PLACE-IDENTITY:
PHYSICAL WORLD SOCIALIZATION OF THE SELF

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Introduction

For some years the writers and their colleagues have employed the concept of 'place-identity' in their conceptualization of selected problems of the physical environment (Proshansky, 1978; Proshansky et al., 1979; Proshansky and Kaminoff, 1982). Because of its derivation from self theory, its meaning was relatively easy to establish and make use of in the analysis of person/physical setting problems. Later on in this paper we will provide a more formal definition of place-identity and its properties. At this point, however, what is needed is a brief review of the social and cultural processes involved in the development of self-identity. From this discussion, the theoretical significance of physical settings and their properties in regard to self-identity will clearly emerge. Paradoxically, what will also emerge is the realization of an almost complete neglect of the role of places and spaces in this aspect of human psychological development.

In general, self theories tell us that the development of the sense of self is a matter of first learning to distinguish oneself from others by means of visual, auditory, and still other perceptual modes. Later on in this process, the child is taught—informally as well as formally—to apply appropriate verbal statements in making these distinctions. In this way the child comes to know or identify himself by virtue of the fact that these other 'labels' have reference to objects or people that are not him. The child has his own 'label'. What makes these other objects or persons significant is not simply that they are distinguishable from the self, but more importantly, that each one of them has a given relationship to that self, that is, the child. The statement, 'That is a mommy,' distinguishes the child from 'a mommy'. When the child refers to a person as 'my mommy', then not only is the other person identified, but in turn the child is identified by means of his relationship to this other person. Much more, however, is involved in the development of self-identity beyond simply learning to recognize these perceptual and verbal distinctions between other people and oneself.

The assumption made in this paper is that 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. If the child learns 'who he is' by virtue of his relationship with those who satisfy his needs by taking care of him, then it follows that contributing to that same self-knowledge are the toys, clothes, rooms, and whole array of physical things and settings that also satisfy and support his existence. There is not only the distinction between himself and 'my mommy', but also the difference between himself and 'my room'. The room is different and distinct from what he is, but by belonging
to him and satisfying him it serves to continually define his own bodily experiences and consciousness as a separate and distinct individual. In effect, 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.

A closer look at specific self theories reveals that particular properties and functions of self are emphasized in some, but are completely neglected in others since the personality issues being considered by these theorists vary. There are however, some common themes about the role of self which appear in the writings of a variety of theorists, including James (1890), Freud (1933), Mead (1934), Goldstein (1939), Jung (1939), Allport (1943), Rogers (1947), Hilgard (1949), Sullivan (1953), and Erikson (1950).

Basic to all conceptions of self is the view of it as a complex psychological structure characterized by both enduring properties over time and space, and others that are far less stable and given to change. The degree to which the structures of the self are characterized by stability or flexibility, however, is a controversial issue and will be considered later in our discussion in more detail. A primary function of the self is thought to be integrative, in that it organizes and unifies a person’s behavior and experience both across situations and in the more immediate responses to specific situations. In this sense, “self” can be thought of as a term which describes the individual as a total system including both conscious and unconscious perceptions of his past, his daily experiences and behaviors, and his future aspirations. A substructure of the self system which will be more useful to our subsequent analysis is the concept of self-identity.

As first described by G. H. Mead (1934), a person goes through a cognitive process in which he perceives and defines himself as an object to himself as the subject or observer. In other words, the individual learns to judge himself in much the same way that others judge him. This theory emphasizes the individual as a member of a social world in which the development of a sense of self is rooted in the assimilation and acceptance of a commonly shared set of beliefs, rules, values, and expectancies. In addition to Mead, both Erikson (1950) and Rosenberg (1979) have stressed the role of the social environment in the development of individual identity. Rosenberg concentrates primarily on the relevant statuses and roles of a given social group which serve as guidelines to individual members of that group, while Erikson examines broader social and cultural influences on the development of self-identity. The main point here, apart from any specific explanations of how self-identity emerges, is that self-identity differs from the general concept of self in its focus on relatively conscious, personally held beliefs, interpretations, and evaluations of oneself.

From the viewpoint of the environmental psychologist, self system conceptualizations are clearly limited for two reasons. First, there has been an almost exclusive emphasis on individual, interpersonal, and social group processes as the basis for the development of self-identity. Thus, these approaches do not at all consider the influence of the physical settings that are inherently part of any socialization context on self-identity. In a constantly changing technological society, it is 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. Still another problem that emerges from traditional personality and/or self theories, is that the self is assumed to be a stable, unified, and integrated
Place-identity

The emphasis in such theories is on constancy and stability rather than change. Yet both self and self-identity are structures which are ever changing during the entire lifecycle, not just during the formative years. Each major stage during the lifecycle as well as other critical periods in this cycle (e.g. tragic family death), brings appropriate changes in the self-identity of the individual.

The constancy bias creates still another distortion, and that is the 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. Without minimizing the significance of stability and constancy, we must stress the importance of an ecological approach in which the person is seen as involved in transactions with a changing world. In effect, the implication is that it is no less crucial to explore the variability of self-identity than to describe its more stable characteristics.

There have in fact been a number of theorists who have looked more closely at the flexibility of various sub-structures of the self (Stone, 1982). Cumming and Cumming (1962), for example, have focussed on the ‘ego’, which they describe as a structure particularly concerned with response and adaptation to a naturally changing environment. While they recognize that the primary state of the ego is equilibrium, growth is thought to occur through occasional challenges to that equilibrium, which results in a ‘recombination’ of the ego. This is quite a different emphasis from traditional personality theories which describe the ego’s main function as a protector and maintainer of its component processes. Smith (1968) makes a similar distinction between the relatively stable ‘self-concept’, and the more adaptive, malleable self-evaluations which result from regular transactions with the environment. And finally, Marris (1974), from a sociological perspective, makes the important point that in addition to protecting one’s beliefs and experiences, individuals must retain the willingness to revise them in order to stay connected with the real world. The common theme among these theorists 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.

Defining Place-identity

We are now ready to provide a working theoretical definition of ‘place-identity’. To begin with, it 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.

A number of points must be stressed to clarify this definition. First, the individual does more than experience and ‘record’ the physical environment. The person’s needs and desires may be gratified to varying degrees, and there can be little doubt that
physical settings vary from one time to the next in their capacity to satisfy these needs and desires. Out of these ‘good’ and ‘bad’ experiences emerge particular values, attitudes, feelings, and beliefs about the physical world—about what is good, acceptable, and not so good—that serve to define and integrate the place-identity of the individual. Second, it must be noted that what is true of self-identity is also generally true of its sub-structure, place-identity. Other people are important in shaping the place-identity of the person. It is not simply a matter of the child’s experience with his physical settings but clearly also a function of what other people do, say, and think about what is right or wrong and good or bad about these physical settings.

Finally, the reader should not assume that place-identity represents a coherent and integrated cognitive sub-structure of the self-identity of the person. To some extent it may well be; however, it is best thought of as a potpourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas, and related feelings about specific physical settings as well as types of settings. The substantive and structural properties of place-identity—what cognitions it consists of and how they are related—undoubtedly vary with the sex, age, social class, personality and other social descriptors of the individual. As an enduring and a changing structure, place-identity will be modified over the course of the individual’s lifecycle and is not bound by any of the aforementioned categories.

It is important that we take note of other theorists who have also employed the term place-identity. Those most notably associated with concepts of place-identity are Tuan (1980), Relph (1976), and Buttimer (1980), respectively, all of whom are humanistic geographers. Although each of them defines ‘place’ somewhat differently, many of their underlying assumptions are shared. The first assumption is that through personal attachment to geographically locatable places, a person acquires a sense of belonging and purpose which give meaning to his or her life. 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’ (Relph, 1976, p. 20). Place-identity or the sense of belonging, according to Buttimer, is a function of the degree to which the activities important to a person’s life are centered in and around the home. She implies that a particular balance between ‘home’ and ‘horizons of reach’ is necessary for the maintenance of self-identity and emotional well-being.

