are examined here in relation to attachment to a residential environment. It focuses on residents living in an area of the London Docklands, chosen because of the social, environmental and economic change in that area. It was hypothesized that attached respondents would discuss their relationship with the local environment in ways which supported or developed the identity principles whereas nonattached residents would not consider the local environment in this way. Twenty in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out on a sample of residents from Rotherhithe in the London Docklands. The interviews were transcribed and content analysed. Results showed that there were differences between the attached and nonattached respondents in their discussion of their local environment. In addition, there were differences within the nonattached group such that some residents were not attached and neutral with regards to their residential environment, whereas others were not attached but had a negative evaluation of their residential environment. These results are discussed within the identity process model framework.

Introduction

Despite the many studies using the concepts of and place identity (e.g. Lalil, 1992; Proshansky et al., 1983) place attachment (see for overview: Giuliani, 1991; Altman & Low, 1992) within environmental psychology, few have provided a clear and theoretically driven account of the relationship between place and identity. One particular criticism levelled specifically at Proshanky et al.'s (1983) model of place identity is that there is no account of what processes guide action in relation to identity (Korpela, 1989), and therefore no explanation of how or why places become salient for the self-concept. Within the social psychology of the self-concept there are theories about social identity, yet there is little theorizing about the role of place in identity. In this paper we discuss a study that used Breakwell's identity process model (1986, 1992, 1993) as a theoretical framework for organizing the research within environmental psychology, and subsequently empirically examined the relationships between place and identity. There has been a confusing array of terms used within environmental psychological literature to define a range of relationships between the physical environment and identity. In this paper we wish to address the question of whether existing identity theories can be used to explain this relationship adequately.

Following a critical analysis of current work on place and identity using Breakwell's framework, this paper presents data collected from a series of interviews carried out in order to investigate the degree to which emotional attachment to a residential environment functions to develop and maintain identity processes. The usefulness of the identity process model in explaining the relationship between place and identity is discussed together with the significance of this study for the identity process model.

Place and Identity

Overall, there are two ways in which place has been related to identity. The first is what we will call place identifications. This refers to a person's expressed identification with a place, e.g. a person from London may refer to themselves as a
Londoner. In this sense place can be considered to be a social category and will be subject to the same rules as a social identification within social identity theory. Hogg and Abrams (1988) suggest that social identity comprises different social identifications, any one of which will be come salient depending on the context. For Hogg and Abrams (1988), a social identification is defined as: ‘identity contingent self-descriptions deriving from membership in social categories (nationality, sex, race, occupation, sports teams . . .)’ p. 25. Place identification would express membership of a group of people who are defined by location. If this position is taken then place identification is a type of social identification. However, in taking this position then it could be said that the concept of place is subsumed into social identity and subsequently ignored. We would argue that the social identity approach can only account for part of the relationship between self and environment.

The second way in which place has been related to identity is through the term place identity, a construct promoted by Proshansky et al. (1983, 1987) which calls for a more radical re-evaluation of the construct of identity. He proposes that place identity is another aspect of identity comparable to social identity that describes the person’s socialization with the physical world. Since he takes a Meadian approach to the self there is an assumption that the processes operating between place and identity are the same as between groups and identity.

Rochberg-Halton (1981) gives a good account of how objects and places can become part of the generalized other and thereby incorporated into the self-concept. However, it is never made clear by Proshansky what the relationship is between these two aspects of identity. Whilst it may be possible to discuss the relationship between the physical environment and identity without reference to a group, to have two forms of identity would focus discussion on whether or not identity was more ‘social’ or more ‘place’. This would not seem to be useful in explanatory terms. In addition it contradicts environmental psychologists’ transactional perspective on place (Sageart & Winkel, 1990). We agree with Proshansky that there has been a neglect of the physical environment by self-theorists. We would, however, suggest that rather than there being a separate part of identity concerned with place, all aspects of identity will, to a greater or lesser extent, have place-related implications. In this paper we explore the extent to which an attachment with a place can function to support and develop aspects of identity. In order to do this, however, we feel that social identity theory is limited by the dominance of self-esteem as the only principle of identity. Instead we prefer to use Breakwell’s identity process model which proposes four principles of identity: self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness and continuity.

Identity process theory

Breakwell’s (1986, 1992, 1993) model of identity has its roots in the writings of James (1890) and Mead (1934). Breakwell (1986) proposes that identity should be conceptualized in terms of a biological organism moving through time which develops through the accommodation, assimilation and evaluation of the social world. The selection of information to be accommodated, assimilated and evaluated is governed by three principles: distinctiveness, continuity and self-esteem:

Three prime principles are evident: the two processes work to produce uniqueness or distinctiveness for a person, continuity across time and situation and a feeling of personal worth or social value (Breakwell, 1986, p.24).

More recently a fourth principle has been added: self-efficacy (Breakwell, 1992). This is a person’s perception of his/her ability to be effective in achieving his/her goals. Of importance to this research is the fact that social theory suggests that self-esteem is the only motivation for action with respect to identity (Abrams, 1992), whereas Breakwell (1986) gives equal status to continuity, distinctiveness and self-efficacy and does not regard this as an exhaustive list (Breakwell, 1993). What is striking about these principles is the similarities they have with Korpela’s (1989) work carried out on place and identity. He acknowledges that the use of the physical environment as a strategy for the maintenance of self has been accepted in the psychological literature (Fried, 1963), but he also criticizes Proshansky’s conceptualization:

Proshansky et al.’s (1978, 1983, 1989) opinion, experiences are somehow agglutinated and the result is the self of which place identity is a part, sub-identity in its own right. (Korpela, 1989, p. 241).

