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Understanding College Students'
Sense of Home and Its Effect on Well-Being

by

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ABSTRACT

Feeling “at home” is a universal experience that develops during childhood and is maintained throughout adulthood. Despite the importance of home in all stages of life, the psychological literature is lacking in studies of how young adults specifically feel “at home” in short term living spaces like college dormitories. The present study explored the experience of feeling “at home” or “not at home” among college students living on campus and how these feelings contribute to their overall sense of well-being. Nine students from diverse backgrounds were interviewed and their subjective experiences of “home” were analyzed using a phenomenological approach. The study also examined photographs of students’ living spaces on campus to supplement the interview data and to contextualize their experiences of home. Findings indicated striking variations in the meanings behind students’ sense of home, which were explored in terms of their implications for well-being and success in college.

INTRODUCTION

A sense of home is a universal experience. From childhood, individuals begin to develop an awareness of home based on their daily place of residence (Israel, 2003; Jack, 2010). Children typically develop ideas and expectations of home by learning the physical aspects and geographic location of their parents' or caregivers' house, performing daily activities at home and even incorporating the idea of home in their play by utilizing objects and/or natural settings to build makeshift playhouses and establish favorite childhood places (Jack, 2010; Marcus, 1995). As they mature, individuals retain these past ideas and expectations of home, and continue to build on their concept of home (Israel, 2003).

According to Moore (2000), the experience of home has always been an important subject of study across a multitude of disciplines, from literature to architecture to social sciences. For the purposes of this study, home as a concept is mainly explored within the psychological literature, specifically within environmental psychology. In particular, the 1970s saw a surge of studies that explored the meaning of home (Moore, 2000). Located in space and time, home is a special place to which individuals and groups attribute spatial, social, psychological and emotive meanings (Easthope, 2004). Furthermore, meanings of home vary depending on the type of population and the nature of the context. Since people ascribe their own personal meanings to home, Easthope (2004)

argued that there is not one true definition of home that encompasses all contexts and people. Rather, the best way to conceptualize home is to understand it from different perspectives and to determine the distinct types of meaning that individuals and groups attribute to home.

Research on the different meanings of home revealed that the same themes of security, privacy, control and intimacy consistently emerged (Moore, 2000). As a result, a specific language that captures the meaning of home emerged. Utilizing this language, Després (1991) compiled a comprehensive list of 10 different meanings of home from six empirical studies. Meanings included home as security and control, reflecting personal ideas and values, physical space, manipulation of physical space, permanence and continuity, relationships with family and friends, activity center, sanctuary, indicating socioeconomic status, and as ownership (Després, 1991). Although this meaning list was thorough, Moore (2000) critiqued it for its underlying implication that all meanings of home are equally and universally relevant and significant, and its failure to construct clear relationships between meanings. In contrast, the present study aimed to ascertain the meanings behind home in a way that highlights their salience to different individuals and to establish relationships between meanings.

Establishing a Feeling of Home

Although sense of home is an experience that continues to develop throughout childhood and into adulthood, it can still be taken for granted

(Duyvendak, 2011; Easthope, 2004). Feeling “at home” is associated with more inconspicuous emotions, such as a sense of safety, contentment and security.

However, the absence of these emotions is immediately and powerfully felt by the individual as feeling “not at home.” As Duyvendak (2011) wrote, feeling not at home is a more prominent and potent experience compared to the more passive awareness of feeling at home. As such, by being aware that one does not feel at home, one becomes more conscious of one’s own sense of home. Relocating to a new and unfamiliar residence usually stirs feelings of being not at home and leads to a heightened awareness of the individual’s own sense of home. It can be difficult and take time to feel at home in a new place, which spurs the individual to act to try to feel more at home (Duyvendak, 2011). By deliberately constructing and manipulating space, the individual begins to establish a sense of home (Easthope, 2004).

The experience of moving away from home and into college is a prime example of a time when most individuals who attend college begin to feel and critically evaluate their sense of home. College students who have relocated and felt not at home typically become aware and introspectively reflect on the role and impact of home in their lives. This newfound self-awareness drives them at least to try cultivating a sense of home in college (Tognoli, 2003). Utilizing this context of a newfound awareness of sense of home triggered by residential

relocation, this study aims to analyze how college students feel at home or not at home when living on campus.

To this end, this study considered sense of home as an umbrella term that encompasses place attachment, Duyvendak's (2011) "familiarity, haven and heaven elements" and Israel's (2003) environmental autobiography concept. Specifically, sense of home encompasses past and present experiences, perceptions, interactions, feelings and meanings ascribed to a familiar place of significance that ideally provides safety, support, control and privacy (Israel, 2003; Jack, 2010; Duyvendak, 2011; Rollero and De Piccoli, 2010).

Place Attachment

Prior research on the psychology of home has mainly discussed place attachment, which is defined as the bond between people and a physical space as a result of past experiences, interactions and meanings ascribed to the place (Harris, Werner, Brown & Ingebritsen, 1995; Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010). Also referred to as people-environment or self-place bonds, this relationship between a person and a place consists of the person's emotions, perceptions and cognitions around the particular place (Harris et al., 1995; Israel, 2003; Jack, 2010).

Although place attachment certainly captures a major aspect of how people feel at home, this study assumed that a sense of home is made up of more than just place attachment alone.

It is important to recognize that home is not just any place that people control, or with which they interact and develop emotions. Home is a particularly significant and meaningful place among all places for its crucial role in the fundamental aspects of a person's everyday life, from execution of daily activities, identity development to formation of social relationships (Easthope, 2004). In addition, home is all the more special because it can take on a multitude of forms for different people (Marcus, 1995; Sixsmith, 1986). One can feel at home in a room, or call an entire country home (Duyvendak, 2011). Traditionally, home can be where an individual has lived the longest or where loved ones reside. However, home can also be a frequently visited natural environment setting that brings peace of mind. Most of all, home is not always a single place; rather, people may feel at home in many different places (Sixsmith, 1986).

With home having such diverse meanings, the concept of place attachment may not adequately put the same kind of emphasis on home that it deserves. Furthermore, place attachment research has also been criticized for its understatement of subjective feelings, instead focusing on emotions or affects which are considered more scientifically quantifiable and indeed are measured through quantitative scales (Duyvendak, 2011; Marcus 1995). Hence, the present study assumed that place attachment by itself does not fully explain all aspects of an individual's sense of home and the phenomenon of feeling at home.

Familiarity, Haven and Heaven

To learn more about the psychology of feelings underlying being “at home” or being “not at home”, Duyvendak’s (2011) contributions were incorporated into the definition of sense of home. According to Duyvendak (2011), an ideal home consists of three main elements: familiarity, haven and heaven. Familiarity refers to a feeling of knowing and understanding the nature of a place. Because it is known, a familiar place can put individuals at ease and create a sense of safety, which may also lead to bonding between the individual and the place (place attachment). Familiarity is cultivated through time and the constant performance of activities and routines in that space. College students feeling more at home in their residence halls and rooms simply by hanging out and living there for some time is a prime example. Duyvendak (2011) stressed that familiarity is one essential characteristic for feeling at home but it alone is insufficient.

Haven, the second element for feeling at home, is defined as a private sanctuary that allows people to feel safe, secure and free. A haven is also assumed to be relatively predictable and comfortable. For example, college students may feel more at home on college campuses that provide security, privacy and encourage freedom of expression. Finally, heaven is indicated as a feeling of belonging to a broader, shared sense of place and community (i.e., neighborhood,

city, country), as opposed to smaller places (i.e., room, house) where one can freely express and grow along with other people to reach one's full potential.

Although the familiarity, haven and heaven elements seem to have a positive connotation, individuals' places of residence are not always ideal and can lead to a negative or even non-existent sense of home. As Duyvendak (2011) astutely observed, a familiar place can hold bad memories, and not all homes can be completely secure, private and feel like a haven or heaven. Consequently, a home that feels like heaven for a group of people can result in the exclusion of others who have different values and/or are not originally from that home (Duyvendak, 2011). The ambivalent nature of home as heaven is particularly important in studying students' sense of home in college. For instance, the current study on students' sense of home was conducted at Mount Holyoke College which is known for its homey atmosphere. This prevalent cultural attitude on campus may appear inclusive and "heaven-like" to students who share the same sentiment but also inadvertently contribute to the alienation of students who do not associate the college as home or are facing difficulties in adjusting. Studying lived experiences of students could illustrate their different senses of home in the ways they feel or do not feel at home and the factors that contribute to these reactions.

Environmental Autobiography

This study's definition of sense of home also accounted for the role that an individual's environmental autobiography plays on the present sense of home. An environmental autobiography is a unique makeup of all of an individual's past homes, which can range from rooms to countries (Israel, 2003). According to Israel (2003), environmental autobiography contributes to the choice and personalization of individuals' current home with the current physical home reflecting certain aspects of past homes. Individuals can choose to bring in elements from their old homes and incorporate them into the new. Or, in contrast, current homes can also be an expression of resistance to former homes and lifestyles. Regardless, environmental autobiography seems to have an effect on the establishment of the present sense of home.

For college students, past homes typically include their parents' house and their own room in that house. Moving into a new dorm room in college, students can try to feel more at home by rearranging the furniture and putting up decorations (Thomsen, 2007). Thus, the way students choose to decorate and personalize their dorm room may reflect their past homes and ideas of home. Students may also refuse to conform to former ways of living within their parents' home and create a new sense of home as they embrace new aspects of themselves in a new place. Thus, studying students' environmental autobiographies as

reflected in the personalization of their dorm room can shed light on their overall sense of home in college.