The second assumption, which is basic to their work is that this sense of ‘rootedness’ or ‘centeredness’ is an unselfconscious state. Once it is reflected upon or interpreted, it is in some way removed from direct experience and tainted. In describing the essence of place, Relph (1976) states that:

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)

Tuan (1980), on the other hand, believes that the experience of ‘rootedness’—the unselfconscious association with place—is impossible to achieve for people living in contemporary Western societies. Requisite to such an unreflective state he claims, is an ‘incuriosity toward the world at large and an insensitivity toward the flow of
time' (p. 4). In contrast, place-identity is developed by thinking and talking about places through a process of distancing which allows for reflection and appreciation of places. Tuan's effort in defining these terms, and distinguishing 'rootedness' from 'sense of place' should not detract the reader from his fundamental similarity to Buttimer (1980) and Relph (1976). He too believes that the primary function of 'place' is to engender a sense of belonging and attachment.

The characterization of place-identity as an unselfconscious state by these theorists creates some problems. Because of their phenomenological perspective, there is a distinct limitation in their description of place-identity—in fact, the perspective implies that place-identity in its full meaning cannot be communicated. The essence of their approach consequently lies in the description of place-identity when the person is in difficulty. In other words, it is only when one's sense of place is threatened that he or she becomes aware of it. This is particularly clear in Relph's notion of 'placelessness', and Fried's (1963) concept of 'grieving for a lost home'. While it is undoubtedly true that in the experience of daily life there is little self-conscious reflection on the meaning of home, the work place, or the neighborhood, there is theoretical value in articulating the functional properties of place-identity as part of the socialization process, and of place-belongingness as one aspect of place-identity.

Cooper (1974), as well as others (Schorr, 1966; Gans, 1962; Hayward, 1977; O'Mara, 1974), emphasize the psychological relationship between the physical form of the home and self-identity. Although we would question Cooper's emphasis on universal symbols or archetypes as influenced by Jung (1964), her views strongly support our definition of place-identity. She postulates a dynamic relationship between a person and the physical environment in which the person creates an environment that 'reveals the nature of the self', and the environment in turn gives 'information' back to the person thus reinforcing self-identity and perhaps changing the person in some way.

Fried (1963), like the present writers, also laments about the neglect of the physical environment in regard to self-identity. He states that 'a sense of spatial identity is fundamental to human functioning', and that, 'It (spatial identity) is based on spatial memories, spatial imagery, the spatial framework of current activity, and the implicit spatial components of ideals and aspirations' (p. 156). Unlike the theorists discussed above, Fried recognizes the role of cognitive as well as affective factors in space attachment, giving far more emphasis to the former. However, he too focuses exclusively on the home and one's sense of belonging to it, and uniquely, on the personal experience of grief when that relationship is disrupted. Thus, he fails to look beyond the home to other physical settings which undoubtedly also contribute to an individual's development of place-identity.

Clearly 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 as we have defined it here. 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. It is however, an important assumption of this paper that physical world definitions of a person's self-identity extend far beyond a conception of this identity in which the home and its surroundings are the necessary and sufficient component referents. It should become evident in the subsequent discussion that place-identity is influenced by a wide range of person/physical setting experiences and relationships based on a variety of physical contexts that from the
moment of birth until death define people's day-to-day existence. What emerges as 'place-identity' is a complex cognitive structure which is characterized by a host of attitudes, values, thoughts, beliefs, meanings and behavior tendencies that go well beyond just emotional attachments and belonging to particular places.

Some properties of place-identity
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. But there is also the process by which the experience of a physical setting moves from the stage of 'now going on' to the stage of 'being remembered'. Through this process, the person's actual experience is modified by the cognitive process of memory and interpretation and such others as fantasy and imagination. We not only experience the physical realities, for example, of the particular neighborhood we grew up in, but also the social meanings and beliefs attached to it by those who live outside of it as well as its residents. All of these 'cognitions' define the person's place-identity.

The cognitive processes involved in the development of place-identity are not any different from those underlying the formation of other cognitive structures. For example, memories of spaces and places, no less than our memories of social situations, tend to be thematic and stylized. Theorists have referred to the consequences of this process as 'schemata' (Piaget, 1954; Neisser, 1976) and 'scripts' (Abelson, 1981). The extent of this kind of stereotyped thinking grows with the increasing length of time from the period when the person cognitively records an environment as it actually exists. The old phrase 'you can't go home again' is no less applicable to this cognitive process as it is to the reality of the person returning to his or her early home and community setting expecting it to be the same. The person and the physical setting have unquestionably changed, and therefore a return to this early life is not possible. However, further confounding one's 'going home' is the fact that original memories, images, and other cognitions recorded during childhood have also changed, particularly if the individual is no longer part of that physical setting. The cognitions or percepts preserved in memory are both highly selective and stylized.

Our discussion up to this point gives emphasis to place-identity as a personal construction. It grows out of direct experiences with the physical environment; these experiences in turn become modified and transformed by cognitive processes and the effects of still other subsequent direct experiences with the physical environment. And continually being woven into this cognitive fabric we call place-identity and thereby exerting an influence, are the assimilated values, norms, and attitudes germane to physical settings that define the person's day-to-day existence. In the end, of course, place-identity is subject to the same cognitive reductions and subjective meanings which characterize all cognitive structures.

Not unlike other cognitive structures, the place-identity of the person consists of a complex of physical setting related clusters of cognitions in which component cognitions of a given cluster are related to each other, and also to a greater or lesser degree, to the component cognitions of other clusters. In effect, the 'potpourri of memories, concepts, feelings...' is something more than just that. To repeat, cognitive components are not only clustered and related because they pertain to the same setting,
but the cluster of components of a given setting is interrelated to those of other settings. And this is the case because the place-identity of the person mirrors in a broad sense the particular physical settings as well as the pattern of such settings that he or she routinely experiences and uses daily, that is, the home, work place, school, neighborhood, and play environments.

What we are saying in effect is that place-identity reflects in its clustering of cognitive components, the individual's experiences in each of these environments and in the relationships of these environments to each other in defining the day-to-day activities of a person. The cluster of cognitive components for any one physical setting (e.g. memories, ideas, beliefs, etc.) is understandable, but how do components of one setting become related to that of the other? It is more than their successive use in the daily activities of the individual, although long term and successive use of physical settings also creates cognitive interrelatedness between and among them. The fact is that the activities of one—including the social roles one plays—overlap with those of other physical settings. To take but one example, not only do many individuals often take their work home and use their ‘office’, den, or bedroom to do it in, but they personalize their work spaces on the job with objects from their homes. In some instances work spaces may be organized to reflect what is characteristic of a space or place in the household. Of course, such ‘overlapping and interrelatedness’ in real life depends on who the individuals are, and what kinds of employment they have, and what other settings are being considered.

In general, cognitive structures relevant to self-identity tend to be remote from the awareness of the individual. In the case of place-identity, its elusiveness insofar as conscious experience is concerned is perhaps even greater. Unlike social events in which people and their interactions dominate the situational context, physical settings are the 'backdrops' against which these events occur. The person is less likely to be aware of the physical setting and its properties than he is of the people, their activities and characteristics as they behave in these contexts.

If we consider that the development of place-identity begins in the earliest processes of the socialization of the child, then the lack of awareness of the nature and content of this identity is quite understandable. While more than a little of the child’s socialization is direct in the sense that he or she consciously participates in the learning process, much more of it is indirect, that is, without the child consciously participating in it or being aware of the process. In the case of the physical environment, the latter prevails to a far greater extent, that is, in many more instances the child gains knowledge of and reacts to this environment without conscious awareness.

It follows, therefore, that the individual is generally not aware of the variety of memories, feelings, values, and preferences that subsume and influence his or her responses to the physical world. One is simply comfortable in certain kinds of physical settings, prefers particular spaces, kinds of lighting, furniture arrangements, number of people in a room for a party, number of people in an office, and so on. This ‘not in awareness’ property of place-identity insofar as its content and influence are concerned is an important and significant feature of its role in shaping the behavior and experience of the person in given physical settings.

