

Space as a part of social identity

SUBMISSION TYPE (EITHER)

In our research we use a twofold theoretical background containing a model of spatial perception and a model of social identity. We blend both models and test them empirically.

First, we use a model of spatial perception according to which there are three different sets of factors determining the area we are looking for in space (this area is called 'search domain'):

(a) Bodily grounded topological and geometrical structures, (Landau & Jackendoff, 1993, Herskovits, 1986, Mandler, 1992);

(b) Functional knowledge (Coventry & Garrod, 2004); and

(c) Reference frame-based perceptual structures (Levinson, 1996).

Second model we use and relate to the first is a three-stage model of social categorization assuming that social categorization consists of (i) self-categorization based on the bodily and perceptually grounded conception of self, (ii) categorization of immediate social groups, and (iii) categorization of large-scale social groups (e.g., ethnic and political communities). Importantly the self-conception (first stage-categorization) includes significant others (Saribay & Andersen, 2007), i.e., second stage categorization, and is provided with an optimal balance between differentiation, being unique *and* belongingness to a community at the same time (Brewer, 1991, Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

Our model is statistically tested in using a representative sample of a survey analysis indicating that self-categorization of subject depends both on socio-demographic background and on spatially perceived and experienced structures of surrounding geographic and socioeconomic environment in everyday life contexts. The results show that negative experience (poverty, social exclusion, unemployment) of a subject within surrounding medium-scale and large-scale spaces (for extensive discussion about distinction of spaces using scale see Garling & Golledge, 1989) leads to avoidance of self-identification with socio-spatial communities in urban, regional and national scale.

Our results are more far-reaching than Saribay & Andersen, 2007 because our research indicates that self-conception includes not only significant others but also part of socio-spatial structure the subject is involved in.

An interesting theoretical consequence will be briefly discussed: according to our results not only personal environment but also spatial environment generates extended self of a subject.

Brewer, M. B., (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 475-482.

Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. (1996). Who is this "we"? Levels of collective identity and self representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 83-93.

- Coventry, K.R., & Garrod, S.C. (2004). *Saying, Seeing and Acting: The Psychological Semantics of Spatial Prepositions*. New York: Psychology Press,.
- Garling, T. & Golledge, R.G. (1989). Environmental perception and cognition. In E.H. Zube & G.T. Moore (eds.) *Advances in environment, behavior and design* Vol.2. (pp. 203-236). New York: Plenum Press.
- Herskovits, A (1986) *Language and Spatial Cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Landau, B, & Jackendoff, R (1993) "What" and "where" in spatial language and spatial cognition. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 16, 217-265.
- Levinson, S. C. (1996). Frames of reference and Molyneux's question: Cross- linguistic evidence. In P. Bloom, M. Peterson, L. Nadel, & M. Garrett (Eds.), *Language and space* (pp. 109-169). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Mandler, J. M. (1992). How to build a baby II: Conceptual primitives. *Psychological Review*, 99, 587-604.
- Saribay, S.A., & Andersen, S.M (2007). Relational to collective: significant-other representations, ethnic categories, and intergroup perceptions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33, 1714-1726.