Sense of Home

To understand sense of home, the current study defined sense of home as the integration of the bonds between a person and a significant place (place attachment), the person's feelings towards home (i.e., familiarity, haven and heaven) and the influence of past homes (environmental autobiography) on the present home. Place attachment explains the nature of the relationship born out of experiences and interactions between an individual and a place. Duyvendak's (2011) familiarity, haven and heaven elements describe the particular feelings that are associated with a significant place like home. In addition, a time dimension is added to the definition of sense of home with the incorporation of environmental autobiography. With all three concepts, sense of home is no longer a static phenomenon but a multidimensional concept that includes a temporal context as well as psychological contexts. Specifically, this study's primary goal was to understand what sense of home means for college students.

Most research on sense of home focuses on permanent or long-term residences of adults and nuclear families, and not on temporary residences like college student dorms. College students occupy residence halls fully aware that they will only be living there for a short period of time. In her study, Thomsen (2007) found that college students in Norway put in effort to decorate and try to

feel at home in their dorm rooms despite knowing the expiration date of their lives in these residences. Clearly, a sense of home is not only cultivated in permanent residences but also in temporary ones like college housing.

Similarly, Romanelli (2013) studied 15 students participating in a post-high school year-long gap year program, using a phenomenological approach. Findings revealed that participants' meanings of home were in relation to a concrete place, to significant others or were lacking. Except for one participant, home was a significant multidimensional experience that affected their security and freedom, and evoked feelings of comfort, love and nostalgia. With home affecting such basic affective needs such as security, comfort and freedom in emerging adults, it is necessary to learn more about sense of home during a stage when individuals are learning to develop their own identity (Romanelli, 2013).

The goal of the current study was to add to the existing literature on sense of home for young adults living in temporary living spaces like that of college campuses. As Thomsen (2007) argued, the establishment of a sense of home at any stage in life, whether in adolescence or adulthood, is warranted and should be encouraged. The transient nature of student housing should not deter researchers but instead motivate further research to be conducted on college students' sense of home. Moreover, it is between the ages of 18 and 25 that individuals explore and develop their identity (Arnett, 2000). Recognizing this need for more research, the current study's aim was to study college students not because of their abundance

and convenience but because of the particular circumstance in which a sense of home was activated and the transient nature of students' residences that comes with this particular stage in life.

Well-Being

Understandably, relocation for college students can be stressful regardless of the distance travelled from the parents' home (Harris et al., 1995; Thomsen, 2007). Tognoli (2003) found that the further the parents' home was from college, the more the students suffered from homesickness. Homesick students scored lower on self-esteem, internal locus of control and ego identity which indicated an adverse effect of relocation on well-being. Well-being, or quality of life, is defined as the highest form of mind, behavior and experience (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Past literature has revealed a relationship between place attachment and well-being (Harris et al., 1995; Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010). Thus, the current study's secondary goal was to understand the relationship between sense of home and well-being.

Different types of well-being abound in the literature which includes personal, social and psychological well-being. Previous studies on well-being have focused more on the effects of social relationships on well-being, and largely overlooked the impact of physical spaces and place attachment on quality of life. For example, in a study on well-being, the strength of place attachment as a predictor of quality of life in urban environments came as a surprise to the

researchers, while social support as a predictor had been initially emphasized and foreseen (Tartaglia, 2013). Nonetheless, place attachment has been shown to affect an individual's personal, social and psychological well-being (Easthope, 2004; Harris et al., 1995; Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010; Stokols, Shumaker & Martinez, 1983).

In their study, Stokols et al. (1983) investigated the relationship between residential relocation and personal well-being. Personal well-being is defined as an individual's perceived health status. They discovered that the effect of residential relocation on health and personal well-being was mediated by psychological factors, such as quality of relationship with the current residence (place attachment) and quality of past residences (environmental autobiography). That is, the relationship between residential relocation and well-being depended upon place attachment and environmental autobiography. That study's findings suggested that less place attachment, and consequently a more negative sense of home, may be associated with lower personal well-being.

Place attachment has been found to affect social well-being as well (Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010). Social well-being is defined as the perceived quality of relationships with the environment and its community (Keyes, 1998). In Rollero and De Piccoli's (2010) study, different spatial ranges of place attachment (neighborhoods or cities) contributed differently to social well-being. Place attachment to a city was reported to be significantly associated with high

perceived quality and a strong understanding of the community and people's own place in it. However, place attachment to neighborhoods revealed that people may trust the quality and potential of their community but find it difficult to understand and fully comprehend it. Thus, the effect of place attachment on social well-being was different depending on the size of the place - whether the place was a neighborhood or a city (Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010).

A relationship between psychological well-being and place attachment has also been established (Harris et al., 1995; Ryff, 1989). Psychological well-being describes the process towards self-actualization in which autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery and positive relationships indicate a fulfilling life (Lent, 2004; Ryff, 1989). In her study, Ryff (1989) collected self-rating scores of individuals on the six aforementioned aspects of psychological well-being. The aspect that most relates to the current study was environmental mastery, which refers to people's ability to choose and/or control environments to complement their own emotional and mental needs. Her study found that individuals who scored high on environmental mastery also scored high on life satisfaction, self-esteem and morale. This finding indicated that the interaction and manipulation of the environment, or place, can contribute to an individual's psychological well-being. Self-report ratings also revealed that environmental mastery improved with age, and was steadily maintained well into old age. Thus, the current study assumed that environmental

mastery and sense of home could be more significant in older students like juniors and seniors as compared to younger students.

Harris et al.'s (1995) study on privacy regulation also showed a connection between place attachment and psychological well-being in university students. Individuals who scored high on quality of life measures were found to have greater place attachments to their campus residences. As such, the current study aimed to learn more about Mount Holyoke students' psychological well-being in relation to place attachment. However, since different types of well-being have been associated with place attachment according to prior research, the study specifically examined how sense of home contributes to students' overall quality of life, instead of focusing on a single type of well-being alone.

Using the same logic, Gattino, De Piccoli, Fassio and Rollero (2013) investigated the role of place attachment and sense of community on overall quality of life in adults living in Italy. In this study, quality of life consisted of physical, psychological, relational and environmental aspects of well-being. Utilizing data from self-report survey questionnaires, researchers found that sense of community significantly affected physical, psychological and environmental aspects of quality of life. In contrast, the relationship between place attachment and quality of life did not reach significance for any aspect of well-being. Thus, place attachment was found not to predict quality of life (Gattino et al., 2013). However, since the current study's sense of home includes not only place

attachment but also a feeling of heaven-like sense of community, a relationship was assumed to exist between sense of home and overall well-being.

The Current Study

To summarize, past research on home has largely neglected to study sense of home experienced in temporary living spaces, as well as sense of home experienced by young adults. Since residential relocation was shown usually to evoke an awareness of a person's sense of home, there is a need to study college students who leave their parents' house to live in a residential college.

Responding to this need, the current study primarily strove to understand what sense of home was for college students. By extension, the study also examined whether students feel "at home" or "not at home" in college. The establishment of a sense of home was of particular interest with the study examining how students interacted and shaped Mount Holyoke campus places, especially their dormitory rooms. The current study also sought to understand how the contribution of students' sense of home to their well-being may be different depending on whether they feel more at home in their dorm rooms, other spaces on campus or Mount Holyoke in general.

Furthermore, since past studies have indicated a connection between place attachment and different types of well-being, the current study's secondary aim was to examine the relationship between sense of home and overall well-being of college students. Specifically, the study investigated how sense of home

contributes to students' overall well-being. If a sense of home is established in college, how does feeling at home contribute to students' well-being? If a sense of home is lacking, how does feeling not at home affect students' well-being?

To this end, the study aimed to analyze subjective experiences of students with varying senses of home through the collection and analysis of interviews and photographs of their subjectively defined home-like places on campus. By raising awareness of sense of home as a crucial factor in well-being, this research was considered to have potential benefit to residential educational institutions in helping students experience a fulfilling college life which may in turn lay the groundwork for a satisfying adult life.

METHOD

Participants

To examine sense of home, students who lived on campus for at least a year and were currently living in single rooms in Mount Holyoke College residence halls were recruited. Students sharing a bedroom with roommate(s) were not recruited as the shared room was assumed to be a reflection of all roommates instead of a pure reflection of the participant alone. Thus, only single room residents were offered the opportunity to participate in the study since they have complete autonomy and agency to manipulate their current living space.

Prior research and personal experience has shown that the cultivation of a sense of home can take time (Duyvendak, 2011). To allow for the development of their sense of home, only students who lived on campus for at least two semesters were recruited. The rationale for this criterion was that students will have at least tried to feel at home in Mount Holyoke, if not cultivated and solidified their sense of home, by the third semester of living on campus. If students do not feel at home at Mount Holyoke, having lived there for at least two semesters will have allowed them to explore and understand the reasons behind their feelings.

Commuting students, students who were abroad, on leave or living off-campus were not recruited as the study required their concurrent experience of living on campus at the time of participant recruitment.

With the goal of having as diverse a sample of participants as possible, students who could share unique experiences and perspectives as a result of their personal background (eg. international students, Frances Perkins scholars, students who have had frequent residential relocations across countries) were personally invited to take part in the study. The study was also promoted through word of mouth and written word through flyers posted around campus and on online forums.