Korpela’s (1989), following Epstein (1983), provides some principles which could guide action. The three principles he defines are: the need to maximize the pleasure/pain balance, the need to maintain a coherent conceptual system and to the need to maintain a favourable level of self-esteem. The following section takes Breakwell’s four identity principles and reviews the literature within this framework.
Distinctiveness

The first principle of identity is the desire to maintain personal distinctiveness or uniqueness. Research into settlement identity (Feldman, 1990) and community identity (Hummon, 1990) has focused on the perceived distinctiveness associated with being a ‘city’, ‘town’ or ‘country’ person. This research suggests that distinctiveness summarizes a lifestyle and establishes that person as having a specific type of relationship with his/her home environment, which is clearly distinct from any other type of relationship.

In Hummon’s (1986) study, urban enthusiasts were adamant not only that they were ‘city’ people but were convinced of the benefits associated with living in the urban environment. These benefits were compared with the negative aspects of living in suburbia or the country. Not only did these aspects distinguish themselves as ‘city’ people, but their lifestyles were positively contrasted with the lives of those living in different settlement types. The distinctiveness felt by a ‘city’ person had a highly positive valence attached to it.

This ‘city’ identity represents a distinctive lifestyle usually coupled with a strong positive affect with regard to that lifestyle. Some people therefore, do seem to use a place related self-referent in order to present themselves as distinct from others.

In addition to settlement identifications, Lalli (1992) discusses specific place identifications:

- the bond to a particular part of town also contributes to one’s differentiation from residents in other town areas (Lalli, 1992, p. 25).

A resident’s association with a specific town or area of town people enables them to differentiate themselves from people from other parts of town. In one of the early studies of cognitive maps and neighbourhood image, Eyles found that aspirations to have an address in a fashionable part of London resulted in the bending of the perceived neighbourhood ‘boundaries’ so that the respondent’s address would be seen in Highgate Village (Eyles, 1968), creating an identification to which specific attributes were ascribed, e.g. ‘Highgate Village residents are smart, therefore if my address is Highgate Village, I too am smart’.

In summary, there is some compelling evidence that people use place identifications in order to distinguish themselves from others. In this sense place functions in a similar way to a social category and therefore place identifications can be thought of as comparable to social identifications.

Continuity

Breakwell (1986) suggests that a desire to preserve continuity of the self-concept is a second motivator of action. It is defined as continuity over time and situation between past and present self-concepts. Two distinct types of self-environment relationship which focus on the maintenance and development of the continuity of self are discussed in the literature: place-referent continuity and place-congruent continuity. Whilst these self-environment relationships are not mutually exclusive it is suggested that they are related to distinct patterns of residence.

Place-referent continuity is discussed by Czikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), Graumann (1983), Korpela (1989), Giuliani (1991) and Lalli (1992), who show that places act as referents to past selves and actions and that for some people, maintenance of a link with that place provides a sense of continuity to their identity. This is expressed concisely by Korpela:

The continuity of self-experience is also maintained by fixing aids for memory in the environment. The place itself or the objects in the place can remind one of one’s past and offers a concrete background against which one is able to compare oneself at different times . . . . This creates coherence and continuity in one’s self-conceptions (Korpela, 1989, p. 251)

In using the term place-referent continuity the physical environment is conceptualized as a reference for past action and experience. Research suggests this exists at both the individual and group level. Devine (1994) examines the role of historical sites in Ireland in the maintenance of national identity suggesting that historic places play a role in preserving the continuity of a group identity. At the individual level, Rowles (1983) showed that elderly members of an Appalachian community did not want to move as the environment reminded them of past, more active selves. Lalli (1988) found that the extent to which a town provides a person with continuity with his/her personal past was related to a general identification measure.

Hormuth (1990) discusses the role of relocation and self-concept change suggesting that choosing to move can represent self-concept change with the old place becoming a symbol of the old self and the new place representing an opportunity to develop new identities. In both these examples place is considered to be an active part of the construction of a person’s identity, representing continuity and change. Evidence that having control, or not, over the maintenance of continuity of place is important.
for psychological well-being comes most dramati-
cally from Fried (1963) and Speller (1988) who have
shown that unwanted and personally uncontrol-
lable change in the physical environment, resulting
in the loss of the principle of continuity, may cause
a grief or loss reaction. Such grieving can be long-
term as demonstrated in the study by Nanistová
(1994a, b) in which it was found that inhabitants of
a village who had been forcibly moved in order that
the valley could be flooded for a reservoir were still
distressed 40 years later. This work shows how the
principle of continuity can be useful in explaining
psychological issues surrounding forced relocation.

The second conceptualization of the way in which
the environment is used to maintain continuity of
the self-concept is place-congruent continuity. It
differs from place-referent continuity in terms of
specificity. Place-referent continuity refers to the
maintenance of continuity via specific places that
have emotional significance for a person, whereas
place-congruent continuity refers to the mainten-
ance of continuity via characteristics of places
which are generic and transferable from one place
to another. For example, a person may seek a place
felt to be congruent with his/her settlement identifi-
cation (Feldman, 1990), in order to preserve con-
tinuity of self as a specific type of person. That is,
people will look for places in which to live that seem
to represent their values. Graumann highlights
this:

For it is actually values which people esteem highly
and which they feel to be personified or objectified
in their objects of identification.' (Graumann, 1983,
p. 314).