The cognitive clusters that comprise place-identity involve far more than the memories, feelings, and interpretations of each of the real world physical settings that the person uses. Interwoven into these clusters are the social definitions of these settings which consist of the norms, behaviors, rules and regulations that are inherent
in the use of these places and spaces. Within any one of these settings are activity
relevant differentiations of the space that are defined by what individuals are expected
to do at particular times either alone or with other individuals. However ‘physical’ or
objectively real these settings, they are inextricably tied to the social and cultural
existence of a group, as expressed by its valued activities, interpersonal relationships,
and individual and group role functions. As we have often said, there is no physical
environment that is not also a social environment, and vice-versa (Ittelson et al., 1974).

Attached to the physical settings that substantively define place-identity are not
only the general social properties that come from the broad uniformities in a culture,
but also those that serve to distinguish different groups in the culture—racial, ethnic,
age, sex, social class, religious, etc. This means that place-identities of different ethnic,
social, national and religious groups in a given culture should reveal not only different
uses and experiences with space and place, but corresponding variations in the social
values, meanings, and ideas which underlie the use of those spaces. The inextricable
relationship between a social setting and physical setting is evidenced in place-
identity through the merger of the individual’s personally held images, feelings,
memories, and ideas about a given setting or settings with the relevant attitudes, values
and behavior tendencies that express the sociocultural and demographic characteristics
of the individual.

In reviewing the kinds of cognitions which cluster together in the formation and
development of place-identity, we have yet to mention an obvious type: those that
transcend the varying nature of human societies because of the common biological
character of all human beings. What we are referring to is the fact that each human
being is also a physically defined object that occupies space, and therefore, no two
of them can occupy the same space at the same time. In other words, from both
a physical and therefore biological and social point of view, the human organism
is at every moment in need of a basic minimum of his or her own exclusive physical
space, and it is this need which lies at the root of the fact that all societies evolve
norms and values about human privacy, personal space, crowding, and territoriality.
This basic requirement enables the person to meet the essential biological conditions
necessary to exist, not to mention the satisfaction of more complex biological and
social needs. And to this we must add the view that these norms and values about
crowding, one’s own space, privacy, and territoriality for a given society or culture,
are also expressed as place-identity cognitions of the person thereby adding still further
to his or her definition of self.

Earlier in our presentation we alluded to the fact that place-identity shows both
stability and change in the nature and organization of its components. If we consider
the various physical settings that define the social life of the person, that is, the
household, the school, the neighborhood, and the ‘play area’, it is evident that they
are very significant in the early socialization of the child and therefore are part of
the earliest of his or her learned space-related cognitions. Furthermore, it is in these
‘original’ spaces and places that so many of the social roles and categories that define
the self-identity of the person, are learned or internalized by the child (e.g. sex, religion,
social class, ethnic group, etc.). In many cases—although by no means in all cases—
these physical setting experiences are persistent and repetitive over time in a child’s
growing up. The enduring nature of early patterns of place-identity components is
therefore, quite understandable and to be expected.

The nature of place-identity conceptualized in this paper, however, immediately
suggests that such enduringness of place-identity components may occur at a later time in the lifecycle and with spaces and places outside the family and neighborhood context. Thus, when individuals are preparing for some occupation or profession, the relevant physical settings in this socialization period undoubtedly have a very strong influence on place-identity. In these instances as well, that is, not only in early childhood, we can expect place-identity to occur with respect to the places and spaces of educational and occupational training. Many examples can be given: the school and classroom for the teacher; the laboratory for the science researcher; the nurses' station for the nurse on the ward. Of course these place-identity components involve specific as well as general occupational settings that help define the self-identity of a person, that is, the particular laboratory a young scientist was trained in and did his early research.

Even the most enduring cognitive components of place-identity will change to some degree over the length of the lifecycle. As we have already suggested, the cognitive process itself as well as the succession of new role related experiences may induce such changes. Certainly significant roles such as occupation and parenting undergo major changes in their requirements when the individual nears retirement age. With these changes there occur changes in the relevant place related cognitions directly tied to these social roles. Thus, once the teacher retires or leaves teaching, the classroom may be somewhat less significant in defining that person's self-identity. In addition, and more importantly, the classroom related cluster of cognitions may eventually show changes toward becoming an over-simplified and idealized conception.

In speaking of change in place-identity, however, we do not mean just the gradual changes that occur in enduring components associated with corresponding changes in social roles over the course of the lifecycle. There are other influences that induce change which are relatively unrelated to social role development and the socialization process generally. Physical settings themselves may change radically over long or relatively short periods of time, and thereby no longer correspond to existing place related cognitions that serve to define the self-identity of the individual. Every individual must deal with a changing society, with unexpected events, with advances in technology, with social upheavals, and any number of other phenomena that directly or indirectly have an impact on the physical world of the person.

The extent and intensity with which television has invaded American households (and elsewhere as well) means that it is no less an important aspect of the place-identity of the person than say, the automobile. Its significance in defining who the person is goes beyond satisfying his or her entertainment interests. It is a means of escape, a way of having contact with the outside world, a source of learning, and a resource for knowing how to think and feel about many things.

Influences on place-identity resulting from changes in the individual's physical world can be traced to more than simply technological developments. Demographic and ecological changes in a community, themselves the result of economic, political, and social impacts, may have important consequences for the place-identity of the person. As we have already suggested, place-belongingness or strong emotional attachments to one's home and neighborhood can be acquired in adult life because of its role for parents in bringing up their own children. Other factors may also lead to such attachments occurring during the adult stage of the lifecycle. The intrusion of unwanted groups, the evidence of crime in the area, and beginning signs of physical
decay, may all precipitate stronger emotional attachments to one's home and neighborhood. Similarly, groups who are dislocated from their residential 'turf' because of urban programs or other governmental or social interventions, often feel 'lost' in their new setting and long for the old home and neighborhood. Depending on the stage of the lifecycle that the person is at, and the discrepancy between the old and new locations, a sense of belongingness to the new neighborhood may never be achieved.

**Functions of Place-identity**

Like any other cognitive system, place-identity influences what each of us sees, thinks, and feels in our situation-to-situation transactions with the physical world. It serves as a cognitive backdrop, or perhaps better said, as a physical environment 'data base' against which every physical setting experience can be 'experienced' and responded to in some way. Broadly speaking, what is at stake is the well-being of the person. That well-being, in turn, requires not only maintaining and protecting the self-identity of the person but in making adjustments in that identity as the person, and his or her physical and social worlds change slowly over time and more rapidly because of sudden, significant events. It is in this sense that we describe below specific functions of place-identity in the thoughts, behavior, and experience of the individual; these functions serving the need for some level of integration of the individual's self-identity.

**Recognition function**

As we have already indicated, an important general function of place-identity is that it provides the *environmental past* against which any immediate physical setting can be judged. Clearly, the first step in this comparative process is the determination of what is familiar or unfamiliar in any given physical setting. This is seldom a conscious process, but whether it is or not, making such a determination undoubtedly occurs each time the individual moves from one physical setting to the next.

One dimension of the person's experience of environmental stability lies in the affirmation of the belief that the properties of his or her day-to-day physical world are unchanging. The individual's recognition of these properties at any given moment in a given situation serves to confirm their continuity from the past, and in turn this perceived continuity portends that they will occur again in the future. The perceived stability of place and space that emerges from such recognitions correspondingly validates the individual's belief in his or her own continuity over time. Since the individual's place-identity mirrors a physical world, the continuing recognition of that world over time gives credence to and support for his or her self-identity.

