

*Narratives of Identity and Place*. Stephanie Taylor. Routledge: London, 2010, 160 pages, 978-0-415-48047-5. £29.95 (Hardback)

The advent of late modernity has brought about ever-increasing mobility to the way people in contemporary affluent societies conduct their lives, particularly where they chose to live. Many no longer see relocation and migration in so negative a light as before; since the desire to move to another area or even country may no longer be a result of persecution or hardship, but rather of lifestyle choices or work opportunities. The traditional expectation of one spending one's entire life in the same town, city, or even country, very often no longer applies with popular culture going so far as to celebrate these "atomised" individuals who choose to 'relocate' themselves away from their birthplaces, home towns or countries.

Despite this increased mobility Stephanie Taylor sets out in this book to show that the place where people live still plays an important role in their identity and is significant within the narratives they use to express who they are. The central theme of the book lies in the examination of how common sense meanings both shape and limit people's *identity work* when establishing a connection to place. The fluid natures of the processes that go into the formation of identity are identified through Taylor's narrative-discursive approach, which stems from her understanding of critical discursive psychology. She "considers identity in terms of process and ongoing, open-ended change", which predicates that a "person's identity ('who I am') is fragmented and unfixed, differing, for example, from one situation to another". This departure provides for an interesting and often challenging approach to the subject with the author drawing from previous works on discourse analysis, discourse psychology and narrative psychology to interpret the idea of "resources" rather differently and employing a more detailed analysis of how "identity work" is done and carried out in talk.

Dividing the book into eight chapters, Taylor maps out her interpretation of how women's identities are formed in terms of narrative and the fluidity of process that goes into creating these narratives. The first three chapters give the reader a quite detailed analysis of the various theoretical frameworks which she uses to formulate her own hypothesis. The first chapter offers a general introduction to the subject; identifying some of the connections to be found between place and identity and helps to set the tone for the rest of the book, using selected extracts from an interview conducted with one participant - a woman referred to as P1 - to show how identity is often formed within the narratives that are created by the very act of speaking. Chapter two goes on to set out the main premise of the narrative-discursive approach which she uses throughout the book. In examining the works of Margaret Wetherell and Jerome Bruner amongst others, Taylor considers the various theories on narrative found within social psychology; and positions her own work as developing from established reflexive modernisation approaches, which have been further expounded in discursive psychological terms. Developing this further in chapter three, she looks at *place-identity* and the notion of 'home' in relation to identified places of residence. Again by drawing on debates within discursive psychology, she focuses on the possible links between gender and identity in talk and the significance of performance in relation to gender. Focusing on her participants' talk of remembering and memory in relation to the places that hold meaning in their lives, Taylor provides a detailed analysis of her interviews in chapters four through to seven.

In chapter four, she applies the discursive theories of remembering in order to understand how her participants construct their own life narratives retrospectively and suggests that these stories predominantly follow the traditional *born and bred narrative* she details earlier in the book. Chapter five continues this line of enquiry by applying the discursive psychology term of *trouble* in women's talk to analyse what limitations some women experience when trying to construct their own identity work through the idealised born and bred narrative. In chapter six Taylor identifies how women construct their relationship to place in less conventional terms, referring to safety and danger

within the narratives of the participants and how this trouble is resolved by some women, but not by others. Chapter seven departs somewhat from the rest of the book, where multiple interviews are analysed, by focusing on the experiences of one participant who has sought to resolve past troubles in her identity work by the way she structures her current 'nice' home. After experiencing numerous changes of residence over the course of her life it is suggested that for participant P12 having a nice home "has a special meaning...as a local resource through which she constructs her life narrative". Taylor concludes her book with a relatively short chapter eight, reiterating her position that contemporary identities of place are inherently tenuous by the very fact that they are subject to individual interpretations and imaginings.

Though the author is mainly concerned with how these changes in the relationship to place and its influence in understanding the self, as pertaining to the experiences of women within the theoretical framework of social psychology, her approach to the subject will be useful to anyone concerned with discourse and narrative analysis, and qualitative research methodologies more generally. The factors that influence how people construct their identities with very specific, often urban, spaces has long been of interest to social scientists and though not specifically addressing the urban experience, there is much that the urban researcher can take from this book. This reviewer was particularly interested in her use of the "born and bred narrative" as a point of departure and as a resource, which has a direct relevance to discourses on the city. Citing Ruth Finnegan's work on how we understand and experience the urban environment Taylor shows how the "born and bred narrative" has been used to differentiate existing urban populations, who see themselves as "authentically" belonging somewhere, as opposed to identified newcomers to an area. Researchers looking at urban migration will also find the book of particular use.

While the author has written an utterly compelling and enjoyable read, this reviewer had one minor issue with how a source, who features in the book on

a number of occasions, fails to appear in the references section, but does feature in the index. Though this was easily resolved with an internet search and is not in itself significant when looking at the broader context of the book's theoretical approach it did hamper this reviewer's efforts to follow the author's reasoning through the literature at an important point in her argument. Having said this, the author has produced an excellent book, which draws from her already substantial body of work, and will no doubt become requisite reading to those of us engaged in qualitative research in fields ranging from psychology, gender studies and narrative analysis to all facets of human geography; including most pertinently for this readership, critical and urban geographies.

Breffní Lennon

University College Cork, Ireland