In addition to choosing environments that are
congruent with self, the physical environment can
be modified in order to present present selves
(Duncan, 1973) and to present a new self. The
absences of place-congruent continuity can lead to
general dissatisfaction and possibly a desire to
leave an area to find another place to live which is
congruent with self (Feldman, 1990).

Overall, there is evidence that place is inextric-
cably linked with the development and maintenance
of continuity of self. Furthermore, the self can be
threatened by unwanted disruptions to emotionally
salient places.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to a positive evaluation of oneself
or the group with which one identifies; it is con-
cerned with a person's feeling of worth or social
value. The desire to maintain a positive conception
of oneself has been regarded as a central motive by
many writing about the self (e.g. James, 1890;
Gecas, 1982), specifically within social identity
theory (Tajfel, 1978; Hogg and Abrams, 1988;
Abrams, 1992). With regard to the environment,
Korpela (1989) shows how favourite environments
can support self-esteem. Children described the
sense of positive self-esteem they gained from being
in their own rooms during times of distress.

Through living in an historic town a person can feel
a sense of pride by association (Lalli, 1992; Uzzell,
1995). This differs from simply positively evaluating
a place, in that it suggests that person gains a boost
to his/her self-esteem from the qualities of the place,
i.e. 'I like Docklands' (evaluation) vs 'Living in
Docklands makes me feel good about myself' (self-
estem). It may be possible to evaluate a place posi-
tively but this may not impact upon one's self-
estem, though the two may be related.

Self-efficacy

This is defined as an individual's belief in their
capabilities to meet situational demands. It is used
as a measure of personal agency. Self-efficacy the-
ory was developed within the framework of social
learning theory (Bandura, 1977), and is regarded as
high when the individual believes s/he can perform
an act or complete a task. It follows that an individ-
ual would wish to maintain a reasonable level of
self-efficacy. This is increasingly regarded as
important for psychological well-being (Leibkind,
1992). With respect to the environment, we would
suggest that feelings of self-efficacy are maintained
if the environment facilitates or at least does not
hinder a person's everyday lifestyle. In the environ-
mental literature, Winkel (1981) discusses the con-
cept of manageable environments:

A manageable environment is one in which the resi-
dents of an area are able to organise information from
their immediate socio-physical environment in such
a way that they can develop a predictive system
that allows them to judge whether a setting sup-
ports their goals and purposes.

Living in a manageable environment means that
a person feels self-efficacious with respect to their
daily functioning in that environment. That is, they
believe that they are able to carry out their chosen
activities in that environment. We suggest that
when an environment is perceived as unmanage-
able it constitutes a threat to self-efficacy.

In conclusion, using these four concepts originat-
ing in social psychology but modified and developed
within an environmental context, it is suggested that:

1a. Respondents who are attached will express place identifications; they will distinguish themselves from others by these identifications.

1b. Those people who are not attached to the local area will express no place identifications or identifications not congruent with the local area.

2a. The local environment will be discussed by people who are attached in ways which maintain both place-referent and place-congruent continuity or promote conscious discontinuity of both types of continuity.

2b. Those people who are not attached to the area will have no sense of continuity with the local environment but may or may not have continuity with another place.

3. Respondents who are attached to the local area will express positive self-esteem from that attachment. Those respondents who are not attached to the local area will express negative or neutral self-esteem associated with their relationship with the area.

4. The local environment will be discussed in ways which show how manageable a person feels their local environment to be and that this will refer to the functional aspects of the environment, such as closeness to work and the evaluation of facilities such as shops and schools.

**Theory into practice**

The research context

The research presented here was carried out in the Surrey Docks, part of the redeveloped London Docks, England which is now referred to as London Docklands. The London Docks used to be one of the largest areas of docklands in the world. The reduction in world shipping and the decline of Britain as a maritime power led to the closing of most of the docks. Some of the Dockland sites were redeveloped in the 1980s in what was to become the largest urban redevelopment project in the world. Canary Wharf (see Fig. 1) became a symbol of the economic boom of the late 1980s when new offices and an influx of young, single, high earners contrasted with the remaining indigenous working class population and vestiges of pre-1970s industry. The former derelict sites on the south bank of the River Thames did not experience the scale of com-

![Figure 1. Map of the London Docklands.](image-url)
mercial development found, for example, at Canary Wharf. Nevertheless, in Rotherhithe the old docks were filled in, and new houses were built. These were marketed as desirable residences for the influx of an essentially middle-class population.

Surrey Docks was chosen for the research because it had experienced such massive social, economic and environmental change attracting a large amount of controversy (e.g. Newman & Mayo, 1983; Morris, 1992) which meant that there was an existing discourse about whose place it was and who belonged there (Morris, 1992). This was important for the research since place attachment is usually experienced at a largely unconscious level (Relph, 1976) so one approach to its study is to focus on areas of place disruption (Brown and Perkins, 1992). The redevelopment also meant that there were a range of inhabitants with a varying degrees of attachment to the same area and therefore contrasts could be made between attached and nonattached residents. This paper does not look directly at the ‘impact’ of the new development, rather the processes of identity within that area.

Sample. The sample consisted of 20 people chosen from respondents to a questionnaire which focused on place attachment (Twigger, 1992, 1994, 1995). These people were chosen because they fulfilled the criteria of ‘attached’ or ‘not attached’. The criterion of attached/not attached was decided by the respondents’ score on an Attachment Scale. A score corresponding to the mean or below was chosen as the cut-off criterion, those respondents higher than the mean were considered to be ‘attached’ and those below ‘not attached’. Ten respondents at each end of the scale were selected, with either very low or very high scores so that any differences would be emphasized.