One implication of the recognition function of place-identity is that extreme variations in the physical environment experienced by a person may indeed threaten the self-identity of the individual. The radically different physical settings experienced by American prisoners of war in Japanese prison camps as well as the brainwashing techniques employed by their captors, would in part explain the reports of some prisoners that they lost touch with their own sense of personal identity (Lifton, 1961). We can add to this group Nazi concentration camp victims, long-term residents of psychiatric institutions, and those imprisoned as a result of our own criminal justice system. Each of these are clear and dramatic examples of people whose deprived
physical environments and social isolation negatively affects and seriously threatens their sense of self.

It is important to examine more commonly occurring threats to self-identity which are of a somewhat different nature and which are directly related to the politics of urban redevelopment and change. Several researchers have documented the negative effects of large scale urban redevelopment and relocation programs in which people were uprooted from their familiar neighborhoods and moved into unfamiliar high-rise structures. Fried and Gleicher (1961), Jacobs (1961), Gans (1962), and Yancey (1971) have all written about the sense of grief and frustration residents experienced when they were forced out of their cherished neighborhoods. Although by some standards the new housing could be considered superior, it was highly discrepant from the environmental past and place-identity experiences of the residents. The implication is not to maintain inferior and deteriorating housing because it is recognizable and consistent with the physical setting experiences of the poor, but rather to incorporate into the new setting those features of the old setting which reflect and support the place-identity characteristics of these residents.

The recognition function of place-identity implies that individuals do indeed spend time in physical settings during their formative years for periods long enough to allow them to adapt to and derive satisfactions from these settings. This undoubtedly occurs to some degree depending on the level of quality of the physical setting. Suppose, however, in the midst of family dysfunction, a child experiences a continual shifting from one physical setting to another, particularly under circumstances that suggest, 'it's not your place, and don't expect to stay long'. Wouldn't such experiences make for a fragmented environmental past which would not only interfere with the recognition function, but would in turn preclude a well-defined or even meaningful place-identity?

Coles' (1970) study of children of migrant workers revealed that frequent school changes and lack of a permanent bed contributed to a sense of rootlessness that was reflected in a negative and fragmented self-concept. Of course, the negative consequences for the development of self-identity in these children involve a constellation of social and cultural determinants as well as physical environment considerations. But the role of the latter cannot be overlooked. Self-identity growth also depends on the development of a meaningful place-identity; and where the latter is distorted because of a lack of consistency and continuity in home and school experiences, the integration of self-identity will also suffer.

**Meaning function**

Physical settings usually have a primary purpose. And it is this purpose that determines their design and sensory characteristics, the objects and facilities they require, and the kinds of individuals and related activities that will be found in them. Place-identity is the source of meaning for a given setting by virtue of relevant cognitive clusters that indicate what should happen in it, what the setting is supposed to be like, and how the individual and others are supposed to behave in it. These groups of cognitions serve as an ever-present background system of meanings of spaces and places which enables the person not only to recognize a setting but to understand its intended purposes and activities in relation to its design and other substantive properties.

Meanings of spaces and places are not universally shared. Beyond knowing how to behave and what to expect from particular settings, environmental meaning includes
symbolic and affective associations between the individual and various parts of the physical environment. These meanings as well as appropriate behaviors and expectations in regard to place are culturally transmitted and are integrated into the place-identity of the individual through his or her own experiences in the physical world. Certain aspects of meaning are widely shared such as rules of traffic, while others are particular to some sub-groups within our own culture such as the reification of the natural environment among American Indians. The recognition function of place-identity is of course one level of meaning attributed to a physical setting. However, in this analysis we prefer to restrict the 'meaning function' of place-identity to a much higher level of attributed meaning; one which goes well beyond recognition of or familiarity with a physical setting in that it establishes its purposes, its properties, and what is to go on there.

Because place-identity in essence evolves from and represents the environmental past of each individual, the person is able to apply these more complex meanings to physical settings. Whatever the role of an individual (e.g. wife, father, son, doctor, or banker), there are appropriate physical settings that not only help to define this role but indeed determine by virtue of how well they measure up as supporting physical systems, how competently he or she can be expected to play the role. A young, new Assistant Professor, for example, may experience some difficulty in playing this role when his office is nothing more than a desk in a large open space which he shares with many other young faculty members. Missing are the books, research files, private conversation area and other factors associated with the role of academic-faculty researcher. In effect, the meanings of space and place dictated by the occupationally relevant aspects of his place-identity are not being met by the actual physical setting in which he is expected to play this role. Under these circumstances we can expect the 'Assistant Professor' to be very much aware of his less than adequate physical setting, particularly when his students come to see him; and second, at some level of awareness he may self-consciously be uncertain of his status as an Assistant Professor especially in regard to his colleagues who have the rank but more adequate academic offices.

Settings that are seriously dysfunctional in relation to the recognition and meaning functions of place-identity have been studied to some degree but not nearly enough. Some prisons and mental institutions make direct assaults on the place-identities of their inmates by stripping them of everything that is familiar and that has space and place meaning for them. This, along with the social coercion that accompanies it, often leads to symptoms of deindividuation, disculturation and estrangement (Goffman, 1962; Zimbardo et al., 1973; Sommer, 1974). The current trend is to 'normalize' some institutional settings by making them closely resemble the familiar places left behind. Given this similarity, it is believed that individuals using them will personalize and give them the appropriate meanings so that they can become more congruent with their own place-identity experiences (Wolfensberger, 1977). This represents an attempt to bolster the self-identity of the person and to provide more relevant and meaningful place-identity experiences that would make future adjustments to the 'real world' easier to negotiate once the individual leaves the institution.

Expressive-requirement function
The recognition and meaning functions of place-identity provide a basis for 'diagnosing' the nature, value, and relevancy of a physical setting. But 'diagnosis' is
not enough if it turns out that place-identity cognitions are not matched by the properties of a given physical setting. In some ways the individual must respond so that this match is at least approximated. Standards and expectations for what the setting should be like must be sought after and achieved to some degree. Thus, diagnosis of the setting must be followed by at least two other functions of place-identity which, one might say, are ‘problem-solving’ in nature.

The first of these functions, to be discussed in this section of our paper, we have designated as the ‘expressive-requirement function’ which involves two types of place-identity cognitions serving this same function. There are those cognitions that express the tastes and preferences of the person; and there are others that represent what spaces and places actually require insofar as their primary purposes are concerned. Tastes and preferences reflect far more what the individual desires because it satisfies some affective or aesthetic choice rather than because the setting actually requires it. ‘Requirements’ are those characteristics of a setting that are necessary given its primary purpose, the activities underlying this purpose, and the fact that the biological nature of human beings impose minimal requirements on the use of a space (e.g. light, heat, oxygen, etc.).

The tastes and preferences of a person touch upon many, many aspects of the built environment extending from the specifics of house design, color, and lighting to more general landscape preferences regarding urban, suburban, or rural styles. In many instances it is not difficult to establish the source of these place-identity characteristics because they represent the influence of social, religious, ethnic, and other socio-cultural factors. For example, in a study of how middle-class families decorated their homes, Laumann and House (1972) found that white Anglo-Saxon families whose forebears occupied a similar socioeconomic status, typically selected the traditional decors of French or Early American furniture with still life paintings on the walls. Those families that had selected a more modern decor characterized by contemporary furniture and large abstract paintings, tended to be upwardly mobile, non-Anglo-Saxons, whose parents had migrated to the United States from southern and eastern Europe since 1900. Similar relationships between housing preference and social class in India have been documented by Duncan and Duncan (1976).

There is little question, however, that for each individual in any group, unique experiences and personality characteristics also impose their influence on tastes and preferences for physical settings and their properties. The important point to stress however, is that when physical settings do not match these preferences, when the person’s desires in this respect are not met, it is then that the expressive function of place-identity is initiated. What most likely occurs at a cognitive level is that the relevant and desired tastes and preferences come into consciousness. And it is these cognitions that the person is ready to act on in order to satisfy these tastes and preferences if it is at all possible to personalize the space. If such changes did occur, not only would an individual’s place-identity and the setting now mutually support one another, but more importantly the changed properties of the latter would be an affirmation of the individual’s self-identity.

