

HOME AS IDENTITY: PLACE-MAKING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF OLDER PERSONS

Laura L. Lien

Abstract

The need for appropriate and affordable housing among all individuals is severe, regardless of age, sex, income, race, or ethnicity. The need for such housing is particularly great, however, among the elderly population as they tend to face significant changes in their housing status as they continue to age. Current housing options available to the elderly are neither vast nor favorable, as a significant portion of this population would identify "aging in place" as their ideal housing preference. The reality of aging typically includes a new or continued need for acute or permanent care, emotional and physical support, and appropriate and affordable shelter, which characteristically eliminates the option of growing older in current locales. This review of literature aims to explore links between four theoretical frameworks surrounding the concept of "housing as identity" in order to create a better working definition of an individual's self-proclaimed meaning of home and place that can influence research, the design of housing, and programs for older adults. Determining how identities are formed and perpetuated within a home setting has implications on how housing is created and developed to influence a better future for individuals as they age. Since housing preferences within the aging population often point to the ideal of "aging in place," the concept that allows individuals to maintain their habits, routines, memories, and daily activities makes the focus of "home as identity" a feasible, warranted, and necessary course of research.

Introduction

Home as a sense of identity implies various meanings in research of the built environment. Historically, there has been a significant amount of research geared toward current and future housing strategies. Lacking is the

Laura Lien is a graduate student seeking her M.S. in Housing Studies, Department of Design, Housing, and Apparel, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN. This paper originally received the 2008 Tessie Agan Graduate Paper Award from the Housing Education and Research Association (HERA) and was presented at the 2008 HERA Annual Conference in Indianapolis, IN.

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linkage between the two areas based on the occupants, their outlooks and feelings, as well as their physical, emotional, and psychological needs within the residential built environment. Determining how identities are formed and perpetuated within a home setting has implications on how housing is created and developed to influence a better future for individuals as they age. Since housing preferences of the aging population often point to the ideal of “aging in place,” the concept that allows individuals to maintain their habits, routines, memories, and daily activities makes the focus of “home as identity” a feasible, warranted, and necessary course of research.

Most research related to home identity stems from a theoretical point of view. Environmental psychologists, including Gustafson (2001), Manzo (2003), Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996), and Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) have a firm grip on the notion of place-identity, albeit encompassing different viewpoints. Previous theories describing how people relate to their home environment have focused only on sense of place, place attachment, place dependence, or place identity as separate entities instead of looking into how they are interrelated. Although these points of view “address people’s relationships to places, the exact connection between them remains unclear or their application in research does not fully embrace all of the important dimensions of people’s emotional relationships to places suggested by their definitions” (Manzo, 2003, p. 47). The purpose of this paper is to explore links between four theoretical frameworks to link important concepts from each theory. The objective is to create a better working definition of an individual’s self-proclaimed meaning of home and place that can influence research, as well as the design of housing and programs for older adults.

Theories Surrounding Identity and its Relationship to Home

Identity is a complex notion that contains different concepts, thoughts, and theories. Although researchers have determined a working definition of place-identity that includes the relations and contributions of home, their theories surrounding this consensus vary greatly. When combined and explored side by side, connections can be formed bridging the formerly separate theories to create the overlying concept of home as identity. Pulling a number of design implications and principles from these concepts will help

designers, planners, developers, and policy makers further their conception of appropriate and adequate housing for aging individuals. The following examples highlight prime examples of meaning of place theories that help establish connections between identity and self for future research and design.

Gustafson's Three-Pole Triangular Model (Sense of Place and Place Dependence Concept)

The place meaning model formed by Gustafson (2001) encompasses the varying levels of environmental dependence that one experiences through the life cycle. In Gustafson's research, three concrete identity groups were determined—self, others, and environment—the three identity groups that were combined to form the Three-Pole Triangular Model. Although this theory includes only three poles, it provides a spectrum type model within which individuals' experiences may fall. It also helps to describe how those experiences, according to their location within the model, might determine a sense of place.