Twenty respondents were contacted and 19 were subsequently interviewed in their homes. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 40 and 60 min. Semi-structured interviews were used because there were specific questions which had developed from two previous studies (an interview and a questionnaire survey) that the interviewer considered to be important to this stage of the data collection. Semi-structured questions allowed for the respondent to discuss his/her answers within a defined framework.

Interview schedule. The interview schedule consisted of six sections. The first section contained questions on the extent and nature of the respondent’s attachment/nonattachment to the local area e.g. ‘In the questionnaire you said that you were attached to the area. I wonder if you could tell me in what ways you are attached to the area.’

Section two focused on the issue of relocation. Respondents’ perceptions of the impact of relocation on their lives in particular and in general were discussed, together with the significance or not of becoming a homeowner. Respondents who had not relocated within the previous 10 years were asked to discuss the pros and cons of remaining in the same area for that length of time, e.g. ‘What do you feel are the advantages for you in having lived here for a long time?’

Section three comprised questions on the impact of the redevelopment of the Surrey Docks area on their lives with specific reference to the positive and negative consequences of the redevelopment for them, their social networks and the community as a whole e.g. ‘What impact has the new development had on your life?’ (asked if they had lived in the area prior to redevelopment).

The fourth section focused on an elaboration of the personal meaning of their settlement, place and local identifications. They were also asked if there were certain situations in which they would use a specific identification, e.g. ‘Are there situations when you would specifically use that label to describe yourself?’

In section five respondents were asked where they came from (it was known that they were not all native to the area and came from many different places from Southwark to overseas) and what perception they thought others had of Surrey Docks, e.g. ‘What sort of image do you think other people who do not live in this area have of it?’

Section six focused on the respondents’ expressed pride in the area and the positive and negative aspects of living in the area, e.g. ‘Would you say a bit more about what makes you feel proud/not feel proud about living here?’

Analysis

The transcripts of the interviews were analysed using the theoretical framework presented above. This might be classified as a ‘thematic analysis’ method, which aims to provide ‘a coherent way of organizing or reading some interview material in relation to specific research questions’ (Banister et al., 1994, p. 57). Henwood and Pidgeon (1994) eloquently describe the different epistemological assumptions and contradictions present within the now wide range of qualitative research approaches available. This research sits within an empiricist
framework that takes a 'broadly inductivist view that initial representations of social relationships can be discovered from detailed qualitative observations.' (Henwood & Pidgeon, p. 229). In order to establish whether or not expressing emotional attachment to the local area could be regarded as supporting identity principles, criteria were established to denote the four identity principles. The transcripts were read several times for evidence supporting or refuting the coding framework detailed below. In addition, the aim of the thematic analysis was to draw out the salient dimensions of the relationship with the local area for identity development and maintenance.

Distinctiveness. Hummon (1990) suggests that distinctiveness is confirmed when the respondent uses an identification to distinguish him/herself from others. In addition, Hummon (1990) showed that a ‘city’ enthusiast would describe him/herself with reference to other identifications, e.g. a ‘country’ person. In order for a response to be classified as referring to distinctiveness, two criteria were used: (i) confirmation by the respondent of the identifications expressed in the questionnaire, showing that s/he did use those categories in order to distinguish him/herself from others. (ii) The comparative use of identifications, e.g. defining him/herself as distinct from another type of person in the course of the interview.

Continuity. Evidence of continuity was expected to centre around the respondent’s residential history, his/her attachment to the area and relocation perceptions. Continuity, as noted above, can be divided into place-referent continuity and place-congruent continuity.

Place-referent continuity would be confirmed if the respondent showed how the environment functioned as a referent with which to relate past activities and selves to the present. For example attachment expressed as talking about the landscape as it was when s/he was younger.

Place-congruent continuity would be confirmed if the respondent’s discussion of his/her attachment centred around the integration or fit between the person and the environment. For example, feeling attached to the local area because the physical environment was their preferred type (e.g. city).

Self-esteem. Self-esteem was examined using the statement relating to pride in the area, taken from the questionnaire. Respondents had already expressed the extent to which they felt proud to tell people they lived in the area. In order for a response to confirm the role of self-esteem, the respondent had to refer to how living in the area gave them a positive feeling about themselves thus distinguishing it from being only a positive evaluation of the area.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was noted when the respondent referred to the ease (or not) with which s/he could carry out his/her daily life in that area. The content of answers classified as concerned with manageability was expected to be focused on facilities and functional aspects of the local environment.

Results

Characteristics of the sample

Of the 20 respondents contacted only 19 were available for interview during the time period (10 attached residents and nine nonattached). Twelve were female and seven were male. Ages ranged from 26 to 67 years with a mean of 42.3. Five respondents had been born in the local area (Rotherhithe). Two respondents had lived in their current house for less than a year, four had lived there for between 1 and 3 years, seven for between 4 and 7 years, two for 8-10 years and four for 11+ years.

Distinctiveness

From the Tables 1 to 3 it is possible to see that there are differences between the attached and nonattached residents in their pattern of identification. This is most marked at the local level and the place level, that is more attached than nonattached have place and local identifications.