Participants consisted of nine Mount Holyoke College students between the ages of 19 and 27. They included eight women and one non-binary gender individual. With the exception of one sophomore, participants were all seniors. Six participants were domestic students, one was an international student and one was a Frances Perkins Scholar. Although officially a domestic student due to her parents' nationality, one participant personally identified as an international student with her experience reflecting that of an individual who had always lived outside of the United States. Five participants grew up and lived in one place before attending Mount Holyoke College. Due to the nature of their parents' work, three participants had the experience of moving and living in many different cities and countries while growing up. Similarly, one participant had also relocated many times after moving out of her parents' house before transferring to Mount Holyoke College.

To have an extensive range of senses of homes, participants were continuously recruited until a range of experiences were reflected in the data. At the time of recruitment, all participants lived in a single room in different dorms with one participant occupying a single room within a suite. Participants were assigned with pseudonyms, and places that participants had lived or studied abroad were similarly disguised.

Procedure

To maximize participants' sense of control, the data collection took place in their dorm rooms at a convenient time that worked for both the participant and the researcher. Participants filled out a consent form in which they were informed of their right to confidentiality, anonymity and the options to decline to answer any interview question or withdraw from the study at any point without question or penalty (Appendix A). Consent to have the interview be audio recorded and have their dorm rooms and/or other campus places they call home be photographed were also obtained. After they had given consent and agreed to participate, data collection began. During data collection, the researcher took notes on participants' behavior and reactions.

First, participants took part in Marcus's (1995) warm-up exercise (Appendix B). The exercise involved asking participants to freely write down or draw on paper their thoughts and feelings about home in general and/or specifically their own home. According to previous research, the emotion of

feeling at home can be difficult to put into words (Duyvendak, 2011; Marcus, 1995). Being overlooked and taken for granted, the feeling of being at home can be subordinated to the person's other stronger and more conspicuous feelings (Duyvendak, 2011). Additionally, its universal applicability can lead to stunted and superficial discussions of home as people graze the topic of home, assuming that others know exactly what they mean, instead of fully exploring it (Marcus, 1995). To prime participants on their sense of home, allow them time to reacquaint themselves with the subject and help them feel less pressured to discuss a complex and deeply rooted topic, Marcus's (1995) warm-up exercise was utilized. Similarly, to orient participants on their thoughts and feelings regarding Mount Holyoke College, participants were also asked to engage in the same exercise but instead express their ideas about Mount Holyoke on a separate paper. They were given a total of 10 minutes to complete the exercise on both topics.

After they completed their warm-up exercise, the audio recording began and participants were asked to describe and explain what they wrote and drew about home and Mount Holyoke. Then, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with the participants to learn in-depth about students' sense of home and well-being, using a general interview guide (Appendix C). Participants were interviewed on their concepts of home, their general thoughts and feelings on Mount Holyoke, where they feel at home on campus and their

college life. After the interview, photographs of their dorm room were taken to examine how students use materials and manipulate their living space to cultivate a sense of home. If participants indicated in the interview that they feel at home in other campus places, photographs of those other spaces were taken with permission at a later time. Regardless of whether participants feel at home or not at home in their room, photographs of their room were collected for analysis.

Finally, participants were thanked for their involvement and compensated with a \$10 gift card from a store of their choice. Data collection lasted between 30 minutes and an hour and a half. Later, interviews were transcribed, with pauses, breaks and general reactions of participants noted in the transcriptions.

Data Analysis

The goal of this study was to explore how students feel “at home” or “not at home” in college and to analyze the relation between their sense of home and well-being. To that end, participants’ warm-up exercise and interviews were analyzed using a modified phenomenological method articulated by Giorgi (1975). Phenomenology allows researchers to understand the different ways by which an experience can be structured, thereby illuminating the nature of the experience of interest and the way people are affected by that particular experience. An experience can manifest itself in different types or forms depending on the individual. It is possible that there may be more types than the researcher was able to determine due to the sample of participants studied. The

goal of phenomenology is to determine the essence of an experience, or what qualities make up an experience for it to be that particular experience and no other (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). The benefit of phenomenology is that it gives researchers a chance to explain phenomena according to the perspectives of participants and in the way that participants actually experience them.

In this study, phenomenology allowed the researcher to understand the essence of students' feeling "at home" or "not at home" in college. In addition, this type of analysis examined students' varying senses of home at Mount Holyoke College in a way that first and foremost emphasized the particular perspectives and experiences of the students. According to the phenomenological method (Giorgi, 1975; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003), the researcher first reads transcripts of participants' experiences of home multiple times, employing the technique of phenomenological reduction. This means that the researcher attempts to suspend prior beliefs and personal experiences with feeling at home or not at home, by recording presuppositions about her own sense of home and attempting to the greatest extent possible to ensure that those presuppositions do not shape the researcher's interpretation of the data. The purpose of the phenomenological reduction is to view the phenomenon of feeling at home from a fresh perspective and understand it as it is.

With phenomenological reduction in mind, the researcher next separated the interview transcripts into meaning units which are chunks of an interview

transcript, each with its own theme and meaning. Next, these meaning units were transformed from the participants' own words to psychologically relevant and generally applicable descriptions, called situated structures. Using free imaginative variation that helps illuminate how sense of home can vary in different contexts, the researcher lastly determined the typical structures, or types of sense of home as embodied by the participants (Giorgi, 1975). Typical structures reveal the different forms the phenomenon of home can manifest in college students. After the essential typical structures had been determined, the overall effect of sense of home on well-being was examined.

To comprehensively study the experience of feeling at home or not at home, it was important to investigate the roles that physical elements and spaces play on establishing a sense of home. Along with interviews, collecting and analyzing photographs of dorm rooms and other campus places allowed the researcher to provide a spatial and material context for students' home experiences on campus. Specifically, photographic evidence shed light on the many different ways a dorm or other campus place was used, manipulated and interacted with by students. To that end, the current study utilized the methods of visual analysis as explained by Riessman (2008) to examine a sense of home that is cultivated through the interaction and manipulation of physical spaces by students.

Photographs were interpreted through close reading of details. Close reading entails understanding the context in which the photograph was taken, identifying detailed individual elements, how elements are organized and used by participants, noting color composition and determining the overall subjective feeling evoked by the organization of elements in the photographs (Riessman, 2008). Visual analysis of spaces supplement information obtained from the interview by providing an additional lens with which to further understand sense of home (Reavey, 2011). Similarly, the interpretation of photographs serving as supplementary information appropriately aids the researcher in painting a clear and solid picture of the experience of feeling at home or not at home according to the ways participants experience them.

Presuppositions

The idea of home is especially important to me due to strong attachments to my family in Myanmar and the long distance between my family home and college. Thus, I have been aware and thought about my own sense of home since my first year at Mount Holyoke College and have had to work to feel at home in college. It took me a whole year and more until I finally felt comfortable and more at home on campus. The fact that I found my niche and close group of friends through the campus job I began in my sophomore year may have largely contributed to my establishment of a sense of home. Currently, in my senior year, I can honestly and proudly say that I do feel at home living on campus and call

Mount Holyoke home. I have come to realize that I am someone who needs to feel at home in a place wherever I am. In fact, I now have confidence in myself that I can feel at home no matter where I live simply for the reason that I myself am there. In the past, my sense of home existed within the important people in my life. Now, my sense of home lies within myself.

Relocating away from a parental home into a college dorm room is a rite of passage that is akin to moving into the first apartment, allowing one to feel and be treated like an independent and responsible adult. With this newfound sense of autonomy and control over one's living arrangements in a new place, not all individuals immediately adjust and feel at home. Similarly, I took time to cultivate my sense of home on campus. First year and sophomore students are likely to be in that stage where they are still figuring out their own identities and sense of home in college. However, I believe that students who have lived on campus for at least a year or who are juniors and seniors will have already learned their likes, dislikes, wants and needs for them to feel at home.

For students who do not feel at home in Mount Holyoke, I believe that they would have explored, or at least understood, the reasons behind their lack of sense of home. Because I was particularly attuned to my sense of home and had to act to feel at home in Mount Holyoke, I assume that everyone in some way tries to feel at home in college. However, this may not be the case. There may be students who do not need or want to feel at home on campus for a variety of

reasons, such as a strong attachment to their parents' house or little time spent actually living on campus during weekends. Nonetheless, I believe that whether students feel at home or not at home, their dorm room and their daily place of residence will reflect and illuminate their sense of home at Mount Holyoke.

Students' sense of home may also differ depending on their personal background. Due to long distances between their home country and America, the process of establishing a sense of home may take more time and adjustments for international students, compared to domestic students. Frances Perkins scholars' sense of home may also offer unique insights since they may already have had the experience of establishing their own personal permanent homes and thus, have a more solidified sense of home. On the other hand, students who have had to relocate frequently as a result of perhaps their parents' jobs may harbor a more mobile and versatile sense of home that can deal with constant residential changes and relocations. As different as student's senses of home may be however, I believe that feeling at home or not at home plays a major role on their well-being, particularly their happiness and satisfaction with their life at Mount Holyoke.

There may be different ways through which sense of home affects students' quality of life in Mount Holyoke. One possibility is that establishing a sense of home leads to identity-making and development which consequently affects quality of life. For example, the way a place is manipulated and controlled can reflect an identity that is concurrently developing within a student. It is

possible that the actual personalization of a place can build identity as well. In any case, with a stronger and more developed sense of self, a student may feel happier and satisfied with her college life. However, it is possible that an entirely different explanation for the contribution of sense of home to well-being emerges from the data.

RESULTS

Situated Structures (Group 1)

Cara.