However, even Gustafson (2001) gives clear warning about interpreting the model, individual experiences and the meanings attached to places often fall within the three poles. His increased observations of this concept found that an individual's expressed meaning of place tended to situate between the three poles of self, others, and environment instead of belonging to only one category. The three poles were then expanded to relate to the varying spectrum of identity, including self, self-others, others, others-environment, environment, environment-self, and self-others-environment. Gustafson (2001) defined the poles and interim space in the following manner:

Self: Relates to an individual's life path. This path is directly associated with their roots/continuity, experience/memory, security/sense of home, activity, and self-identification.

Self-Others: Points to a place having meaning due to an individual's relationship with others living there. These ties build their sense of community, recognition, and/or anonymity.

Others-Environment: Finds that meaningful relationships found within the atmosphere, climate, street-life, or alternate location may be associated with a particular type of inhabitant.

Environment: Discusses the various types of surroundings and how they relate to a person's sense of place. Sense of environment and its relation to place dependence is influenced by the physical, symbolic/historical, and institutional environments, along with place description, type of place, and location.

Environment-Self: Deals with an individual's familiarity with the physical environment and how they have personally shaped their own space. The environment has meaning to a person through the offerings of various types of opportunities it provides (e.g., personal development, citizenship, localization).

Self-Others-Environment: Involves all three poles working together to include an individual's traditions, festivals, anniversaries, and membership in defined associations/organizations.

Overlying the model is the determination that "a meaningful place appears as a process, where various individual (and collective) projects converge and/or compete with other projects, with external events, and with the course of time" (Gustafson, 2001, p. 13) in order to create, maintain, and sustain a sense of place and dependence within an environment. In general, the model begins to highlight how an individual's surroundings help define who they are and how they depend on place through the physical environment across a broad spectrum of locales. For a place to have meaning it must be distinctive and identifiable to the individual; "[it is] not only about establishing the uniqueness of the place, but also about categorization, about telling what kind of place it is and thus what it has in common with other places" (p. 13). It also must have a particular value to the person, be continuous, connected to the person's life trajectory, and able to withstand change; "over time, places may acquire new meanings... [therefore] place and meanings of place stand forth as an ongoing process... respondents take an active part in the process of giving places meaning" (Gustafson, 2001, p. 13).

In summary, Gustafson's Three-Pole Triangular Model (2001) most closely ties to the sense of place and place dependence concepts, showing how individuals connect to their surroundings and come to depend on the continuity that environment provides. Because an individual's sense of place and dependence on that environment are crucial to developing meaning within place, this theory has a stake in the future of research surrounding home as identity.

Manzo's Affective Relationships to Place Theory (Place Attachment Concept)

Manzo's (2003) theory highlights how place attachment not only stems from the physical house, but also the surrounding environment. This focus helps define how the house becomes a home and cultivates a sense of emotional attachment for the individual maintaining residence. Manzo studied relationships to place across a broad spectrum of locales by examining both the residence and how it interrelates to the neighborhood, community, city, and environments outside the physical walls of the home. The home alone is not sufficient enough to understand place attachment, rather the "dynamic interplay between the residence and places outside of it...[become a] critical aspect of people's emotional relationships to places" (p. 52).

Manzo's (2003) research incorporates four concepts explaining how an individual relates to place and forms an attachment within that environment. According to Manzo, affective relationships to places:

- Encompass a broad range of physical settings and emotions.
- Are an ever-changing, dynamic phenomenon.
- Are both unconscious and conscious.
- Exist within a larger socio-political milieu. (p. 48)

The first concept of Manzo's (2003) theory explains how relationship to place influences identity through a broad range of physical settings and emotions. "Relationships to places can be a means through which we consciously express our worldview and explore our evolving identity...people actively engage with places and the creation of meaning, and in doing so, can consciously foster relationships to place" (p. 53). Tuan (1977) further validates Manzo's theory: "what begins as undifferentiated 'space' evolves into

'place' as we come to know it better and endow it with value. Emotion links all human experiences so that place can acquire deep meaning through 'the steady accretion of sentiment'" (p. 33).