Settlement identification. Of the attached respondents six of them had congruent settlement identifications, i.e. city, and they described the valued attributes of their settlement identifications in comparative terms as suggested by Hummon (1986).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Settlement identifications for attached and nonattached respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attached</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonattached</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Londoner</th>
<th>Rotherhithe</th>
<th>Downtowner</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonattached</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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### Table 3

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Not local</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Attached</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonattached</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I just like the hustle and bustle of London, I like to go to the country and stay but I like to get back to London, more to do... RN

we bought a cottage in Norfolk, I can go for a week or a fortnight but no longer, it's too quiet. BH

I think it would be too quiet [the country], I like it like this with things going on. DH

For the rest of the attached respondents who had other settlement identifications (i.e. country) there were three who had an idealized identification with the country and one who considered himself to be a town person. For the former group, the idealized identification although incongruent with their present surroundings did not appear to present any conflict for them, rather it expressed a feeling of escapism for them. The respondents who said he was a town person, considered the area of Rotherhithe to have a small town atmosphere and so it was congruent with his identification.

The nonattached respondents with noncongruent settlement identifications (i.e. country) also used a comparative technique to evaluate their current environment:

I find it difficult to tolerate the dirt, the noise, the busyness, the cars or the people, I like getting out... a lot of quiet. JG

the view is within three to four hundred yards. I have no wide outlook here and you know, when you get out into the countryside and suddenly you can see for miles and miles and miles. It's that element of broadening out that I like. MR

These two people were not living in place which they perceived to be congruent with their settlement identification. They were planning to leave in order to find places which would be more compatible with their settlement identification. Finally, there were two people who were not attached and had no settlement identification and they explained this by having had no childhood settlement identification and enjoying the best of the country and the city.

Place identification. The comparative technique was also used by attached respondents when talking about place identifications. The people who said that they were Rotherhithe people made a distinction between Rotherhithe and the other areas of Southwark, emphasizing the different types of people in those areas.

you only had to go past the Red Lion and they were Deptford people. BH

but you start going to Peckham, you are going into uncharted territory, into a different world, because once you get past the Old Kent Road and you have got Peckham. JL

How could you say you came from Catford, poxy Catford? JL

I think Rotherhithe and Bermondsey people are the same type of people, but you wouldn't associate yourself with Peckham and that's on the same sort of border. JC

A North Londoner is more quiet, I mean when I first came over here, I mean they used to swear and I thought, what have I let myself in for. DH

Only one of the attached interviewees did not class herself as a Londoner or a Rotherhithe person. She said she was 'a southerner' but felt that her identity was defined more by her class and lifestyle:

I identify myself by class and lifestyle, sort of left-tie, middle-class thinking person... Guardian reader. MS

Of those people who were not attached to the local area, three of them had identifications with other places: namely, Ireland, Scotland and Birmingham.

It can be said that, for these two people, they were living in places not congruent with their identifications. These people were planning to leave in order to find places which would be more compatible with a very different type of place identification. The Irish woman was planning to move to Eastbourne which she felt had similar qualities to the town in Ireland in which she grew up. For her, it was not important that she should go back to Ireland. In fact she said that she had been back to her home town and found it too quiet. More impor-
ant for her was to find a place that possessed the qualities she valued in her hometown.

Two of the interviewees who were not attached to the local area did have place identifications. Both of them said that they were Londoners. For one, it was the city of London with which she specifically identified and for her it was enough to be anywhere in London.

I've just literally in the last two or three weeks looked at flats and I've gone straight over to Tooting and put a deposit on a flat over there and I know nothing about Tooting . . . but I like to live in London. JP

For the other person his identification as a Londoner did not mean that he felt he had to stay in that area or London necessarily. It was more a statement of who he was rather than an expression of his relationship with the local environment.

The rest of the nonattached interviewees did not have any identification with either place or settlement.

Local identification. With respect to a local identification 11 of the respondents said that they were local people (all the attached people and one nonattached). When they discussed the reasons why and the significance of it for them, their responses centred on the importance of recognizing people and being recognized themselves, i.e. being distinguished from others.

I think when you get involved in area things going on, you tend to, people think of you as a known face, out. EC

knowing people and knowing where you are . . . you're talking to somebody and they say, Oh I used to know her mum and whatever. MO

because we know people, we recognize people, and in the shops they are very good at getting things for you, they are very good you know. SS

Amongst those people who did not feel local to the area there was a desire to feel local; it was something that they felt they would like to achieve in another place. This was also true of the nonattached respondents without any settlement or place identifications. They felt that they did not have any place or settlement identification because they had lived in many different places.

Not local to anywhere, I think if you've moved and married away from home and then moved after that, and then teamed up with someone, the roots, there is not time for roots to go anywhere . . . GG

I'd only feel that I came from somewhere if I'd lived there a hell of a long time or had kids here or something. PW

Personal distinctiveness. All the above identifications are considered as social categories. Distinctiveness related to identification will relate to some degree to the person's relationship with the other people who defined themselves as 'city', therefore it is related to a group identification. In addition to this group distinctiveness, there were expressions of personal distinctiveness relating to the length of time spent in the area. Two people who had lived in the area prior to the redevelopment expressed a feeling of uniqueness because they had stayed in the area and watched it change from a slum to a desirable residential area:

I can remember what a crap place I was in. J L

I've enjoyed seeing it change, the change, when I was young this was a dirty place, with all docks and the wharves, and that noisy and all that but now it's quiet . . . someone who moved away for five years would come back and they wouldn't recognize it, completely different. RN

In addition three people who moved in early on in the development also expressed a feeling of uniqueness:

and it was quite good because here we were one of the first to move in and that gives you a bit of an edge, cos you can say to them, tell them what's what. EC

Well it has been very interesting seeing if change, I think a lot of the new people haven't got the community spirit that we had in the first place . . . with one or two exceptions I am one of the older residents. HB

It's been nice being one of the first people, seeing it grow up around us. DH

Distinctiveness was achieved by inhabitants at both a spatial and temporal scale. First, attached residents expressed distinctiveness on three levels of environmental scale: settlement, place and locale. Second, distinctiveness could be achieved by differentiating oneself from others on a temporal scale: e.g. before and after the redevelopment. In terms of the questions posed at the end of the introduction, both attached and nonattached respondents expressed settlement identifications, but were differentiated by the congruency of those settlement identifications with the locale. The attached respondents were more likely to have a settlement identity that is congruent with the locale. Unexpected was the concept of idealized settlement identifications. For those people with an idealized settlement identification place and local identification seemed to be more salient than settlement identifications. As predicted there were those nonattached respon-
Continuity

Continuity, it will be recalled, can be sub-divided into place-congruent continuity and place-referent continuity.