Happiness is integral to Cara's well-being and sense of home. Associating happiness with "taking things one at a time and not feeling bogged down," she makes sure that she is generally happy and "in a good spot." In addition to her "chill" way of going with the flow, Cara feels happy and at home by feeling comfortable and free to do what she wants. Being able to make food the way she likes it and having a well-equipped kitchen to cook that food are some amenities that make Cara feel free and at home. Ideally, Cara feels at home where "you just feel comfortable enough where you're literally [like] anything goes."

Unfortunately, living on a college campus does have its limits on the "anything goes" freedom that Cara requires in a home. Cara has to follow rules and regulations set by the college, such as refraining from lighting scented candles in her dorm room. Cara dislikes the institutional aspect of Mount Holyoke as well. Although others praise Mount Holyoke College on its progressive thinking in terms of social justice and equality, Cara finds it "annoying" that people apply this "binary" of progressiveness. She declares, "I don't ever envision my home as being forward or backward." Politics of progressiveness make Mount Holyoke appear more institutional and less like a home to Cara.

Moreover, on campus, her academic life and social life are “deeply intertwined” and “all wrapped up into one.” This intertwining of school, work and social life feels “weird” and “not real” for Cara who denounces the concept of including school and work in home. School, work and institutional politics create a stressful atmosphere that has no place in Cara’s sense of home. Instead, to feel comfortable in her room and the greater Mount Holyoke campus, Cara compromises. “I try to make my own here with the things that I do have ... I made it what I could.” Because she did what she can with what was available, Cara has done the best to feel comfortable and fulfilled at Mount Holyoke.

Indeed, Cara’s dorm room is a reflection of her efforts to feel comfortable and happy. Photographs of friends and places, art pieces and decorations that she finds beautiful are displayed on the wall (see Figure 1). Although she tries to make her room feel more inviting to friends and guests, her sense of comfort trumps all else. Compromising what she can with the small room size and forbidden items, Cara makes do to feel as comfortable and at home as she can in her room. Since she associates home with the color purple, she puts up purple curtains and uses purple bed sheets (see Figure 2). Cara’s room shows her personality and how she uses elements to feel “comfy.” Because she puts in effort to feel at home in her room, Cara succeeds in feeling at home in her room. However, she does not refer to the larger Mount Holyoke campus as home.

Essentially, Cara associates home with a permanent address. “I’ve always had this correlation where I’m like, this is where I’m from, this is where I grew up, this is also like my address.” As a result, Cara does not view Mount Holyoke as home because she has her permanent main address in her mother’s house where she grew up. Associating New York as her home, Cara feels that some form of permanence and familiarity are necessary for a place to be called her home. Furthermore, a deeper level of connection with a place helps Cara to associate it as home. For example, Cara feels connected to her mother’s childhood home in Tennessee due to its affiliation with her ancestral history more than the house in New York where Cara herself grew up. Thus, although she does feel at home in her room at Mount Holyoke since it is her “constructed space” and she can call it hers, Cara does not call Mount Holyoke home for its lack of permanence and personal connection.

Shelby.

Shelby’s sense of home involves feelings of comfort and familiarity, having a sense of belonging and associating home with the past or future. Having “a sense of community that you’re attached to in that area or friends or family” helps Shelby feel at home. As a result, Shelby’s current home is her parents’ house in Connecticut. For Shelby, home is where she is comfortable and feels a familiar “sense of childhood” generated by her memories and the personal items she has had since a young age. Moreover, home is where she not only shares her

past but also expects to be part of her future. That is, she views home as a place where she gets a feeling of “I’ve always lived here or like, I’ll always live here.” Essentially, she associates home with continuity in the form of long-term living, whether it happened in the past or will happen in the future. However, Mount Holyoke College fails to provide a sense of continuity for Shelby to feel at home.

Indeed, Shelby does not share her past with Mount Holyoke or expect it to be part of her long term future. Instead, she views Mount Holyoke as a temporary living situation. Since she already has a home that is only an hour from the college, Shelby does not need to “fulfill” or “crave” a sense of home; she already feels secure and has fulfilled her need for a home. Rather, Shelby needed and wanted her college to “not feel like home” and “feel away from home.” If she did view Mount Holyoke as her home, she would feel the need to constantly be away. To Shelby, “it is important to have a place to go to that’s your space, not necessarily feeling like home but ... you feel comfortable there and you just kind of have your time.” She considers Mount Holyoke is like home in the sense that she has a safe space that is hers but differentiates it from being her home in terms of familiarity. Thus, she feels “content” regarding her sense of home in college since she already “feels fulfilled” with her parents’ home and wants Mount Holyoke to be something other than home.

Having stated that, however, her current dorm room feels more like home compared to the rest of campus. It is where she goes to feel most herself. She feels

some connection with her room after constructing the space to feel comfortable and cozy and views it as her space. Shelby has decorations that help her feel comfortable in a college room, as well as other items that remind her of home. She puts up motivational posters that help her de-stress and calendars that help her stay organized (see Figure 3). Laughing, Shelby shares, “it’s interesting now that I think about it, these don’t remind me at all of home.”

Even though the decorations do not remind her of home, Shelby still owns several lamps and string lights that create “warm lighting,” a rug and plants that remind her of home and help her feel cozy (see Figure 4). Since her parents’ house also has warm and soft lighting, rugs and plants, it seems that Shelby feels comfortable in her room by having basic items that create a similar ambience like that of her home in Connecticut. As a result, Shelby expresses that her dorm room is where she feels most at home and considers as her space in all of Mount Holyoke.

Nevertheless, even her current dorm room’s homeyness cannot compare to the feeling of home she experiences at her parents’ house. “The thing about dorm rooms is ... it’s always someone else’s home away from home ... it’s hard for it to feel really like yours because you know that pretty soon it will be someone else’s.” In this way, even the place where Shelby feels most at home on campus fails to provide a sense of continuity that Shelby looks for in a home.

Because Mount Holyoke is a residential college, there is a lack of “separation” between school and home. To Shelby, living at Mount Holyoke is like always being in school. “We don’t really go home at the end of the day.” Mount Holyoke lacks a feeling of home since the “materialistic” aspects of physically living in the midst of books, papers and other school-related items lead Shelby to associate Mount Holyoke solely as school and not home. “It’s comfortable but it’s almost ... like a forced comfortable, like you have to be comfortable because it’s going to have to work.” Thus, the unnatural and forced feeling of comfort that she experiences accentuates the school-like quality of Mount Holyoke, diminishing her sense of home.

Although Shelby does not feel at home on campus and does not want it to feel like home, she feels “content” and “fulfilled” regarding her college experience at Mount Holyoke. Although college has been stressful and overwhelming, she believes she has developed close friendships and has personally grown by becoming more confident, mature and aware of her own needs. Developing strong friendships has helped her feel like “it’s your place, your space sort of thing.” Because she has succeeded in cultivating a space that is hers at Mount Holyoke while still viewing it as different from home, Shelby remains happy and satisfied with her college life.

Zia.

Zia's concept of home is tripartite (see Figure 5). At its core, Zia's sense of home consists of her house. Next, her sense of home includes "the land that is owned by individuals". Finally, her home encompasses the community that surrounds the land and house. However, her sense of home is not complete without a gathering of people in the center and positive energy flowing through, affecting both the people and the land.

Nevertheless, for Zia, feelings about a home are more important than its physical aspects. She feels at home where there is "love between people who occupy the space." More importantly, her sense of home centers around the idea of "a spiritual connection" to a place in which her religion is integral to her sense of home and well-being. Praying helps strengthen Zia's connection with God and her self which positively impacts her happiness and sense of home. Indeed, regardless of the geographic location, Zia feels "a hundred percent at home" in shrines and holy places of her religion. Home is where she feels a "cohesiveness" and a "sense of security" with her own self. In her current room, Zia has constructed a space where she can reflect and strengthen the relationship between her and her soul (see Figure 6). Her nook of reflection is complete with a lamp, mat for sitting on the floor, ukulele for soothing music and bookshelf full of books for leisurely reading. Establishing this kind of space for self-reflection is essential for Zia to feel at home anywhere.

Currently living at Mount Holyoke College, Zia has only begun to feel truly happy and comfortable living on campus in her senior year. Nevertheless, she does not truly feel at home on campus. For Zia, although Mount Holyoke tries to “instill this sense of home and unity within its people,” the college remains unsuccessful and needs to learn how to overcome this “disconnect” (see Figure 7). “A lot more people could feel at home if that unity really existed but instead it’s just harmonized which isn’t necessarily enough.” In addition, she finds the lack of an urban lifestyle, the pervasiveness of “negative energy” and pressure on students, and “Mount Holyoke as an institution itself” contribute to her feeling not at home on campus. Her initial reluctance to attend Mount Holyoke and the culture shock of moving to United States influenced her lack of a sense of home as well.

Although she feels at home in certain places and casually refers to many places as home, especially wherever her parents live, Zia does not have a place that she truly calls home. She associates home with feelings of attachment. However, she currently lacks attachments towards any particular place. For Zia, feeling at home in a place can be “a choice of willpower.” Thus, one reason why she does not feel at home at Mount Holyoke was because she did not “allow” herself to feel at home. Her decision not to feel attached at Mount Holyoke may be partially due to her constant relocation. According to Zia, because she returns to her parents’ house after every semester and studied abroad in France during her

sophomore year, she has not lived in the same place for more than five months in the last four years. Understanding that a departure is imminent, Zia may not have given Mount Holyoke a chance to help her create a sense of home.