Manzo's (2003) second concept describes how place attachment changes over time, depending on life circumstances and an individual's life path. Manzo elaborates by explaining how places alter one's emotional connections:

Places become meaningful as transitional markers or symbols of critical life events, such as a benchmark in a significant relationship (either positive or negative), as well as in simpler moments of reflection. They are often places to which people intentionally return because of the events that they symbolize and the meanings that they hold (p. 53).

This aspect of Manzo's theory has implications for the concept of home as identity for aging individuals, as this population often experiences new home environments later in life.

Manzo's (2003) third concept showcases attachment as either a conscious or unconscious process. Place attachment within the built environment is often fostered on an unconscious level. Attachment to place is often formed by both the built environment itself (which we tend to attach to on a conscious level) and the events, activities, memories, and relationships created within those walls (within which we attach an unconscious identity). Manzo states that "places that provide comfort and security tend to be places with which we are familiar, so we may be attached to them on an unconscious level" (p. 53).

The fourth concept in Manzo's (2003) theory describes the socio-political milieu that defines people, therefore describing their place identity. "Identity is shaped by our interactions with the world and the messages that we receive about ourselves from others. Our relationships to places are influenced by who we are, with all of the political implications of this identity" (p. 54). Historically, particular groups of people with varying cultural, racial, religious, and economical backgrounds will continue to perpetuate similar identifications and attachments throughout their life cycle. In essence, a portion of individuals' identity relates to their political and social experiences

within their home and surrounding environments.

Manzo (2003) also determined that individuals attach to environments and choose certain surroundings for particular reasons. Place attachment is more likely to develop in environments that are congruent with an individual's self-concept, provide a sense of community, help meet goals of everyday life, have a relationship to nature, meet the demands and events of everyday life, address personal needs, and facilitate self-development. Manzo's ideas most closely relate to the place attachment concept which also has implications for research linking home as identity. The more attached individuals become to their home environment the more likely they are to identify with similar surroundings later in life.

Twigger-Ross and Uzzell's Theory on Breakwell's Model (Place Identity/Attachment Concept)

Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) used an alternate model originally created by Breakwell (1986, 1992, & 1993) to further determine how place relates to an individual's sense of identity and attachment to place. Four principles of identity related to place were generated through Breakwell's research: distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Breakwell's identity process model "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" (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, p. 206). Essentially, the identity process model created by Breakwell states that individuals learn from their environment and utilize their competence to form identity in relation to their surroundings.

Based on Breakwell's previous theoretical research, Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) have further elaborated on these concepts to relate an individual's perceived sense of identity to the home environment:

Distinctiveness: Summarizes a lifestyle and establishes a specific type of relationship with the home environment, which is clearly distinct. "There is [evidence] that people use place identifications in order to distinguish themselves from others" (p. 207). People may use an association with a particular area

to further their identity in relation to other environments.

Continuity: Highlights “two distinct types of self-environment relationship which focus on the maintenance and development of the continuity of self: place-referent continuity and place-congruent continuity” (p. 207). Although separate ideas, these concepts work together to form an overall sense of continuity within an individual’s identity.

Place-Referent: Theorizes 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” (p. 207).

Place-Congruent: “Refers to the maintenance of continuity via characteristics of places which are generic and transferable from one place to another” (p. 208). In other words, people will look for places to live that seem to represent their values.

Self-Esteem: “suggests that person gains a boost to his/her self-esteem from the qualities of the place” (p. 208). Favorite environments, for example, can support the self-esteem of individuals, furthering their relationship to place.

Self-Efficacy: States that “feelings of self-efficacy are maintained if the environment facilitates or at least does not hinder a person’s everyday lifestyle” (p. 208).

An individual’s identity is often cultivated through his or her level of attachment to the environment (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Individuals attached to their surroundings will express place identifications and will distinguish themselves from others by these identifications. Individuals attached to their environment also maintain continuity, develop positive self-esteem from that attachment, and find the environment manageable and functional. Those not attached to their surroundings often lack identifications or form identifications incongruent with the local area, will not maintain a sense of continuity within place, will express negative or neutral self-esteem associated with their relationship to the area, and often find the environment

stifling, uncomfortable, and inflexible.