The ‘requirement’ function of place-identity, of course, is no different from the expressive function in terms of the protection and enhancement of the person’s self-identity. In both instances we are dealing with the nature of the changes the individual would like to make in a physical setting or some aspect of it. However, what the individual thinks and wants is quite different from what he or she does. A complex
of personal, social, and cultural factors are involved in the transition from cognitive processes to active manipulation of the environment. As we have already suggested however, ‘requirements’ represent 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. The person knows in general terms what size, shape, lighting, sound, equipment, furniture and still other ‘requirements’ must be met in order to achieve the purposes and functions of kitchens, classrooms, bedrooms, theaters, nurseries, parks, conference rooms, restaurants, ad infinitum.

Here too, of course, sociocultural factors, such as sex, ethnicity, social class and others make a difference. They influence the priorities of purposes and functions to be given to types of physical settings (e.g. home, school, work, etc.), and these in turn influence the properties of these settings. Even where different social groups attribute the same importance to a given type of setting and have the same goals for it, these groups may still differ in the design and content requirements for achieving the aims and purposes of that type of setting. The expressive-requirement function of place-identity is most easily demonstrated with regard to the home since individuals by and large have far greater control over their household setting than others which are external to the home, such as the work setting.

**Mediating change function**

Discrepancies between a person’s place-identity and the characteristics of an immediate physical setting arouse relevant and interrelated cognitions in the individual for reducing if not eliminating those discrepancies. They involve knowing what’s ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ with the physical setting and what has to be done to bring about change in it or reduce the discrepancy between it and the place-identity cognitions of the individual. Change of some kind may be deemed necessary and the individual must therefore also assess what his or her relevant environmental skills and resources are for making this change. It is important to emphasize once again that we are speaking of cognitions and not actions or actual behaviors. Whether the latter will occur depends on a host of other factors besides the availability of appropriate, relevant, and realistic cognitions. However, the latter is clearly necessary before action can occur, and within the realm of place-identity cognitions, three types can be assumed to exist, whose function it is to mediate changes that will bring into harmony the person’s place-identity preferences or requirements and the nature of the physical setting.

To begin with there are those cognitions that relate to changing the physical setting itself. The physical socialization of the individual during the formative years involves not only identifying and using specific physical settings, but also learning how to manipulate and change them. The child learns to move a chair over to the high counter and climb on it so that he can get to the cookie jar that is out of reach, or he may learn to use the handles of the ascending drawers of the counter as a ladder. At a later age come all the ‘technical’ skills individuals learn to both construct and change their physical settings, from hanging a picture, to wiring a lamp, to planting a garden. By the time the person is a young adult his or her ‘environmental past’ in this sense is well established, the nature of that past, of course, depending on sociocultural factors of sex, social class, nationality, ethnic and religious background, and others. Thus, tied to the clusters of cognitions of the person’s preferences and requirements for various physical settings are also those that relate to the necessary behaviors, tools, and skills for changing them.
Suppose, however, the appropriate cognitions for change are not available because the individual doesn’t know what has to be done or if he does lacks the skills and/or authority to carry out these changes. His cognitions may involve depending on others. Although most individuals have tastes, preferences, and requirements for relevant places and spaces, many of them learn to depend on others in choosing, using, and indeed changing a physical space. These others, of course, may or may not be available depending on the friendships, financial resources, and/or ‘power’ and authority of the person. Of course, in the context of one’s own home, regardless of what social class is involved, one or more adults and to some degree children have the power—if not always the ability—to change a physical setting to meet place-identity preferences and even requirements.

The question of cognitions for mediating environmental change goes well beyond matters of tools, skills, and to some degree even authority and reliance on others. In his or her day-to-day experience, the person uses physical settings that far more often than not involve the presence of other people. Even the individual living alone must to some degree contend with the possibility that the behavior of neighbors may make a difference in the quality of life in his own household setting. A physical setting which satisfies the place-identity preferences or requirements of a person, may be made less than perfect because of the sheer presence of other people or more likely because they use the setting in ways which run counter to these preferences or requirements. In the case of a setting involving many people (e.g. school, work place), the people who use it are an inextricable part of its environment and constitute a social system which has a different kind of authority as a collective than any individual user of space.

We come then to a second type of cognition that functions in mediating change in the place-identity of the person. The individual learns to deal with other people either because they are in effect human objects that occupy space in the physical setting and/or because their actual behavior and activities alters the nature of this setting. Specialized skills evolve from the physical world socialization of the person particularly as he or she learns the space and behavior norms for such critical person/physical setting relationships as privacy, territoriality, personal space, crowding, and others. The point to be made is, for example, that in matters of privacy, the person learns not only the conditions that define it normatively, but also how to achieve it when these conditions are violated by other people. Each of us learns ‘to send a message’ to others if, for example, they stand too close to us in conversation. Without thought we either move back or change our bodily position. Such techniques of manipulating and changing the behavior of others also apply to matters of crowding, personal space, and territoriality.

In effect, in the clusters of cognitions that make up place-identity there are ‘how to’ and ‘what to do’ cognitions for manipulating and controlling the behavior of other people as environmental objects. For those socialized in urban settings any number of ‘non-verbal strategic interaction techniques’ are learned to control the behavior of others in crowds. Territoriality requires not only that one ‘demarcate’ one’s space but that this demarcation be communicated to and protected from the behavior or intentions of other people. As one older person in a community residence put it, ‘I always left my ashtray near my seat to remind everyone that it was “my place” whether I was there or not.’

In household, school, work, and play settings there are more complexly defined social relationships among people. In these circumstances changing the behavior of
other people may be attempted more directly, and the ‘politics’ of interpersonal relationships undoubtedly plays an important role. Those in authority or power are more likely to influence the behavior of others than be influenced. Yet, it is just these kinds of relationships that move others in the group to attempt non-verbal and other strategic interaction techniques in changing the behavior of those over whom they have no direct or legitimate control. The child who feigns and acts the part of being ‘sickly’ on a regular basis often manages to get the best space either in a classroom or in his home or in both.

What if the person cannot change the physical setting or the behavior of others? One thing the person can do is to leave the setting and find another more suitable. Yet, it is not always the case that one can or even wants to give up a physical setting if it provides other satisfactions that are relatively remote from the place-identity expectations and desires of the individual. What is left for the person to do is to change his or her own behavior. Thus, the third type of change oriented place-identity cognitions involves techniques of behavior change in the person himself or herself so that place-identity/environmental discrepancies are minimized. As one colleague put it, ‘Ever since I was young, the New York City subway has never been a problem for me insofar as working “privately” and not being disturbed by the terrible noise. I always use special earplugs that cut out most of the noise and I withdraw into my papers and just work.’ Still another possibility as revealed in some research are strategic postural reactions to minimize the effects of crowding. A respondent pointed out that when in fixed crowded situations (e.g. subway car, over-crowded cocktail party) that he can’t always leave, he removes his glasses and keeps his body limp. By doing this he can no longer see others well and feels that they are further away because he has ‘reduced’ his own size, thus reducing his feelings of being crowded.

Looking back on the three types of place-identity cognitions that serve to mediate change in place-identity/physical environment discrepancies, it becomes clear that in many instances we are dealing with certain types of environmental skills. Knowing a physical setting, being able to detect changes in it and to grasp what has to be done about changing it involve skills of environmental understanding. The individual not only has learned ‘to read’ his or her physical settings, but has become skillful in understanding what changes in it mean in relation to his or her own needs and behavior. Such understanding is necessary but not sufficient. The person must have environmental competence, such that he or she knows what to do and how to behave in relation to the physical setting as dictated by his or her understanding of it. That competence includes using the setting as it is in light of all its properties including its objects and facilities as well as the presence of other people. Thus included are not only skills of talking in a routinely crowded space but how to use a variety of gadgets in it (e.g. telephone, intercom, etc.). But as we already suggested physical settings are subject to change over time, so not only must the person be ready to understand them, but he or she must also have skills of environmental control in changing the setting, the behavior of others, or his or her own behavior.