Indeed, Zia is currently “personally searching for some form of continuity” in a place where she can feel rooted and connected to her self. Continuity is keeping items from former homes to include in future homes and “establishing new things in one space for a longer period of time.” When she arrives in a new room, Zia immediately unpacks and organizes her room to “feel rooted right away” which reflects “the sense of continuity - the wanting to be continuous.” A coat hanger and a knife set are two constants that as a teenager she has always envisioned one day owning and having it in her home.

Zia feels comfortable in her current room since she has worked on it to be the way she likes it. “If I could take this room and put it anywhere ... I’d feel at home in this room ... I can come back here and my heart feels at peace.” Having a continuous home life will make her feel more at home by establishing “roots in a space.” Knowing that she will be living in her current room for a year has already helped her feel more at home on campus in her final year. As a college senior ready to step into the real world, Zia is in the midst of cultivating her own sense of home that reflects her true self, rather than the part of her that was molded by institutions and parents.

Currently, she views herself as a “global citizen” and expresses this aspect of herself by putting different types of maps on the wall behind her desk (see Figure 8). Since she has moved around multiple times throughout her childhood, maps are a way for her to feel connected to her past experiences as well as set goals for the future. Thus, maps serve an important purpose in her search for continuity that objects in a dorm room do not usually provide. Although she would have enjoyed her time in college more had she felt at home, Zia feels she has already achieved her goals. To Zia, a positive sense of home may make a college experience more enjoyable but it does not affect or improve the experience any more than a non-existent sense of home.

Typical Structure

Group 1: Home as a Familiar Setting that Provides Longevity and Continuity. (Cara, Shelby, Zia)

This form of the experience of “home” centers around time. Home is experienced temporally as the place where one has lived in the past or will live in the future for an extended period of time. By connecting the past and future, home is continuous with familiar elements from the past being carried on and new elements being incorporated for the long term. Because it is familiar and one has spent time living there, home is a place that one views as stable and reliable. Moreover, comfort comes naturally in a home where one has lived for an

extended period of time. As a result, one does not feel at home in temporary living spaces since they cannot be relied upon for continuous long-term residency.

Among the instances of these participants, the home that most closely fits this criterion of continuous longevity is the place where they spent time growing up. For these participants, the place where they grew up is usually their first significant home. Hence home is not only familiar but also sets a precedent. The home where they grow up becomes a basis for their expectations of future homes. Participants have set requirements for a place to feel like home, such as having plants or a particular kind of lighting. Having lived there for some time, memories of the past invoke feelings of nostalgia which contribute to these participants feeling at home. Furthermore, the shared experience of time with parents and loved ones in that special place plays a major role in the cultivation of these participants' sense of home.

Because longevity and continuity are essential to these participants' sense of home, they do not feel at home living in a temporary residence, like a college dorm. Additionally, they have to put in effort to be comfortable in a dorm which acts as a striking contrast from their expectation of an effortlessly comfortable home. According to one participant, "back home, it's just comfortable because it just is," whereas living in college is "almost like a forced comfortable, you have to be comfortable because it's going to have to work." Thus, having to force a feeling of comfort leads to a lack of sense of home in college.

These participants attempt to feel comfortable and at home in their dorm rooms by trying to keep stress from entering. However, living in a residential college where school and home are the same place can create its own stress and tension for these participants, negatively affecting their sense of home. However, participants differentiate stress from school and work with stress that can be found in a home. While they despise work and school stress in their homes, they consider stress from familial relationships and performing household chores as part of home stress that is allowed in a home.

Although currently living in a temporary college residence negates the idea of continuity, participants do feel more at home on campus with increasing familiarity. One participant has been moving around so much so that being in one dorm room for a year will be enough to form “roots” and help to create a feeling of home. For these participants, having a continuous and familiar place for the long term leads to feelings of connection and attachment which ultimately contribute to a sense of belonging and home.

Situated Structures (Group 2)

Aspyn.

(Participant went by the pronouns they, them and their.)

Aspyn feels at home in a place where they feel comfortable and safe to express their identity. Harboring an almost territorial sense of home, they assert ownership and control in their space by making sure people are “aware that

they're a guest." Even when sharing a home with a partner, Aspyn still needs their own space to control as they wish. Additionally, Aspyn prefers a home to feel fresh and not too familiar. However, more than any other quality, a "safe space" free from judgement that allows them to express their identity is crucial for Aspyn to feel at home. For instance, their parental home in Illinois has lost the title of "comfort zone" for Aspyn because they no longer felt safe and free to express themselves in their parents' house. Instead, they call their partner's family house in New Jersey home.

Aspyn idealizes home as a "haven" where they feel safe to express their identity, take refuge from judgemental people and overwhelming feelings of stress. Since they have constructed an idealized and almost perfect version of home, home also becomes a place to which they can escape to avoid work and stress. To Aspyn, the actual physical location does not matter; home is really a glorified metaphorical place where they do not feel stressed. Because the greater Mount Holyoke campus generally allows them to feel safe and free to express their thoughts and beliefs, Aspyn feels at home at Mount Holyoke College. In addition, close friendships, participating in music-related activities and a heartwarming and homey atmosphere all contribute to their establishment of a sense of home on campus.

Concurrently, Aspyn does not feel at home in their current dorm room as their campus job requires the mixture of work stress and home in their room. For

Aspyn, who dislikes their home to be even remotely associated to work or school stress, living and working in the same space as a result of their job subtracts from their overall feeling of home in their room. Moreover, lack of privacy, peace and control as a result of thin walls, numerous parties and limitations on room decorations in the dorm also negatively affect Aspyn's sense of home. Ultimately, Aspyn can never truly feel at home in a place like Mount Holyoke, the main purpose of which is to educate rather than instill a feeling of home. "It's a weird sense of trying to make yourself feel at home when you know you really can't." In the end, it is a lost cause for a dorm room to feel like home.

Nevertheless, despite it being "weird," Aspyn still makes an effort to be comfortable in their current dorm room. Aspyn makes it feel as homey as possible by not engaging in stressful work and school-related activities, such as writing long papers, in their room. Instead, they relieve work stress by having stuffed animals nearby to hold when they study at their desk (see Figure 9). Since Aspyn regards studying as work that should remain separate from home life, they need extra sources of comfort, such as stuffed animals, at their desk where they feel the most stress. Aspyn's efforts to separate work and home is reflected in how they have partitioned part of the doorway area with a cloth curtain (see Figure 10). This may be an attempt to block the view of the white wall and door looking from the perspective of the bed. Nonetheless, the curtain creates the illusion of two rooms instead of one and acts as an additional layer of space that separates

Aspyn's private personal stress-free haven from the rest of the stress-inducing dorm and the outside world.

Mount Holyoke's small campus size and "bubble" environment make Aspyn sometimes feel claustrophobic from having to be surrounded by people all the time, as well as feeling cut off from the outside world. A "double-edged sword," Mount Holyoke is heartwarming and inclusive but that inclusivity and students' need to always be politically correct can feel "in-your-face" stressful and smothering for Aspyn. Furthermore, Mount Holyoke's pervasive and exhausting "stress culture" in which students outdo each other on their level of stress is not "healthy" and does not make it feel like home. However, Aspyn perseveres in learning about controversial campus issues, works hard in their activities and job which have helped them feel empowered and happy to be at Mount Holyoke.

Katie.

Katie feels at home in a place where she feels comfortable and loved. She establishes a sense of home by incorporating elements that are "representative of love." In her current room, she surrounds herself with books, plants and homemade gifts (see Figure 10). Her favorite object is the wood carving of a figure head made by her boyfriend. All these items make her feel loved and supported. Ideally, living with her boyfriend and cat, growing plants in her garden

and having a kiln to engage in her “sacred hobbies” like pottery all help her feel at home in a place (see Figure 11).

In front of her shelf full of books, Katie’s latest creative project that is still in progress could be seen on the floor (see Figure 12). For Katie, home is also where she can be “creating things and not just consuming” such as making ceramics and pots. By engaging in her artistic hobbies and “creating” art, Katie creates “homespace” as well. Because Mount Holyoke College does not provide many opportunities for her to partake in her hobbies, Katie tries her best to still keep up with “creating” as much as she can.

Katie has relocated many times after moving out of her parents’ house. As a result, she feels “that energy happening” to just “call home wherever.” With each subsequent move, Katie naturally and almost effortlessly shifts her sense of home to “wherever” she lives next. Thus, when she relocates, Katie ceases to feel at home in her former residence. Rather, she shifts her sense of home and calls her current residence home. Currently, Katie feels at home and calls Mount Holyoke College her home since it is her “permanent address.”

Because she has had the experience of living in many places with different living conditions, Katie learns to expect “less” in a home. “You need less. It takes less to satisfy you.” Katie’s sense of home has become “relative” to all her other living experiences, with her developing lower expectations and a greater appreciation for a place to feel like home. Similarly, Katie appreciates her current

living situation in Mount Holyoke all the more after having lived in “dump places.” At Mount Holyoke, she truly feels at home due to a strong sense of community, “positive energy flowing through” and a challenging academic career.