Place-congruent continuity is the ‘fit’ between the environment and the residents’ desires and values. This was expressed in two ways. For the 10 respondents who were attached there was a tendency to compare their local environment with a specifically valued place that they had once lived in, mentioning both physical and social features of that environment.

Two other people considered the local area in terms of general qualities that they valued. Of those respondents who were not attached but had identifications with other places there was a desire to find places to complement those identifications. This was illustrated by two people describing their feelings of not fitting in with the environment, specifically the social environment. One woman had come to a mixed tenancy block of flats in the area, with the intention of getting involved in the area, but has been unable to do so. She found that she did not get on with the local people and found the facilities to be poor.

I have a lot of difficulties relating to the locals, you have to fit in with them, rather than the other way round and that becomes a bit difficult when you have, you know there is an awful lot of racist feeling in Rotherhithe and there are all sorts of tests being carried out if you get invited into a house of someone, genuinely a lot of racist talk. . . . JG

Another woman found similar conflicts between her values and those expressed by the local population. She had moved to the area as an investment. As a result of her experience she said that she would be very careful about choosing the next place she moves to.

the local people, I find are very insular and cliquey, they are not what I would call friendly by any stretch of the imagination and they seem to share a common attitude which is one that I don’t personally share. . . . there have been no, up until recently there have been no recreational facilities. . . . there’s nothing. JS

Continuity expressed by attached and nonattached respondents (note it was possible for a respondent to express all of these constructs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Place congruent</th>
<th>Place incongruent</th>
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<td>3</td>
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unloaded and sit and the odd occasional crate would fall over, we'd be over there like a shot, potatoes that's next week's potatoes and we'll have the athers because there's oranges coming. J L

One interviewee said how he would be devastated if they closed the 'pie and mash' shop up the road, even though he had not been there for a long time. He identified himself as a Bermondsey boy and for him this shop represented the part of Bermondsey with which he identified.

One of the people who was not attached to the area did express a lack of place-referent continuity:

I was born overseas, so I don't feel attachment to anywhere, because I was born in Libya, so I don't know, maybe if you could say you were born in that hospital you could say you were more attached. PW

For those two residents who were not attached and had no identifications, continuity of place did not seem to be important to them:

I don't feel a particular need to be rooted to a place. I'm more of a snail, I carry my shell around with me. GG

Finally, there was evidence that where people had changed their residence this represented a new beginning and a break from the past. Two people had moved to their own place after divorce:

Oh I was thrilled with it, starting from scratch . . . JP

that was a wonderful feeling, somewhere stable to live after all those years of instability . . . I loved moving here, having my own home, I could do what I wanted with it. HB

One person was intending to move with his new partner. Unfortunately she died before they moved:

the house belonged to Clare and her family and I teamed up with Clare. We didn't mind living there on our own in her family house but we needed a fresh start and she died unfortunately . . . GG

One respondent described how he and his wife had moved away from another area because they could no longer be councillors due to his new job in which he had to be politically neutral.

because I hold a politically restricted job in local government now, I couldn't stand and we decided to move . . . let's go somewhere else . . . rather than stay attached to the area you've been involved in for 15 to 20 years, otherwise you are going to get pangs.

'cos you can't do what you wanted to do . . . let's go and change everything. BH

These represent people who consciously changed their environments in response to life events in order to start anew.

Overall, there was evidence for the expression of place-referent and place-congruent continuity in residents' relationships with the local environment. It was particularly noteworthy that the symbolic role of the local environment was highly salient for many inhabitants. This was exemplified by the tendency of inhabitants to equate the physical relocation with a psychological relocation. Both attached and nonattached residents expressed the significance of their residential environment to their self-concepts.

Self-esteem

Overall, the attached residents expressed many different ways in which their relationship with the local area impacted positively on their self-esteem, whereas the nonattached respondents expressed a narrower and more negative range of impacts.

Two people, when explaining why they felt proud of the area, talked about the changed in the area. It made them feel good to see the area which they had known for years become a desirable place to live.

down here before it was a slum, it really was, although you wouldn't admit it . . . it was bad, since this has been done everything's new and it's all been tidied up, it's nice. RN

It's mine, I own part of it, I've helped somewhere along the line, I've shared the crap. J L

Several people discussed the status attached to living in Docklands. There were mixed feelings as to whether they would associated themselves with it since there is a difficulty with people thinking Docklands is only north of the river. One person expressed how she did use the name to give her some kudos with her workmates:

working in Kensington obviously they look down their noses a bit and to be able to say in the early days, "Oh well I'm moving to Docklands" was throwing it back at them . . . HB

Further, one respondent expressed how moving to her new home enhanced her self-esteem at the personal level:

getting the keys to this place was a great feeling, I had actually achieved something. HB