Whether in changing the actual properties of the physical setting, the behavior of others, or one’s own behavior to reduce place-identity/physical environment discrepancies, the individual draws on mediating change cognitions developed when physical world socialization of the person is taking place. As previously stated, this process is one that continues throughout the lifecycle. These cognitions involve
environmental skills necessary to use, change, and maintain a physical setting (e.g. competence, control and understanding), and they evolve both in the general learning about one's physical world and in the more defined person/physical setting relationships of human privacy, personal space, crowding, and territoriality.

Anxiety and defense function

If, as we have assumed, place-identity represents physical setting cognitions that serve to define, maintain, and protect the self-identity of a person, then it follows that some of these cognitions may function directly as anxiety and defense mechanisms. They may signal threat or danger in physical settings or they may represent response tendencies that defend or protect the person against these dangers. It is possible to consider the anxiety and defense function of place-identity at three levels of analysis.

The first level of analysis is based upon the rather obvious and simple assumption that insofar as places and spaces are concerned their definition of the person's identity involves not only what should be but what should not be. In the physical world socialization of the child, he learns not only about the good and satisfying properties of physical settings but also about those that threaten the well-being of the person. Whether in the wilderness or midst the complex technology of urban life, socialization must involve what not to do in these physical settings, what to avoid, what is inadequate, what is life-threatening, and many, many other 'don'ts' about the physical environment. We are speaking here of not crossing heavily traveled auto highways against the lights, not sitting on open window sills high above the ground, not sticking one's finger in an electric plug, not turning temperatures up either too high or too low, not walking through an unfamiliar crime-ridden area, ad infinitum.

If it is true that place-identity expresses the person's sense of self through wanting, expecting, and designing a physical world that will match this identity, then it must include all the knowledge and concerns of this world that literally threaten his or her physical well-being and safety. The cognitions involved not only signal what the threats or dangers are, but also the behaviors either to engage in or not to engage in as a defense against these threats or dangers.

At the second and more complex level of analysis, the anxiety and defense function of place-identity is a little more difficult to specify. It is based upon the assumption that for some individuals, but by no means all, persistent cognitive discrepancies between physical setting properties and place-identity expectancies may foster feelings of threat and pain in association with those cognitions which in turn motivate the person to avoid this setting. Reactions of this kind will often occur in the formative years but are clearly not limited to childhood. As we already suggested much earlier in our paper, individuals subjected to intensely discrepant physical settings (e.g. prison camps), may develop just such phobic reactions. When such settings cannot be avoided, then defensive strategies involving fantasy, withdrawal, and even visual hallucinations may occur. However extreme and atypical these defensive reactions may be, they do in fact protect and help maintain the integrity of the person's self-identity, but obviously they do so at a great cost to the day-to-day psychological well-being of the individual.

The third level of analysis of the anxiety and defense function of place-identity is rooted in other aspects of the self-identity of the person. The development of self-identity is more than a matter of the identifying aspects of the group membership and social roles that define who the person is to himself and others. These member-
ships and many of the sociocultural roles the individual plays, involve evaluations of the performance of these roles and the social value of his or her group memberships. Self-identity then is also structured by a pattern of evaluations and value characterizations derived from the interaction of how the individual actually performs, his own judgments of these performances, and how others judge him. At root what the person experiences is some level of self-worth or feelings of self-esteem. Self-evaluations of this kind, whether of a general nature or applied to specific roles and functions of the person, not only have consequences for the self-identity of the person but for his or her place-identity as well. The inability of a person to play a given role effectively coupled with a poor self-image in this respect, tends to distort the person's views and judgments of the spaces and places relevant to this role. The role related physical setting may induce anxiety and discomfort no less than playing the role itself; and perhaps of greater importance is the tendency to view the setting as not adequate in its support of the role demands made on the person. The related spaces and places rather than the person himself can be 'blamed' for his poor performance.

However, physical settings and their specific characteristics can be viewed and used in many other ways to protect the self-identity against low self-esteem. The setting can be overdone—'it is modern and up-to-date in every sense'—so that the individual tends to convince himself or herself and others that a negative performance is not possible. Low self-esteem and related conflicts in family life allow for and nourish distortion in the use of physical space. For example, the wife who persistently emphasizes her skill in maintaining the neatest and cleanest house as a measure of her own self-worth may be using it to protect her poor self-esteem insofar as the role of wife, mother, and community member.

This brings us to the end of our theoretical clarification of the concept of place-identity. In the remaining section of our paper we seek to sharpen our analysis and, more importantly, to examine some of the theoretical implications that follow from this conception of place-identity.

Some Theoretical Clarifications and Implications

Place-identity is theoretically conceived of in the present paper as clusters of positively and negatively valenced cognitions of physical settings. The substantive and valuative natures of these cognitions help to define who and of what value the person is both to himself and in terms of how he thinks others view him. While there has been more attention paid by psychologists to the impact of social roles on the development of self-identity, we put forward the hypothesis that the places and spaces a child grows up in, those that he or she comes to know, prefer, and seek out or avoid also contribute significantly to self-identity. Negatively valenced cognitions contribute to such a definition of the person by specifying the settings and their properties that are either not him, or even more significantly those settings which actually threaten his conceptions of self. Among the latter are first those that serve to identify such settings and thereby signal 'danger', and second, others that cognitively detail behavior mechanisms and strategies for avoiding or minimizing the threats and consequences of such danger. In a very broad sense, it can be said that all place-identity cognitions are positively valued in that they either define directly who the person is, or they do so indirectly by defending him and protecting him from those settings and
properties that threaten who he is and what he wants to be.

Not all physical setting socialization experiences—either positive or negative—end up as cognitions in the place-identity of the person. The human organism is neither capable nor motivated to ‘record’ all of the properties of a given physical setting (e.g. size of a room, color, location of windows, bed, chairs, etc.). On the other hand, even though physical settings are typically the ‘backgrounds’ for social interactions and social processes, far, far more of the properties of these settings are assimilated to some degree as aspects of place-identity than one would expect or certainly than the individual is aware of. It is, generally speaking, only when a physical setting becomes dysfunctional that a person becomes aware of his or her expectations for that setting. What was routine and in the background suddenly becomes the ‘figure’ in the thinking of those using the setting.

It can readily be assumed that some place-identity cognitions are more salient and significant in defining the self-identity of the person than others. If we follow the lead of modern personality theorists (Allport, 1961; Mahler, 1968; Erikson, 1968), then we already know how important the period from infancy through puberty is in explaining self-identity development. The social contexts which are generally recognized as singularly important in this development, are the home, the school, and the neighborhood. In terms of place-identity theory, this implies that the physical settings which help define and establish these contexts have considerable impact on the development of self-identity. However, this impact must be explained in its own right. We cannot simply assume that it occurs because of the close association of these physical settings with role learning in the young child, clearly, a critical aspect of the early socialization process. The theoretical conception of place-identity presented here implies at least three factors underlying the considerable influence of these physical settings on the development of place-identity in the individual.

First, the physical settings of the home, school and neighborhood—however they are structured in given cultures and subcultures—dominate the physical world existence of the child. He is not only immersed in them, but there is an unyielding continuity to the child’s exposure to these settings. This means that they have a ‘primacy’ and ‘recency’ to them which by itself suggests that they must have a considerable influence on place-identity development, and, therefore on self-identity conceptions and growth. By this we mean that depending on what period of the formative stages of the lifecycle, the child not only ‘begins’ his day in one of these settings but spends long periods in it to the extent that for a given day its impact involves both being first and last in the physical world experience of the child.

The influence of these settings, however, is not just a matter of constant exposure to them. It is in the home, school, and neighborhood settings that the child learns some of his or her most significant social roles such as sex, family member, peer-group member, ethnic group membership, and others. And in each instance the particular physical setting has a direct relevance to learning a given role by virtue of its physical design properties that express and are instrumental to particular requirements of that role. Thus, to take but a few examples, at home sex role differences in the children of a family are reflected in how rooms are designed, used, and kept by boys and girls, respectively. Among religious families, children soon learn what can and cannot be done with respect to religious articles in the home, and just how houses of worship in the neighborhood and their facilities are to be used.