Although she feels at home in classes and the rest of campus, her sense of home is especially established during night time in their dorm common room (see Figure 13). The common room resembles a living room inside a traditional house with wooden floors, comfortable furniture and cozy yellow lighting. Although the warm setting of the common room invites gatherings and a relaxing atmosphere, it is spending time with her friends who live in the dorm that makes it feel like home for Katie (see Figure 14). Katie feels loved and supported hanging out in the common room every night where people study, talk, eat and read together. Additionally, Katie equally feels at home in her current dorm room. Depending on the situation and her mood, she will move from the living room to her room and vice versa to feel at home. Although Mount Holyoke has its flaws of the occasional “arrogance and meanness” and a lack of creative opportunities for amateur artists like her, Katie nevertheless feels happy and fulfilled living on campus. For Katie, the “intersections” of her social and academic lives help her feel fulfilled and at home.

Kiara.

For Kiara, home is where there are familiar surroundings, a supportive group of family and friends, basic living comforts and a private and “semi-public” life. Having lived in different places throughout her life, Kiara cares less about the actual locations and instead values the concept of a “support system.” Currently, she calls France home, despite her unfamiliarity with the country, because her parents have moved there. A “family centered support system” is crucial for Kiara to feel at home in a place. Among the many places she has lived, Kiara ultimately feels most at home in Pakistan for its familiarity. “It’s like you’re going back to your own country” where clothing, language and culture are familiar. With her parents and brother, she visits almost annually to see her extended family. Thus, since it was familiar and included her parents, Pakistan “completes the package” of home for Kiara, becoming the place where she feels most at home.

Kiara’s sense of home involves the idea of a final “destination,” a place where she is supposed to be. Mount Holyoke is a home to Kiara because she currently does not have anywhere else she has to be. When she returns to her room on campus, she feels like she has reached her “end destination which has to be the home if nothing else.” Kiara also feels at home in a “mollycoddling” place where she is entirely “taken care of.” According to Kiara, “a home also should provide you with comforts that doesn’t make you feel like you’re overburdened ... but actually nullify that effect.” At her home in France, basic

comforts, such as food and transportation, and daily tasks, like laundry and cleaning, are “taken care of.” For Kiara, home is a relaxing and comfortable place where all her needs and wants are generally and easily satisfied. She feels at home in a place where she does not have to work too hard for the “comforts of life.”

Because Mount Holyoke provides “good comforts and support system,” she feels connected and at home on campus. Mount Holyoke is also where Kiara made friends who are like family to her. She compares Mount Holyoke to her study abroad experience in Greece where the college was not “invested” in their students and did not provide food and laundry. “So, you’re kind of on your own ... you kind of only associate with the college in terms of classes ... so, it felt more like disconnected.” By not providing basic living comforts which she requires in a home, the college in Greece does not make Kiara feel connected and at home. However, since Mount Holyoke does make an effort along those aspects, Kiara feels a “genuine warmth” that makes her call it “Mohome and all these cheesy things.”

Because she feels and calls the Mount Holyoke campus her home, Kiara has had a “decent run” in terms of her college life. Feeling generally happy and fulfilled with her college career, Kiara’s positive experience with friends at Mount Holyoke has helped her feel comfortable enough to call it home. Within Mount Holyoke, she feels most at home in her room since it serves its purpose of being a “comfort private zone area” within a larger “semi-public” area. Although she has

decorated and lined her walls with personal objects, her collage of photographs and a whiteboard of her schedule had fallen and Kiara had not put them up again (see Figure 15). This suggests that she was content to live in a room in which she has yet to “figure out a greater order.”

Interestingly, despite her apparent love and feeling of home for the college, Kiara’s dorm room does not really reflect her sense of home as needing to feel nurtured and “taken care of” (see Figure 16). Instead, she feels like she has to find “solutions for this emptiness” in her room. Kiara’s generally bare walls and floor space make the room appear empty and lacking. It is possible that since the greater Mount Holyoke campus has already fulfilled her need for nurture that she no longer needs the same level of “mollycoddling” from her room. It is enough that her room offers her a bed and a private space.

Wendy.

For Wendy, home is “subjective” and does not necessarily involve biologically-related people. Most importantly, a reliable and stable place where she returns, home serves as a “safety net” for Wendy. “The home in the background is always there.” In a way, Wendy associates home with permanence which then leads to some “level of attachment.” Thus, a sense of home is established in a place to which she feels attached. However, she differentiates feeling attached to people from a feeling of attachment to the place. She explains, “if my family and stuff moved, then like that would be my home ... home is more

like the people.” For Wendy, her family evokes feelings of attachment, safety and permanence that contribute to establishing a sense of home in a place to which she can return.

In contrast, Mount Holyoke College fails to provide Wendy with feelings of attachment, reflecting impermanence and work instead. Wendy finds her Mount Holyoke experience is akin to that of a “boarding school” or “camp kind of thing” which she attends for some time and then goes back to her true home. Although there are supportive friends who make Wendy’s college experience enjoyable, they will all go their separate ways after graduation, thereby making her college experience temporary and diminishing her feeling of home. Furthermore, feeling comfortable within the Mount Holyoke community requires work on her part. She needs to “do work” and “maintain” her comfort by spending time with people and engaging in activities. While in her first year, she had learned to put herself more out there by “actively going for it and hanging out with people,” instead of “seeking a sense of belonging without working for it.” Thus, the temporary camp-like nature and the maintenance work needed in Mount Holyoke relationships have led to Wendy’s general lack of attachment and sense of home on campus.

Comparing University of Massachusetts Amherst and Mount Holyoke, Wendy tells of her preference to the “business” and “that independence and solitude” of the UMass campus and students. Referring to the busy UMass

campus life as “refreshing” from Mount Holyoke, Wendy also admits that her idea of college, which includes a co-ed environment, larger campus and more social activities, fits more with UMass than Mount Holyoke. In fact, her semester-long study abroad experience in Japan was a “closer intimate experience” and “like a home” than living at Mount Holyoke. She felt more at home during study abroad since the people in the program all bonded and experienced things more together as excited students thrown into a new place which gave rise to a sense of home. Nonetheless, Mount Holyoke has grown on Wendy. “I feel like if I had more time being here, then I would’ve liked it.” With the extra time, she would have liked to explore and take classes that were beyond her major.

As for her current dorm room, Wendy feels comfortable since it provides privacy and her own space. She decorates it to look cozy and beautiful and hung up pictures that reflect her interests (see Figure 17). On top of her bookshelf, an array of stuffed animals could be seen. However, she has only arranged and decorated on one side of the room. From an alternative perspective, her room offers a striking contrast to the side of the room where she has decorated and put in effort (see Figure 18). Although she chose the room for its large size, she has not fully utilized all the space that her room offers. With barren walls and extra floor space, Wendy simply leaves one side of the room undecorated, creating a dichotomous ambience of colorful activity and pale emptiness all in the same room. This contrasting arrangement of her room may represent her efforts to feel

comfortable and at home in college, as well as feelings of unfulfilled wishes when it comes to using all her resources efficiently.

Typical Structure

Group 2: Home as a Haven that Nurtures and Supports. (Aspyn, Katie, Kiara, Wendy)

This form of experiencing “home” focuses on nurture and support. Home is where one is comfortable, protected and all needs are “taken care of.” Serving as a “safety net” and “comfort zone,” home is where one can escape from stress and return to rest and recharge. One feels nurtured by focusing on self-care and having others be caring. Thus, home is a “haven” that offers a “support system” of family and friends. Since one feels at home wherever there are support and love, one surrounds oneself with loving and caring people. The experience of home with loved ones reflects a “mutual” relationship; home is where one not only receives love but also gives back and cares for others. It is the intimate relationships with loved ones that make one feel a sense of belonging and community which contribute to an overall sense of home.

In the instances of these participants, comfort and happiness are important to feel at home. However, not all participants feel “at home” in college. If they do not view college as their home, these participants still try to feel at home in their dorm rooms on campus by ensuring that they create and maintain their room’s homey feeling. They manipulate their dorm room space to feel comfortable and

happy by changing the orientation of furniture, adding personal and meaningful items and displaying them. If their room does not feel homey due to factors they cannot control, these participants try to find other places on campus where they can derive a sense of safety and support. In any case, these participants require a nurturing and supportive environment for their home.

While having a supportive group of people is essential, it is also vital that their support structure understands them enough for these participants to feel at home in a place and call it home. As one participant explained, she feels at home where “you don’t have to go out of your way to express something to them because they already know you.” Thus, having supportive people who understand them helps these participants establish a sense of home.

Ultimately, home provides complete safety and security through supportive people in a nurturing space. As a result, an idealization of home is present in the instances of these participants. This idealization turns home into a metaphorical place that can almost do no wrong. Because these particular participants’ instances of home have always reliably met their needs, home then becomes a perfect dream.

Situated Structure (Group 3)

Jhordan.

Home is where Jhordan feels supported, safe, free to do whatever she wants and comfortable to express her “vulnerability.” Her sense of home includes

having her own “spot” that she can call hers. Home is a place where she “should want to be.” After enrolling at Mount Holyoke, Jhordan has naturally “transitioned” from calling her mother’s house in Georgia to feeling more at home in college. The unwavering support she receives on campus “mirrors” the support she receives at her mother’s home. However, more importantly, unlike her mother’s home that spoils her and serves as a “comfort zone,” Mount Holyoke College challenges her to leave her “comfort zone” and “fight” for herself to achieve her goals. With Jhordan investing time and energy, Mount Holyoke has become her true home that helps her grow and learn more about herself.