There was some evidence for the physical qualities of the place providing positive self esteem. One

<table>
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<td>Self esteem</td>
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woman felt her spirits lift when she went for a walk in the area:

When I get lonely in the flat I can just go out and be walking around and I feel better. JP

Visitors’ perceptions of the area were also expressed in terms of self-esteem:

I think generally people who come to visit me and haven’t been before are surprised . . . pleasantly so at the green. MS

It’s nice, if you want to invite people, it’s a nice place to bring your friends. BH

The people who were not attached fell into two distinct groups, those who liked living in the area but were moving on, and those for whom it was not a pleasant experience to be living there. For the former group the local area was not expressed as central to their identities. The latter group expressed their feelings of dissatisfaction and a strong desire to leave the area. One woman expressed how she used the negative aspects of the place in a way that boosted her self-esteem:

I think I take a terrible satisfaction in telling them how awful it is, because most of the people I work with are living in quiet little garden suburbs, the extent of the depravity is people leaving the occasional bottle . . . it’s my way of coping. JG

These results suggest that for the attached respondents living in an area which is congruent with their values and desires enhances their self-esteem. From the comment made by the respondent who was not attached and positively disliked the place, it was important for her to salvage some positive feelings in terms of the self-presentation of her residential location. The two respondents who were not attached and felt negatively about the local area, positively identified with other places which had the effect of highlighting their discontent about their present residence.

Self-efficacy

There were a variety of aspects of environmental manageability such as the existence of crime, the standard of public services, pollution levels or racial mix that were important to both attached and unattached respondents. It was therefore appropriate to list the numbers in each group who mentioned which aspect (see Table 6). For some people these were tolerable but for others they created tensions even to the extent that they had contemplated leaving the area.

The attached people made more reference of the manageability of the environment:

convenience for everything, getting to work, schools, leisure centre, library, shops, I mean everything we do or got to in an average week is within walking distance. EC

it’s easy to move around London, it’s ideal from most points of view and it’s handy for work. BH

Both attached and nonattached respondents gave examples of situations that threatened the manageability of their daily lives, such as crime, services, pollution and the social environment. These were the areas which people discussed in answer to the questions about the costs and benefits of living in the area. In addition these topics were mentioned as areas which could cause the breakdown of manageability with a result that they may have to leave the area.

First, in respect of crime and safety, two people had been burgled. For one nonattached person crime was becoming an increasing problem for her:

I don’t like the idea that you have to lock your cars at night, you have to make sure you are secure from burglars and the sheer business of living and getting to work takes so much time, that you have about an hour to yourself, it’s exhausting. JG

One other person felt that it was not possible to go away and leave her house because she felt sure she would get burgled. She felt there had been a rise in crime and it was one of the reasons she would like to leave the area.

Everyone mentioned the poor public transport system. There was also general agreement that there were few entertainment facilities in the area. However, the lack of secondary schools in the area was a problem for one man who felt attached, and he argued it may be a reason to leave the area even though he was reluctant to do because he had lived there most of his life.

Pollution too was an issue. One person mentioned the air pollution through dust:

There is an incredibly high rate of asthma in this area and on the other side of the river . . . and my eldest one has got asthma and my wife has developed it. BH

<table>
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<th>Issues of environmental manageability</th>
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<td>Bad public services</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racial tension</td>
<td>2</td>
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For him this might mean that he would leave the area. Noise pollution was experienced by one of the respondents:

- but the neighbourhood is being spoiled in my view by the large number of young people living here with loud music machines, our neighbours next door drive us mad ... get drunk and play loud music at 4 o'clock in the morning. GG

He was leaving the area for a home in France.

Finally, the social environment or more specifically changes in the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood. Many of the respondents commented on the increased number of Black people who have been moved into this area by the local authority. It was felt that this would be a major issue in the next few years:

- it will be [a big issue] towards the end of this and next year, I mean you go down there in the mornings, I'm not prejudiced but, you drive down there in the mornings and that's all you see at the bus stop, they've got to live somewhere I suppose. RN

- you never got any blacks around here because there weren't no houses, now there are houses Christ knows what is going to happen in two years time, powder keg ... they are getting the blacks with chips on their shoulders. JL

The people who were not attached to the area expressed both positive and negative opinions about the manageability of the area:

- easy access straight in and being able to wander around . . . the shops are brilliant. JP

- now that they have a set of shops out here it's a very very convenient spot, short walk to the tube, short walk to the shops, short walk to the park. GG

- we've got a limited shopping facility at Surrey Quays and everything else has failed. JG

Both groups discussed the local area in positive and negative terms. Manageability did not, on its own, clearly differentiate the two groups but it seemed to have the potential to be the 'last straw' for nonattached people with no continuity and incongruent settlement and place identifications. The main difference between the attached and nonattached was the ability to leave the area in the face of a threat to their feeling of manageability. Not surprisingly, for the attached respondents this was a more difficult decision to make than for the nonattached respondents.

Discussion

Overall, the results provide evidence for the use of the residential environment in the maintenance and development of identity processes. There was evidence that holding specific settlement identifications was used to gain positive distinctiveness over people identifying with other settlements. This was exemplified by the 'city' people negatively labeling the qualities of the country, e.g. the peace and quiet, which are valued by 'country' people. As suggested by Hummon (1986), the settlement identification represented a framework through which perceptions of other settlements and their qualities were evaluated.