Twigger-Ross and Uzzell's (1996) theory describing an individual's attachment to the environment define an individual's sense of identity in significant ways. By combining Breakwell's identity process theories with place attachment, it is evident that the two theories are closely tied. One could conclude that place attachment and place identity are connected in significant ways. The more attached people are to their home environment, the more likely they are to identify with their surroundings and be happy with the locale. If individuals feel attached to the home environment, they are more likely to express a significant meaning of place related to that environment, therefore cultivating a greater sense of identity.

Physical and Social Environment Theory by Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff (Place Identity Concept)

The place identity theory created by Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) is one of the first comprehensive studies examining how an individual relates identity to both the social and physical environment:

The theoretical conception of place-identity as an individual's strong emotional attachment to particular places or settings is consistent with the broader conception of place-identity. Individuals do indeed define who and what they are in terms of such strong affective ties to 'house and home' and/or neighborhood and community (p. 61).

Environments often overlap with activities, routines, memories, and experiences to form an interrelated place identity which varies between individuals. Specific spaces within an environment seek to serve many purposes, relating identity in one location to other physical settings that have a different form of identity (Proshansky et al., 1983). Place identity can be contingent on a number of environments within an individual's surroundings.

This theory highlights place identity as a conscious and subconscious process:

Place-identity as a cognitive sub-structure of self-identity consists of an endless variety of cognitions related to the

past, present, and anticipated physical settings that define and circumscribe the day-to-day existence of the person. These cognitions are evolved through the person's selective engagement with his or her environment on both a conscious and unconscious level (p. 62).

Place identity is closely tied to self-identity as spaces become the location that identity forming processes take place (Proshansky et al., 1983). In that respect, one often consciously relates the social aspect of the space to the physical attributes that contribute to the social experience.

Place identity in a physical context is also tied to the social and cultural norms, behaviors, roles, rules, and regulations of the space (Proshansky et al., 1983). These concepts require individuals to behave in a particular manner, influencing the identity they associate with that particular environment. Behavioral identifications begin at an early age and perpetuate throughout the life cycle. A person may have a more complex attachment and sense of place depending on the amount of time they associate with the space. This may be especially true for aging individuals who have had many years of experience within particular environments.

Further elaboration of place identity theories highlight how concepts created by Proshansky et al. (1983) relate to an individual's creation, maintenance, and relation of identity to social and physical environments. Their research defines particular functions of place identity that describe how the thoughts, behaviors, and experiences of the individual define identity through physical environments:

Recognition Function: An individual's experience of environmental stability. The unchanging belief in the day-to-day physical world creates a "stability of place and space" which creates a continuing recognition. This recognition "of that world over time gives credence to and support for his or her self-identity" (p. 66).

Meaning Function: Indicates an environment's "intended purposes and activities in relation to its design" that an individual not only understands but also recognizes (p. 67).

Expressive-Requirement Function: Measures an individual's

response to the environment through tastes and preferences. When an individual's environment does not match, it initiates the expressive function of place identity. The requirement portion correlates to the implementation of the expressive need through the built environment. It "determines the more fundamental characteristics of a setting which are needed in order to carry out the activities meant to go on in that setting and thereby realize its purposes" (p. 69).

Mediating Change Function: Deals with cognition of "discrepancies between their place- identity and the characteristics of an immediate physical setting" (p. 70). Cognition defines the process of determining what needs to be done in order to change or reduce the discrepancy between the physical environment and an individual's place identity.

Anxiety and Defense Function: Explains the negative connotations that can surround an individual's environment. An individual's identity involves both what should and should not be in a space. The discrepancy between expectations of a setting and what the setting actually offers affect the place identity of the individual, creating negative feelings and avoidance of the environment. If the space is not conducive to an individual's perceived role within the environment, it can create adverse behaviors and feelings of anxiety and discomfort.