Finally, we must note still another kind of learning that occurs in the home, school,
and neighborhood which directly relates to the demands that physical settings make on the child: he or she must engage in the continuing task of mastering his or her physical world in these contexts. In each of them the child must learn the environmental skills necessary to use them, change them if necessary, and thereby derive satisfaction from them. Environmental understanding, environmental competence, and environmental control all begin to emerge in the child's adaptation to each of these physical settings.

Our theoretical analysis of place-identity up to this point provides us with a sound basis for explaining the more specific and narrower conception of place-identity which we alluded to earlier in this paper, and which is better referred to as 'place-belongingness'. What is involved is the individual's strong desire for and emotional attachment to his or her early childhood home and its related physical settings. But why should this occur in some individuals and not in others? Place-belongingness undoubtedly occurs in those individuals whose place-identity involves positively valenced cognitions of one or some combination of these settings which far outweigh the number of negatively valenced cognitions. Physical settings of home, school and neighborhood that threaten, detract or interfere with the self-identity conceptions of the individual will not only preclude the development of place-belongingness but may indeed produce its very opposite, 'place aversion'.

Still another theoretical derivation can be drawn from our conceptual analysis of place-identity with respect to place-belongingness. The conditions that foster the development of such belongingness (or its opposite, place aversion) are by no means confined to the early childhood period of the lifecycle. Being immersed in given settings for long periods of time, developing new or improved environmental skills in them, and above all learning new social roles (e.g. spouse, parent, school teacher) does occur in the adult stages of the lifecycle. This means that place-belongingness undoubtedly develops during these periods of the lifecycle as well. Thus, for example, it is quite reasonable to believe that place-belongingness for the family setting may occur not only for children in the household, but also for the parents who bring them up. If the parents learned and developed their parental roles in this setting for a long period of time, and indeed the family house served them well, because they learned new environmental skills in using and running it, then there is every reason to expect the development of place-belongingness to some degree in these parents. It is evident that other settings in which adults learn new roles and environmental skills over extended periods of time, lend themselves to the same kind of analysis. Place-belongingness can and probably does occur at these later stages of the lifecycle and can be accounted for in terms of the theory of place-identity described in this paper.

Our explanation of place-belongingness needs to be deepened, since not all individuals develop a positive emotional attachment to home and its environs or to other significant role learning settings that occur in the later stages of the lifecycle. Thus, this raises the question of how cognitions of a given setting take on positive and/or negative valences in the place-identity of the individual. In this discussion we can do no more than simply identify three classes of interrelated factors that express both the complexity of person/physical setting interactions, and the inextricable relationships between the physical and social properties of the day-to-day environmental contexts. To begin with, the valences of place-identity cognitions must surely depend on the overall quality of the physical setting and its more specific properties including light, heat, available space, air and noise pollution and whatever else serves
Place-identity

the basic biological and culturally determined environmental needs and expectancies of the person. Included in these properties, of course, are all the objects, facilities, and equipment necessary for human activity and social interaction.

Experience tells us that the 'best and finest' physical setting measured in normative terms may not be enough for developing an abundance of positively valenced cognitions of this setting. The quality of a physical setting is also a function of the quality of the social context of which it is a part, the latter including how well individuals play their roles, the nature of their feelings toward each other, the degree of conflict and frustration that arises, the extent to which social expectancies are met, and still other factors. The best of physical settings may be of diminished value if, for example, the 'socializers' of the child, whether parents, teachers, or neighborhood adults, are in conflict with each other and are inadequate in the roles they play. For all of these reasons, physical settings whether in childhood or during adult periods in the life of the person, may indeed become threatening and painful leading to a buildup of many more negatively valenced cognitions than positive ones. When the child becomes a young adult, let us say a college-age student, then no matter how elegant or ivy covered the dorm that houses this student, rejection by faculty, poor academic performance, and/or rejection by peers may all lead to a very negatively valenced cluster of cognitions of the college setting itself. It is not that the very desirable physical properties of this setting actually decline in 'real value', but rather that they recede in importance or that their once very minor defects become perceived as major ones. A physical setting feature that once made the college special (e.g. an abundance of public open spaces) is now viewed as an anathema by the student because of his need to avoid interaction and to be seen by others.

Of course, whatever the time of life or the nature of the setting, the reverse is also true. Very poor physical settings may lead to many positive cognitions because the social context is a very rewarding and positive one for the person. Good role performances by others, strong interpersonal attachments, and the successful achievement of group and personal goals may redefine a poor and meager physical setting so that it is not only viewed quite positively, but actually 'works' for the person in what he or she needs and has to do. Except in the most extreme cases, even the poorest of physical settings may have positive possibilities for the child, if these possibilities are highlighted and utilized by parents or other adults in a context of relationships in which children feel loved, cared for, and respected by these individuals.

But we also know that even in cases where social relationships as well as the physical environment are not of the best, individuals still manage to 'transform' the inadequate physical settings so that positively valenced cognitions of these settings result. The strength and adaptability of the person in coping with such adversity undoubtedly plays a determining role in establishing the valence direction of place-identity cognitions, as do the particular expectations and beliefs about a setting in the light of differences between high and low level physical settings. In the case of the child experiencing what to an outsider is clearly a 'deprived' physical setting, it may well be that his or her perception and/or standards of evaluation differ from those of the adult. Although we know little about it, it may well be that young children evaluate spaces and places from a different vantage point than adults, thus enabling them to derive satisfactions that are not true of the latter.

Finally, what the child may resort to in some instances in order to cope is fantasy. Imagination coupled with ingenuity may well be important in the cognitive and actual
transformation of space, when neither good social relationships or other more desirable physical settings are available to allow for change. Adults, too, in later stages of the lifecycle may ‘transform’ physical settings by means of fantasy and other defensive processes such as denial and suppression. But as adults there are other kinds of resources available to them which indeed may actually transform or change a negatively valenced physical setting. Not only do adults have a greater variety of resources than the child (e.g. money, physical strength, status, environmental skills, etc.), but they have a greater freedom to use them.

The concept of ‘built environment’ is deeply rooted in our associations and beliefs about urban life. That ‘life’, of course, has been the nexus for the development of our complex industrialized society and with it has emerged in its urban residents very strong belief in and attachment to this way of life, or what is commonly referred to as urban-identity. By this we mean an association between the array of physical settings and the complex pathways that connect them which constitute an individual’s conception of the city, with his definition of ‘who I am’. Such cognitions extend to all the important settings which are a part of that person’s history and current life in the city and they are by no means exclusively positive cognitions. While there are a multitude of lifestyles that co-exist within any urban area, members of very different social and ethnic groups may experience New York City, for example, as essential to their self-identity. There would seem to be far more involved than simply the ‘additive’ consequence of positive and negative attachments resulting from the variety and diversity of specific physical settings in an urban context. The lifestyle that underlies urban-identity undoubtedly involves such general factors that characterize life in the big city as the size of space and numbers of people, complexity and variability of the visual scene, background noise level, the variety of alternatives within and among physical settings, the rapidity of technological change and the ‘instant’ availability of such change, and still other general aspects of an urban existence.

The variety of setting types and the generalized properties of the urban scene we just noted above, require that the individual’s environmental skills—understanding, competence, and control—meet the demands of this complex physical world. The fact that most urban dwellers to some degree do develop such skills thereby making the complex physical world of the city instrumental for their needs and purposes, undoubtedly contributes to positively valenced cognitions of or place-belongingness to the urban setting. However, negatively valenced cognitions are just as possible whether because the individual's potential for environmental skills development is not adequate or because other factors render these skills less than important in the face of other factors that influence the valence direction of physical setting cognitions. Social and interpersonal factors, as we have already suggested, may render the best of physical worlds as far less than that regardless of how skillful the person is in using that world. A long period of unemployment, intergroup conflicts, and other sources of frustration may have profound effects on the person’s cognitions about the value and purpose of urban life. Furthermore, if urban life itself ceases to operate effectively because human services such as transportation, education, medical care, or police protection fall below par for long periods of time, then once effective environmental skills may no longer be useful or important.