A similar mechanism was apparent at the place identification level. People who identified with Rotherhithe, positively distinguished themselves from residents of the surrounding areas, such as Peckham. At the level of defining oneself as local or not, there was a bias towards wanting to be labelled as local and wanting to belong. Again nonlocals were defined as different, nonparticipants and short-term residents. Previous work has not examined the different levels of identification.

It was also found that not all levels of place identification were salient for all the respondents. For those people who had lived in the area all of their lives, place and locale were salient but not settlement. If, as Feldman (1990) suggests, identifications are used to categorize and order the environment, then it is reasonable to assume that the categories must have a salience for the individual at the appropriate scale of settlement. In order to achieve distinctiveness whilst living in one neighbourhood for a length of time, it is more salient to compare yourself with the surrounding neighbourhoods than with a different settlement. This raises the issue of environmental scale in relation to the salience of specific identifications. As a general rule, the further away a person is from his/her home, the more general an identification will be used. For example, if a person is in a foreign country s/he is likely to use his/her nationality as her/his identification, whereas someone from London may call themselves a Londoner when they are in the North of England. Distinctiveness then is achieved within the constraints of the appropriate environmental scale.

There was evidence for the establishment and use of place in the maintenance of continuity of self and the use of place to create, symbolize and establish new selves. There was also evidence for place-referent continuity: the landscape is used as a memorial to the person's past. For the two widows, remaining in the area was a link with their dead husbands. For one, the area held the memory of their marriage. In this way it could be said that the place
acted as a focus for memories that they wished to preserve (Rowles, 1983; Korpela, 1989). For others, the ability to point out where s/he had grown up acted as a symbol of continuity with the past and the future: the existence of a familiar building confirmed his/her existence as a young person.

As well as the conscious preservation of continuity amongst the respondents there was evidence of conscious discontinuity (Hormuth, 1990). In these cases a new environment was chosen to mark a new stage in life. One woman’s new house, for example, represented her new life as a single woman after divorce. It stood for something she had achieved without her husband’s assistance. This supports the proposition that place is used in the active construction of identity (Hormuth, 1990) as opposed to its function as backdrop to experience.

There was some evidence for place congruent continuity in the people who expressed dissatisfaction with the area. For them the image of the environment was not congruent with their image of themselves. They did not feel able to belong to an area where the people and the facilities did not represent their values and aspirations (Feldman, 1990). For these people it was necessary for them to live in a place which they felt to be congruent with their values.

Place was also used to maintain positive self-esteem. This is closely associated with distinctiveness. There was evidence of positive self-esteem through association with a ‘prestigious’ place (Lalli, 1992). One women described how she used her association with the Docklands to present herself in a positive fashion. In addition, the association with London was regarded as a positive one, linking a person to activity, and the ‘heart’ of the country. In this sense, self-esteem was maintained through the symbolic qualities of the place.

There was some evidence for the actual physical qualities of the place providing positive self-esteem. In addition, inhabitants’ self-esteem was enhanced by the positive feedback given to them by visitors to the area about their residential location.

In this study manageability was operationalized at a basic level, ostensibly denoting the extent to which the environment facilitated everyday life. Clearly for some people, given their values and aspirations, the environment was not manageable. These people found the level of crime, noise and the lack of services unacceptable, and leaving was their preferred option.

Finally, those people who were not attached seemed to fall into two main groups: those who were attached to other places and those who expressed no place attachment. For the former group having an attachment elsewhere had a negative effect on their identity processes mainly resulting in a desire to leave the area. For the latter group, either place attachment was not salient for them at this stage of their lives or they had never felt any need for a place attachment (Giuliani, 1991).

It was suggested in the introduction that this study may help to clarify the role of place in identity and to illuminate aspects of the identity process model. The framework of distinctiveness, continuity, self-efficacy and self-esteem has clarified the meanings and role emotionally salient places have for a person’s identity. This work has provided some evidence for the salience of place identifications to a group of residents and suggests that these identifications function in similar ways to other identifications. In terms of social identity theory it suggests that place identifications are a legitimate addition to the existing range of identifications. Further, this work provides some evidence for the relationship between place and identity which has implications for social psychological theories of identity. Specifically, it suggests that identity processes have a dynamic relationship with the residential environment. The development and maintenance of these processes occurs in transactions with the environment. In acknowledging this, the environment becomes a salient part of identity as opposed to the merely setting a context in which identity can be established and developed. However, identity process theory needs to be able to account for those residents who did not express an identification or attachment to any place or settlement. On the other hand it can be suggested that there may be stages when attachment to place and identity become more salient, and that some of the respondents fall into that category. However, as Giuliani (1991) argues, there are people for whom these identifications do not seem to be salient. One suggestion is that in respect of location, these people identify themselves more strongly with being travellers or nomads. Their identity is still defined in terms of location, in the sense of moving as opposed to remaining in places. Taking this further, we suggest that all identifications have location implications, place is part of the content of an identification. This is an important contribution to current theories of identity which tend to present identity as disembodied from the physical environment.

Breakwell’s (1986) identity process theory was designed to examine threats to identity. In this research there was an implied disruption of identity...
because of the disruption of the place. This link needs to be examined more systematically in order to gain a closer understanding of the relationship between identity and change in the physical environment. Under what conditions of change to the physical environment do people perceive a threat to identity. This research has focused on the residential environment. Further work could examine the salience of other important environment and identity settings, such as the workplace.

Notes

(1) As part of an earlier study (see Twigger, 1994 for details) the interviewees had completed a postal questionnaire concerning their experience of living in the local area. This questionnaire included a Place Attachment scale of 20 items (α=0.86).

(2) The interviewer was female, white and 26 years old.

References