The place identity theory by Proshansky et al. (1983) provides thorough explanations of how individuals relate socially to their physical surroundings in order to form an identity. This theory explores in-depth concepts surrounding how place identity is created around an individual's sense of self. The relationship between social and physical identity helps explain the perplexities of an individual's place identity. This research has great implications in future studies surrounding home as identity; these concepts not only include the identity contained within the built environment, but also encompass the feelings, meanings, emotions, and relationships that are often overlooked in designing adequate and appropriate residential neighborhoods or communities.

Home as Identity, Drawing from Theory—What is Missing?

Past research focused on determining meaning within place has largely kept sense of place, place attachment, place dependence, and place identity as four discrete concepts. Theories such as Gustafson's (2001) Three-Pole Triangular Model and Manzo's (2003) Affective Relationships to Place Theory have attempted to identify connections between concepts. Each of the aforementioned theories plays a role in the development of an individual's sense of identity within home, as an identity is formed by all concepts interrelated to meaning in place.

Theorists have frequently focused identity as a social category, contingent on membership in particular social groups. However, identity also has a place component related to the constructs of attachment, sense of place, dependence, and identification within the physical world. All of the concepts work together to form an individual's sense of identity; the notion of self is not only social, but also includes implications within the physical contexts of place. Few examples of research related to identity link the built environment to the self. It is therefore "imperative to ask the question, 'what are the effects of the built environment?' not only in regard to the personality development of the individual, but also in terms of how he defines himself within society" (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 58).

Proshansky et al. (1983) determined a definition of place identity by focusing on the relationship between the physical and social environment :

The development of self-identity is not restricted to making distinctions between oneself and significant others, but extends with no less importance to objects and things, and the very spaces and places in which they are found. The subjective sense of self is defined and expressed not simply by one's relationship to other people, but also by one's relationships to the various physical settings that define and structure day-to-day life (p. 57-58).

This purpose led to their development of a very useful definition of place identity:

Place-identity is a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives. These cognitions represent memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes,

values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of behavior and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define the day-to-day existence of every human being. At the core of such physical environment-related cognitions is the 'environmental past' of the person; a past consisting of places, spaces and their properties which have served instrumentally in the satisfaction of the person's biological, psychological, social, and cultural needs (p. 59).

The place identity definition created by Proshansky et al. (1983) can be used to help define all types of physical environments, including the home, which becomes very static when working to create appropriate housing for aging individuals. Since all settings do not carry the same meaning among all individuals, the study of home as identity is more complex. Meanings of home relate to the physical house, the design elements contained within, and the surrounding elements such as the yard, neighborhood, geography, and community. This has vast implications on how home as identity is interpreted across a number of community groups. Gustafson's (2001) theoretical research into sense and dependence on place implies that "meaningful places may be of different spatial scale—residence, local community or neighbourhood, city, region, country, etc.—but the meanings and relative importance of places may differ... [and that] certain socio-demographic variables may explain what spatial level(s) respondents consider to be meaningful" (p. 8). Gustafson also believes that "places are continually produced and reproduced in interaction with their surroundings and thus may acquire new meanings over a period of time" (p. 6).

Just as individuals equate meaning within place across different spectrums, other environmental issues further perpetuate a wider concept of home as identity. Informal meeting places, public space, and structure surrounding the home attributes to sense of place. Other geographic locations outside of one's locality also defines the emotional attachment to place as a whole and how home is further understood as a meaningful place within the larger context. In essence, the environment influences our behavior; individuals tend to choose, depend, attach, and identify with particular environments that sustain behavioral tendencies.

Gallagher (1993) states that “the basic principle that links our places and states is simple: a good or bad environment promotes good or bad memories, which inspire a good or bad mood, which inclines us toward good or bad behavior” (p. 132). Manzo (2003) has also created a theoretical perspective surrounding environmental contribution to attachment within place: “it is not possible to adequately consider people’s emotional relationships with places without recognizing the significant political implications of such a phenomenon—that who we are can have a real impact on where we find ourselves and where we feel we belong” (p. 54). This can have implications in the design world related to environmental and home planning; we can influence an individual’s behavior and behavioral tendencies by creating or adjusting the environment in which they live.

