

Children's Place Attachments

Place Attachment

Key ideas

- Place attachment can be defined as 'the emotional bonds between people and a particular place or environment' (Seamon, 2014: 11). It is experienced as warm positive emotions about the place, and associated with a sense of security, familiarity and belonging, and identification with the place.
- It can be rooted in a sense of connectedness with the place (through birth, residence, etc.) or the physical attributes of the place (beauty, peacefulness, etc.), or both.
- It appears to develop through significant and positive experiences of and in particular places, although the specific processes involved remain debated (Scannell and Gifford, 2010; Devine-Wright, 2014) and under-researched (Lewicka, 2011).
- Places of attachment can be restorative - being in them, seeing symbolic representations of them, imagining them...
- Disruptions to place attachment (Brown and Perkins, 1992) can take place when: the place is left (voluntarily or involuntarily), something happens in the place to damage the relationship to it, the place itself changes

In relation to children and young people

- Comparisons with theories of interpersonal attachment (Bowlby, 1953) focus on parallels in proximity-seeking, the notion of a secure base (Bowlby, 1998) and separation distress (Scannell and Gifford, 2014).
- Morgan (2010) suggests that early place attachment develops through a cycle of the recurring exploratory and attachment behaviours. A secure child will explore new places, but if distressed or frightened reverts to an attachment figure, who provides comfort and soothing; place attachment develops due to the association between the positive feelings experienced during contact with the comforting caregiver, and the sense of mastery and adventure experienced during exploration.
- Chawla (1992) explored childhood attachment places, discovering that outdoor places were of particular significance in mid-childhood.
- Spencer (2006) has hypothesised that place attachment has a role in the development of a child's self-identity.
- In adolescence, young people tend to develop new place attachments, mirroring the processes of separation and individualisation from childhood attachment figures (Dallago et al, 2009)

Questions

- Is awareness of the concept of children's place attachment useful for those who work in the CYP's mental health field?
- What is the relationship between children's place attachments and their psychological wellbeing and mental health?
- (How) is understanding of place attachments useful/relevant for those who work in the CYP's mental health field?

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