Within Mount Holyoke, Jhordan feels most at home in her room. Due to Mount Holyoke being a residential college, it is necessary for Jhordan to mix school work and home which Jhordan finds easy to be comfortable enough to study where she lives. Jhordan has papers, notebooks, binders, golden headphones, organizer for binders and papers, a pencil holder full of pens and pencils on her desk (see Figure 19). The amount and type of objects on her desk shows that she does her serious and intense studying at the desk, occasionally while listening to music on her headphones. Congruent with her sense of home, Jhordan’s room also offers her freedom to sleep however and whenever she wants, act silly and simply spend time with herself. Home for Jhordan is a place where she is free to choose either to be with loved ones or by herself according to

her needs. Similarly, her dorm room provides a “boundary” between friends and being alone which helps establish a sense of home.

Currently in her senior year, Jhordan puts in less effort than she used to in decorating her room. Jhordan’s room still reflects her sarcastic personality and artistic identity which makes it her unique home but her impending graduation motivates her to adopt a “get in, get out” attitude. She simply needs the “essentials” to “keep going” and feel “comfy” and at home in her room, such as her rugs (see Figure 20). For Jhordan, the rugs remind her of her carpet back home in Georgia and keeps her feet warm. However, considering the small size of the rugs and the larger uncovered floor space, it seems that the rugs exist for more of a symbolic reminder than for function and practicality. It is also essential for Jhordan to be reminded and feel the presence of loved ones in her room. Her deceased father’s old shirt acts as “a little piece of him” and a photograph of her with her best friend symbolizes their close bond. These items, as well as items that reflect her faith, serve as essential objects in her room that make her feel loved and at home in college.

For Jhordan, it is necessary to feel at home wherever she lives, whether it be a college or some other residence. “If I wasn’t comfortable, I don’t think I would do as well ... Because I have to be comfortable wherever I am, and if I’m not comfortable, I instantly try to change it ... I can change whether or not I feel comfortable somewhere.” Growing up with the “the only child syndrome” despite

having older siblings, Jhordan has always lived by herself and “mastered” the “skill” of adapting to feel comfortable wherever she lives. As a result, Jhordan has an “adaptable” sense of home which ensures a feeling of home at Mount Holyoke. Thus, a place where she “bled sweat and tears,” Mount Holyoke feels like home after she gave herself the “chance to be comfortable” and “fully immerse” herself. Overcoming health scares, studying abroad, doing a senior thesis, Jhordan has become “good enough” and feels fulfilled and happy at Mount Holyoke.

Typical Structure

Group 3: Home as a Work Hub that Facilitates Personal Growth.

(Jhordan)

This way of experiencing a sense of home revolves around personal growth. Home is a place where one can independently work and strive to fulfill a goal of improving oneself. Although feeling comfortable is important, so is growing and not just feeling cozy and complacent in one’s home. In fact, it is the personal growth that develops as a result of living in a place that makes it feel like home. In contrast, a place that spoils one by taking care of every possible need can make one feel dependent, diminishing the overall sense of home. Once one sets up the “essentials” to feel comfortable in a place, one’s focus turns to home as a site of personal development.

In the instances of these participants, the drive to improve themselves can manifest into leaving their comfort zone to challenge themselves. Consequently,

an educational institution, whose purpose is to help students learn and grow, serve as home for these participants. These participants easily mix the concepts of school, work and home in their lives, finding it comfortable and perhaps even necessary to study in the same place that they sleep. Feeling secure about working and resting in the same place, these participants also keep track of their progress over the years in college. Indeed, a sense of home is part of what allows them to progress and grow, making them feel generally satisfied and fulfilled about their college residential and academic experiences.

Situated Structure (Group 4)

Chloe.

Throughout the twenty-one years of her life, Chloe has lived in different parts of America and Asia. As a result, instead of feeling attached to one place, Chloe is from “everywhere.” True enough, she has put up maps and landscape photographs of places and buildings she had visited and lived in her current dorm room (see Figure 21). In fact, having relocated many times, Chloe does not have a place that she truly calls home. Rather, she casually calls many places home for “a sense of convenience” to “label it something” and help other people understand. However, none of those places she has lived means much to her. Other people may associate home with a special and meaningful place of residence but she herself does not have such a place. “If I had to sleep in my car somewhere, I could

make that my home ... that's how okay I am with any space." As long as a place is safe and preferably has "friendly faces," Chloe is content to live there.

Chloe sometimes associates home with where her father lives as she ends up "following him wherever he is." Her house in Washington also "felt like home" because that was where she first grew up. However, her study abroad experience in England was "the first time" she felt like she had a home. Although it was the novelty and excitement of living in a foreign place that made her feel attached and at home, Chloe herself also chose to live and study abroad in England. Thus, her choice in picking England as her study abroad site may have contributed to her happiness and satisfaction there, creating a sense of home and belonging.

Despite feeling at home in England, Chloe associates home with being rooted and tied down and ultimately does not have "roots" to any place, feeling "free to go anywhere" without feeling sad to leave a special home place. Harboring little attachment to any one place, Chloe remains unaffected by relocation, while her friends who have a place they truly call home are forced to deal with homesickness. "I feel like that enabled me to just accept things easier ... just getting used to everything being new and not something I ever known before." Thus, she is able to easily adapt to new places since she has had to do so in the past when relocating to many different places.

At Mount Holyoke College, Chloe has begun to feel happy in her senior year. The many roommate and room issues that she experienced made Chloe's living experience at Mount Holyoke unpleasant and negative. Chloe dislikes her current dorm room due to its small size and thin walls. Additionally, the small population size makes Mount Holyoke seem like "high school version number two" where everyone knows everyone and her behavior at parties was visible to be used as gossip material. Instead, she felt happier living in England where she felt "like a number" and "just kind of blended in." Blending in and not drawing attention are important for Chloe to enjoy college life and feel at home. On campus, Chloe feels most comfortable and happy in the fitness center at the college gymnasium (see Figure 22). Complete with rows of exercise machines organized in a uniform and regimented arrangement, this fitness center looks like any other gym in the world. Furthermore, a fitness center is a place where Chloe can blend in as just another gym-goer. Perhaps, Chloe would have felt happier living in an institution-like place instead of living in a more personalized and intimate place like Mount Holyoke.

Chloe's difficult campus living experience, the college's small population size, the workload and her current dorm room flaws have all contributed to her lack of sense of home at Mount Holyoke. To Chloe, Mount Holyoke satisfies the bare minimum in that she has received the education she desired. However, it fails

to go above and beyond and provide “the extras” of college life, such as a social life.

Typical Structure

Group 4: Home as a Restraint that Limits Mobility and Freedom.

(Chloe)

This form of experience rejects the centrality of a sense of home in one’s life. A sense of home is not essential for one to comfortably live in a place. In fact, home is a place with emotional ties that prevents one from happily progressing with life. One associates home with attachments that lead to homesickness in times of departure. Thus, one feels freer to live life without a heavy sense of home weighing one down.

Similarly, these participants’ instances exemplify the experience of home as limiting mobility and freedom. They may “label” many different places as “home” to fit society’s expectations of having a home-like place; however, they do not have a special enough place in one’s life to call it home and truly feel at home. Having adapted themselves to live life without feeling at home in a certain place, participants in this group no longer need a sense of home. Nor do they imagine searching for a sense of home in future residences. As a result of constant relocations while growing up, these participants seem to have developed a perspective that it is unnecessary to truly feel at home and have a significant place to feel attached.

At some point, these participants have felt at home in a particular place for the novelty or a personal connection with it. Nonetheless, they ultimately leave every place feeling “free to go anywhere” without being rooted and tied down. Since they associate home with “roots” and attachment that makes it difficult for them to leave, the lack of a sense of home makes these participants feel happy they will be spared unnecessary sadness when they leave a place. Instead, they can enjoy the new place they move to without having to think about their former home. Only requiring a safe and friendly place to feel content to live there, they have a highly adaptable sense of home that allows them to live in places with different living conditions. As a result, these participants feel it is better not to establish a sense of home.

Comparison of Typical Structures

Typical structures are distinct experiences of home identified across participants. Since the current study utilizes a qualitative method of analysis, the number or frequency of participants corresponding to a typical structure by no means reflect the prevalence or validity of a typical structure in real life. Rather, it just so happened that one type of sense of home was arbitrarily exemplified in a number of participants’ experiences due to the specific sample of participants collected. If another sample of participants had been recruited, the frequency of participants in the same typical structure might have been different. Bearing this

in mind, four types of sense of home emerged from analyzing situated structures of nine college students.

In the type of home as a familiar setting that provides longevity and continuity, one experiences home in a temporal sense. Home is where one has reliably and comfortably lived in the past or expects to live in the future for an extended period of time. Unlike other types of senses of home, this form of experience encompasses individuals who all feel “not at home” living in college since college is only temporary. Time seems to offer the best security in the experiences of these participants.

In addition to a continuous home, the study identified a different type of sense of home in which home is a haven that nurtures and supports. In this form of experience, home serves to comfort, protect and care for one’s needs and wants. Depending on whether students feel nurtured and supported enough on campus, they either feel at home or not at home on campus. Participants exemplifying this experience try to keep their nurturing home life separate from stressful school work. Distinct from the experience of a nurturing home that separates work and home, home as a work hub that facilitates personal growth involves the combination of work and home. This form of experience prioritizes one’s own development over comfort. Participants embodying this experience feels that a nurturing home renders them dependent; they prefer a home that promotes independence and growth.

Lastly, the type of home as a restraint that limits mobility and freedom stands in sharp contrast to the other more positive types of senses of home. This form of home is associated with emotional attachments that keeps one from freely and happily moving on to new places. As a result, one ultimately tries to minimize the importance of home in one's life to feel free. Participants exemplifying this type express feeling happiest and most comfortable at an institutional-like place with uniform order. Interestingly, the place where they feel most like home is strikingly different from the kind of intimate and personalized environments that other participants exemplifying other types of home experiences feel most at home.