Overall, one of the missing links needed to fully connect sense of place, place attachment, place dependence, and place identity is the undetermined definition of how home defines individuals. “The difficulty in coming to grips with the concept of home is its increasingly central role in everyday life, coupled with its rich social, cultural and historical significance” (Moore, 2000, p. 207). Faced with the many aspects of home, one must define it from all angles while considering the physical, emotional, and sociological factors that go into creating a home environment. A basic definition of home has been created by Benjamin (1995):

The home is that spatially localized, temporally defined, significant and autonomous physical frame and conceptual system for the ordering, transformation and interpretation of the physical and abstract aspects of domestic daily life at several simultaneous spatio-temporal scales, normally activated by the connection to a person or community such as a nuclear family (p. 158).

Compared to the many theories surrounding home as identity, this definition should be used to create a general sense of what designers, planners, developers, and policy makers can do to create more appropriate and adequate housing for older individuals. These applications can also be applied to other population groups who could benefit from the concept of home identity.

Creating a Home Identity: Applications within Design, Research, and Policy

Design Principles and Implications Related to Theory

The theories that address how one relates home to his or her identity generate many design implications. When working with specific populations, it is important to consider aspects of place meaning that are more relevant to the particular community in order to create, develop, design, and construct appropriate housing options. Working with aging individuals proposes a particularly deep focus on previous theories that relate to the meaning individuals find within their environment. Since older persons are likely to experience physical and social changes in their environments toward the end of their life cycle, it is especially important to conceptualize their needs, desires, and identities in creating appropriate housing.

All individuals, regardless of their age, experience, or background, are connected to their home environments. The home environment helps create an individual's identity that should be considered and accommodated in residential design. According to Gallagher (1993),

studies of hunter-gatherer societies show that a person's turf helps provide identity, privacy, intimacy, and protection from stress. One reason our homes are so precious to us—and being homeless is so debilitating—is that every time we cross the threshold, we warp ourselves in a cozy, protective mantle of memories that helps sustain our persona (p. 187).

Although meaning within place is not always positive, Gallagher's research defines the importance of home for individuals. Furthermore, designers, planners, developers, and policy makers can utilize the concept of home as identity to create adequate, supportive housing for particular population groups.

Many of the theories studied here give precedence to design implications related to housing for the elderly based on the ideas of home as identity. Gustafson's (2001) Three-Pole Triangular Model, for example, highlights how the changes in physical, cognitive, and emotional abilities facing older individuals creates a need for housing options that allow those planning to age in place to maintain distinction, valuation, continuity, and

change. Implied is a need for designers to consider that a majority of older adults plan to age in their current homes instead of moving to a location that better fits their needs as they age or alternatively adapt their routines to accommodate built environments that no longer support them.

Manzo's (2003) theory emphasizes that individuals choose environments that best fit their self-concept, provide continuity, meet demands of everyday life, fit personal needs, and facilitate self-development. Because places are symbols of life events, one must allow individuals to either live close to their memorable environment, or allow them the flexibility and freedom to revisit their home community for special occasions or events. Flexibility must also extend to housing options spanning across different neighborhoods, locations, historical contexts, and cultures, as socio-political events and factors can influence our housing and community choices (Manzo, 2003). Negative experiences should also be considered when designing and developing appropriate housing options for aging individuals. Not everyone associates positive experiences with their home environment; therefore designers, developers, planners, and policy makers need to consider desires for different home environments than may be assumed.

Design implications can also be found within Twigger-Ross and Uzzell's (1996) identity theory. A feeling of locality is a large part of self-identification within the home and should be regarded when considering locations for alternative care facilities and housing. "Unwanted and personally uncontrollable change in the physical environment, resulting in the loss of the principle of continuity, may cause a grief or loss reaction....the self can be threatened by unwanted disruptions to emotionally salient places" (p. 208). We need to be sensitive to how changes in the home environment can impact an individual's sense of identity and plan accordingly so attachment is maintained in order to preserve distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem, and self-efficacy while aging-in-place or when faced with relocation.