In speaking of environmental skills as an aspect of urban-identity, we are referring to the person’s knowing how to function in large crowds, use a complex rapid transit system, work in the midst of noise, navigate by foot through a city, use a tremendous
assortment of technical equipment, and in general cope with very tall buildings as places to live and work, streets and parks that are not always safe, and vast shopping areas and stores that often reflect the complexity of the city itself of which they are a part. All of these skills reflect the extent of an individual's more general abilities for environmental understanding, environmental competence, and environmental control. More importantly, they enable the city dweller to satisfy other complex physical setting needs and relationships. We are referring to desires for privacy, territoriality, personal space, and crowd coping whose satisfaction depends on how well the person can understand, behave competently in, and exert control over his or her physical setting. If we add to this the fact that the success of some if not all of the social roles the urban dweller plays depend on his or her environmental skills in using and functioning in the urban setting, it is safe to assume that the development of urban-identity is rooted in the realization of those skills as well.

It clearly follows from the concept of place-identity that we have presented in this paper, that urban-identity is characterized by changes as well as constancies throughout the urban dweller's lifetime. Social roles, and indeed even the environmental skills of the person may change with a decline in the intellectual, sensory, and motor facility of that individual as he or she ages. A loss of such skills or the failure to develop new ones may produce a decline in urban-identity indeed if not its opposite, a growing aversion to city life. However, it is perhaps more important to stress that place-identity and therefore urban-identity may change in its relevant cognitions because the values of our society change. The social movement of the 1960s and 1970s had without question its place-identity consequences for some groups of people.

One of the best contemporary examples we can give is the value changes of the role of women in our society initiated by the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Large numbers of women no longer perceive themselves as simply caretakers of the home but indeed view themselves as capable of having an occupational career. Of course, actual practice follows more slowly behind value changes, but in both instances physical settings whether in the household or the workplace will eventually also show change. The kitchen may no longer be strictly defined as the domain of the wife and mother in the household, and thus its structural and aesthetic physical characteristics may correspondingly change. A woman having a den or office in the home to do her professional work may soon become rather commonplace. What should be stressed is that the place-identity of many women who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s may indeed already reflect the cognitions of the sex role changes for women that took place in these two decades. Women are not only increasingly to be found on corporate boards, but are also serving as fire-fighters, members of local police forces, taxi drivers, and in important government and private sector executive positions; nor should we forget their increasing numbers as members of the clergy in some religious denominations.

The development of place-identity, however, is not a one way street in which value changes of our society influence particular roles, which in turn require relevant changes in physical settings leading to corresponding changes in cognitions. The 'dynamics' takes place at other 'starting points' and go in other directions as well. Modern technology often alters physical settings to such an extent and with such rapidity, that the roles of individuals are given to relatively sharp changes which are then reflected in corresponding place-identity changes. The advent of telecommunications in schoolroom settings, to which we can now add the use of the minicomputer, have
to some degree already altered the teacher’s function in the classroom which, in turn, has changed the kind of classroom setting he or she now needs and wants. The professional identity and therefore self-identity of the school teacher will undoubtedly shift over the next two decades in which it may well be as important to be a ‘teaching device specialist’ as it is to be able to relate to children or know an array of subject matters. With more generations of teachers we can expect a shift, if not a radical departure in their place-identity cognitions relevant to their professional roles. The change has undoubtedly begun to take place.

Finally, our concern with the dynamics of self-identity necessarily reminds us not to forget the individual and his or her unique experiences and characteristics as a source of changes in self-identity and place-identity. Changes in both are also rooted in sudden, intense, and unplanned events that occur in the life of the person. Thus, physical disabilities or handicaps resulting from illness or accidents may directly as well as indirectly change the place-identity cognitions of the person. The valences of places and spaces may shift in both directions as physical disabilities require avoiding some, adapting to others, and actually changing still others (e.g. the substitution of ramps in the home where there once were stairs). Some individuals in our society also experience the stress of a broken marriage, unemployment, the loss of loved ones due to illness, crime victimization, and so on. In each instance, there may emerge not only shifts in self-identity, but in the person’s ‘physical’ way of life as well. Persons who are divorced or who become widows or widowers must indeed often change where and how they live, as well as develop new or modify existing environmental skills (Proshansky et al., 1979). In this respect ‘learning to live alone’ can be as much of a problem in relation to a new or different physical setting as it is to the new experience of being alone in one’s home and not being able to converse with others on a regular basis.

We come now to the end of our paper and therefore some final summing up and comment is necessary. Social roles and social attributes serve as the conceptual nexus for understanding the development of self-identity via the socialization process that goes on throughout the lifecycle. In this respect we have directly tied our theoretical formulation and analysis of place-identity to the same conceptual structure. Place-identity cognitions express and reflect the physical settings and their properties that support and are directly relevant to the social roles and attributes that define who the person is, how he or she is to behave, and what he or she is worth. Whatever the original source of change—the lifecycle itself, changing values of society, or critical changes in the person—at the root of changes in cognitions of place-identity lie changes in the social roles and social attributes of the person and therefore in his self-identity.

What follows from this theoretical point of view is the derivation that the substantive clusters of cognitions that constitute the place-identity of the person will vary as a consequence of the major social roles and social attributes that distinguish different groups of individuals in our society (e.g. sex, occupation, social class, etc.). Why is this important? Perhaps only because the obvious has been neglected. Little, if any attention, has been given to differences between and among these groups insofar as environmental psychologists consider human privacy, territoriality, personal space, crowding behavior and other person/physical setting interactions. Even in the matter of environmental skills we have given little, if any attention to sex differences, class differences, ethnic differences, and still other group differences.
But the fact is that the individual is characterized by not one role or social attribute but a number of them at any point during the entire lifecycle. While each such role or attribute has consequences for the self-identity characteristics of the person, it is the pattern of these roles for various social, ethnic, religious, national, and occupational groups that leaves its unique design on the self-identity of the group member. Correspondingly, the place-identity cognition clusters of this individual will reflect this patterning of roles for individuals of different social groups and categories.

What this means then is that both theoretically and in terms of a research effort, place-identity may eventually require that we identify types of place-identities, and more particularly, types of urban-identities. Recognizing that we may be simplifying the issue given the multiple social roles and attributes of the person, let us use sex role as an example. Not only are men and women biologically different but in fact these differences are compounded by the differences in the social definitions of appropriate sex roles. A comparison of the place-identities of these two role groups should not only reveal these differences in relation to how they view, use, and react to urban physical settings, but also in how each group perceives and solves problems of privacy, personal space, crowding, and territoriality. For each one of these person/physical setting relationships we already know that the prescribed and proscribed sex role characteristics of men and women impose differences on how the two groups deal with those relationships. To take but one example, there is already evidence that the spaces and places that young boys retreat to or have ‘adventures in’ are quite different than those of young girls (Saegert and Hart, 1978).

As we have already suggested, our theoretical formulation of place-identity leads to the general proposition that there is not one but rather a variety of urban-identities, that is, a variety of ways that individuals feel a sense of belonging and identification with an urban way of life whether a specific city or urban settings generally. The differences among these identities lie in the complex of social roles that not only distinguish what individuals do, believe, and think, but also in the specific pattern of cognitions of places, environment skills, and person/physical setting relationships that underlie the place-identity of the person. If indeed varying social groups of individuals in an urban setting identify strongly with that setting but in different ways, then this finding itself implies that many practical issues with respect to the design, construction, and use of spaces and places would have to be considered in the light of this plurality of urban dwellers. Both the formulation of this kind of research as well as questions of research methodology must wait until a subsequent paper to be written by the authors.

References
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