The place identity theory of Proshansky et al. (1983) implies the importance of maintaining a sense of identity among residents in new home environments as social and physical identities have been formed throughout a wide range of time and may be tied to other environments. Because the spatial past of individuals represents their place identity, the meanings

found within a new physical setting helps define the role of individuals in a more complex way through how well they “measure up as supporting physical systems” (p. 68). Since a person is likely to feel threatened when the home changes from a single-family to a multi-family environment (as is often the case with elderly moving into assisted living), one needs to be aware of the behavioral changes that often accompany such relocation. Ways to mediate this transition need to be determined and implemented so individuals do not feel isolated, frustrated, uncomfortable, or upset in their new living environment.

It is also important to allow for modification of the environment so individuals can function according to their perceived roles and/or traditional habits, routines, and abilities. Simple additions to a residence such as a working kitchen or access to tools can foster a greater sense of place and the maintenance of the individual’s well-being within the environment. Modification of the environment is also an important issue when considering design implications for the elderly; allowing individuals to personalize their space further meets their tastes and preferences. In turn, the modified space is then “an affirmation of the individual’s self-identity” (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 69).

Implications for Future Research

Current research can build on these concepts related to meaning of place, creating new avenues for research and discussion. Place attachment, sense of place, place dependence, and place identity can be combined through more theoretical study and measurable research in order to fully determine how home as identity is formed, perpetuated, and created through the built environment. Place identity is influenced not only by how one views and utilizes the environment, but also how one senses locality, becomes attached to it, and therefore dependent on it to maintain well-being. Future research could study how the four concepts work together in order to form an overall sense of relationship to place. If such a study were implemented, the ability to build connections between formerly separate concepts could make future design, creation, and development of housing for aging individuals more appropriate.

A future study should first include a solid definition of home and its meaning within the environment. According to Moore (2000), “the concept of home has to be examined in terms of its parts as well as a whole” (p. 208) and that “home presents an indisputable challenge to develop theoretical frameworks and models with wider applicability to other places” (p. 213). Once a definite concept of home is established, further implications to place identity can be firmly discovered in relation to the four previous theories surrounding meaning of place.

Measuring home as identity must also go beyond the realm of the built walls. Future studies must include the surrounding environment that also contributes to an individual’s self-identity. Research into how place identity can change when faced with new environments or surroundings could further examine how older persons are impacted and their place identity altered when facing a move influenced by age and change in ability.

Relationships to place are not always positive; one must also consider all experiences that contribute to an individual’s sense of identity within the environment. Research by Proshansky et al. (1983) highlights the importance of studying all emotional attachments, whether positive or negative, to further understand the place-identity of individuals. Future studies focusing on home as identity should include negative connotations of home in order to fully identify appropriate designs that create positive attribution to place.

Manzo (2003) furthers this concept:

we must also better understand the processes by which emotional relationships to places are developed and evolve over time, across the lifespan. This includes a better understanding of the places which contribute to a person’s self-concept, as well as the feelings and experiences that get incorporated into one’s sense of self, and the processes by which they get internalized (p. 57).

By altering an environment, one may be able to alter an individual’s behavior, either positively or negatively. Environment-behavior research in relation to place identity could provide a connection between original place meaning concepts, and have the ability to highlight more design principles surrounding housing options for aging individuals.

Future research also could address how home as identity as a theory informs meaning of place. In order to fully determine how home as identity combines concepts between previously separate theories, a research study would have to be implemented. Further discussion defining the parameters of the variables and research methods would help to create bridges between previous concepts and home as identity. Post-occupancy evaluations, focus groups, and surveys of particular communities are a few methods that may be beneficial in measuring, defining, and forming new connections between place attachment, sense of place, place dependence, and place identity in order to determine how meanings of home help define an individual.

Implications for Policy Surrounding Housing for Aging Individuals

Future research utilizing place identity theories can further policy applications of appropriate housing options for aging individuals. The combination of housing with identity can impact an individual both socially and physically (Proshansky et al., 1983). When housing and identity combine, people become more empowered to remain independent and maintain their quality of life. Individuals can achieve greater satisfaction and stability when they feel connected with their surroundings through social and physical relationships (Gustafson, 2001; Manzo, 2003). Creating housing that fits the needs of aging individuals heightens quality of life, allowing individuals to maintain competence in daily activities (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Individuals reporting housing satisfaction are more likely to feel as if they are valued within their community, and are more likely to stay connected to activities, groups, and individuals. Therefore, policy makers need to be cognisant, understanding, and knowledgeable of how home influences an individual.

Conclusions

Place identity itself has its roots in theory related to the social and physical world experienced by humans. Theory has often focused on the social aspects of the environment, but has neglected the physical surroundings. "Identity processes have a dynamic relationship with the residential environment. The development and maintenance of these processes occurs in transactions with the environment...the environment becomes a salient

part of identity as opposed to the merely setting a context in which identity can be established and developed” (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, p. 218). Hayden (1995) takes this theory one step further, claiming that identity is intimately tied to memory which manifests itself in space. Memory, in this instance, implicates the social aspect of one’s environment and the way that the space itself perpetuates social ties.

If people create identities within their physical environments, individuals also have a unique sense of what home means to them. Relph (1976) proclaims a very important theoretical concept surrounding the individual and home: “without exception, the home is considered to be the ‘place’ of greatest personal significance in one’s life—‘the central reference point of human existence’” (p. 20). In Relph’s research on place-identity, he describes the essence of place:

The essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as centers of human existence. There is for virtually everyone a deep association with and consciousness of the places where we were born and grew up, where we live now, or where we have had particularly moving experiences. This association seems to constitute a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security (p. 43).

Home, therefore, is an appropriate setting within which to study place identity. Home can evoke many meanings, ranging from an individual’s birthplace to defining nationality. It can also evoke emotions and feelings including happiness, belonging, dangerousness, or the end of life’s journey (Moore, 2000). As a person continues to experience home through activity, habit, routine, and memory, one grows more attached to that home and community, and therefore cultivates an identity within that environment. To further emphasize, Moore indicates a thought often reflected in individuals that have had exposure to a home environment: “in today’s usage, longing for home has become a central part of our everyday understanding of the word. Home reflects both reality and ideal” (p. 208).

Most research linking the physical environment to identity has only been concerned with the positive experiences that people may have with their surroundings. “Any exploration of place as a phenomenon of direct experience...

must be concerned with the entire range of experiences through which we all know and make places” (Relph, 1976, p. 6). It is therefore important to remember that emotional attachment to place can also be pessimistic. Most research does not consider family abuse, domestic constriction, divorce, tragedy, and loss. Historically, there has also been a “tendency to ignore the influence of significant environmental changes on self structure, particularly self-identity. Rarely has the impact of neighborhood deterioration, geographic mobility, and technological reconstruction of the landscape been evaluated in terms of their impact on self-identity” (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 59). When considering a definition of home as identity, one must also consider the broad range of experiences that influence an individual’s self-identification within the physical environment.

When determining new theories focused on home as identity, we must remember that identity is formed through the full range of experiences including emotions, attachment to community and neighborhood, urbanization effects, spaces within the home, and social identity. “The common theme which is important to our conceptions of self- and place-identity is the notion that the psychologically healthy state of a person’s sense of self is not a static one, rather it is characterized by growth and change in response to a changing physical and social world” (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 59). Along with the many facets of an individual’s identity comes the concept that identity may change over time. Often, sense of place may transform depending on individual circumstances or particular life challenges that one may face.

All in all, as eloquently stated by Gustafson (2001), “architects and planners, in not considering the meanings that places have to individuals and groups, run the risk of destroying authentic places and/or producing inauthentic ones...individuals conceptualize places differently and [it] is therefore important to consider places from the perspective of their ‘users’” (p. 6). By furthering research that creates connections between the four basic concepts related to meaning within place, one is able to determine how more appropriate, adequate, and supportive housing options can be designed for aging individuals. Overall, sense of place, place attachment, place dependence, and place identity can all be combined, bridged, and connected to form and define the concept of home as identity which is integral to the future of housing.

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