Overall Effect of Sense of Home on Well-Being

Participants exhibited an extensive range of senses of home, from feeling "at home" everywhere on campus to feeling "not at home" even in their dorm room. Analyzing their varying experiences regarding their sense of home and well-being at Mount Holyoke College, several important trends emerged from the data. Sense of home affected participants' well-being differently depending on whether they feel at home or not at home. For participants with a positive sense of home, their sense of home was found to positively contribute to their well-being. For participants with a negative sense of home, their sense of home did affect their happiness but their perception of their sense of home's effect on well-being varied. Some participants who feel not at home in college perceived that it had no

effect on their psychological well-being, in terms of feeling fulfilled regarding their academic life. However, others perceived that their feeling not at home on campus either positively or negatively affected their sense of fulfillment concerning their college life.

Participants with a Positive Sense of Home.

Feeling and viewing Mount Holyoke as home, Jhordan, Katie, Kiara and Aspyn's senses of home affected their well-being, particularly their perception of their academic career in college. Since her sense of home primarily consisted of a feeling of community with friends, Katie's academic life would have "suffered" had she not felt at home and developed close friendships. "It's made it better ... having the homeyness has made my academic life really good." For Katie, feeling at home on campus improved her academic life, thereby contributing to her overall sense of fulfillment and happiness regarding her life in college.

Similarly, Jhordan and Kiara's senses of home had a positive impact on their well-being. In fact, it was "necessary" for Jhordan and Kiara to harbor a positive feeling of home and comfort in college, without which they would not have been as successful and happy. As for Aspyn, their sense of home at Mount Holyoke switches between feeling at home and not at home depending on the circumstances. Nonetheless, their feeling of home affects their happiness on campus, revealing a positive relationship between sense of home and well-being

for Aspyn. Thus, the findings revealed a connection between sense of home and students' well-being in participants who called Mount Holyoke home.

Participants with a Negative Sense of Home.

As for participants who feel not “at home” on campus, their perception of a relationship between sense of home and well-being depended on their particular home experience. For example, Chloe does not truly feel at home anywhere. On campus, she had felt unhappy and not at home to the point of attempting to transfer out of Mount Holyoke. Thus, feeling not “at home” and other factors affected her well-being, in terms of her happiness. However, her feeling not at home has ultimately positively affected her sense of well-being because her lack of “roots” is enabling her to leave at the end of this senior year without feeling sad and instead being able to easily adapt to new environments. Without a sense of home that ties her to one place, she feels free and happy.

However, unlike Chloe, Wendy's feeling of being “not at home” on campus negatively affects her well-being, in terms of her academic satisfaction. If Wendy had lived on campus longer, she feels she may have felt more academically fulfilled and satisfied. However, despite not feeling satisfied academically, she feels fulfilled about her social life and the friends she has made in college. Interestingly, Chloe was reluctant to immediately admit that feeling “not at home” on campus had affected her well-being. For Chloe, it seemed that since she was already in her senior year and has developed friendships that made

her happy, she did not perceive her lack of sense of home to have much of an effect on her well-being. Nonetheless, their negative sense of home ultimately was perceived to have affected Chloe's well-being positively and Wendy's well-being negatively.

In contrast, some participants perceived that their negative sense of home had no effect on their well-being. Shelby feeling not at home at Mount Holyoke did not affect her happiness and satisfaction because from the beginning, she did not want to feel "at home" in college. Rather, she wanted Mount Holyoke to be different from "home" with "unfamiliar people and unfamiliar places." Because she did not want to feel at home in college, it did not matter that she feels not at home. Indeed, her negative sense of home may be partly what allows her to feel happy and fulfilled being at Mount Holyoke. The college's close proximity to her parents' house also placed less importance on her sense of home on campus, thereby diminishing any effect on her well-being. Since her parents are an hour away from campus, she already feels "fulfilled" and "secure" about having a home, so feeling not at home at Mount Holyoke did not affect Shelby's well-being.

Similarly, Zia perceived that her negative sense of home did not affect her well-being. Although the "negative energy" and "pressure" of Mount Holyoke had affected her happiness in previous years, she feels happier living on campus in her senior year. For Zia, because she has reached further than she had before

and achieved her goals, her negative sense of home ultimately had no effect on her well-being. If she had felt at home, Zia's college experience would have been more enjoyable, but having a positive sense of home does not improve or diminish her college experience and overall well-being any more than a negative sense of home. Like Zia, Cara also perceived that feeling not at home did not affect her well-being because she made what she could of college with the available resources. Even though she feels not at home on campus, having her own space in her room to do what she wants helps her feel free and comfortable enough where she lives.

Relationship between Sense of Home and Well-Being.

In a nutshell, participants who feel "at home" at Mount Holyoke found it necessary that they feel comfortable and at home on campus to be happy and successful in their college life. In fact, participants' positive sense of home improved their overall quality of life in college, regarding their social relationships and academic career. Thus, for these participants, there was a positive relationship between sense of home and their well-being. Feeling at home facilitates better well-being, as well as increasing the potential for more happiness and fulfillment.

As for participants who feel "not at home" at Mount Holyoke, a positive sense of home was not necessary for their happiness and success. Some participants perceived that their negative sense of home either positively or

negatively affected their happiness living on campus or anywhere. Other participants perceived little to no effect of their negative sense of home on their happiness and sense of fulfillment in their academic life. For these participants, there was more of a choice. That is, they had more control over their happiness and sense of fulfillment that did not depend on their feeling at home in college or any other place. As a result, they still felt generally happy and fulfilled despite a negative sense of home. Ultimately, for participants who feel not at home and do not need to feel at home, a negative sense of home is not an impediment for a successful college life. Feeling not at home in college may come with some regrets and leave participants wanting more, either more happiness or fulfillment. Nevertheless, it does not prevent them from achieving their goals and feeling happy. Feeling at home affects their level of enjoyment in college but not their success and fulfillment.

DISCUSSION

The sense of home was revealed by the data of this study to take the form of four distinct types: home as a familiar setting that provides longevity and continuity; as a haven that supports and nurtures; as a work hub that facilitates personal growth; and as a restraint that limits mobility and freedom. The current study's findings regarding college students' sense of home partially confirmed findings from previous studies. In her review, Despres (1991) collated 10 meanings of home, three of which corresponded with findings from the current study: home as refuge from the outside world, permanence and continuity, and as center of activities. Indeed, the current study demonstrated that college students associate home with sanctuaries, long-term places with a past or future, and settings that promoted work and growth, respectively.

However, Despres' (1991) list of meanings of home has been critiqued for implying that all meanings are equally relevant to all populations (Moore, 2000). For example, in her review, the meaning of home as an indicator of personal status clearly does not apply to college students living on campus in rooms assigned by the college. Participants from the current study did not associate home as an indicator of personal status since they were all too young to own a home to display their wealth and instead lived in the same kind of dorms on campus. Living on campus does allow for a certain degree of dorm room personalization. Nonetheless, students can only customize and decorate so much

within the college's limitations and regulations on dorm room usage. Since college rooms do not indicate personal status for students who view the campus as their home, the association of home and personal status does not apply to all populations as Despres' (1991) review implied.

In contrast, a study by Sixsmith (1986) constructed and presented a tentative model based on experiences of home in graduate students living on campus within university housing. Using a phenomenological approach, the study found that different types of home exist for different people, with home ranging from physical concrete settings to spiritual places located in existential space. As such, meanings of home were organized into personal, social and physical modes of experience. Sixsmith (1986) argued that the personal, social and physical spheres of home serve as the foundational stage from which subsequent stages reflecting more specific experiences of home could be further construed. Although the study did not identify the specific categories that could be incorporated under the three overarching experiences of home, Sixsmith's (1986) model could nevertheless be used as a starting point for future discussion on constructing a model or theory of home for college students.

Since the current study examined sense of home in college students, the theme of separation versus combination of home and work emerged especially clearly. This theme was most prevalent and relevant in Aspyn and Jhordan's experiences of living on campus. Aspyn tried to prevent any type of school or

work-related stress from entering and polluting their dorm room. They even put up a curtain separating the door area and the rest of their room which could symbolically serve as a partition and add another layer of distance between their nurturing room and the rest of the college campus. In contrast, Jhordan had no issues combining work and home, easily feeling comfortable being in an environment that necessitates studying and living in the same place, such as a college campus. Thus, home and work can be separated or combined according to college students' differing needs.

Case studies of couples who live and work at home by Marcus (1995) confirmed the same kind of conflict as experienced by Aspyn. This type of behavior in constructing a physical barrier is motivated by a need for a separation between work life and home life (Marcus, 1995). Although less prevalent, the theme of separation versus combination of home and work was still found in populations other than college students living on campus. Thus, this tension in mixing work and home among both adults in permanent homes and younger individuals in temporary homes serves to confirm the validity of the current study's typical structures in which home is an ideal haven that nurtures and supports or a workhub that facilitates personal growth.

Implications

Sense of Home.

The current study's findings offer several important implications about sense of home. In studying students with experiences of living in different places before attending college, the theme of an internalized sense of home emerged. For Chloe, Katie, Kiara and Zia who have relocated multiple times throughout their lives, they had to cultivate an adaptable and mobile sense of home out of necessity. They all mention being able to adapt to living and feeling comfortable in different environments. As Zia explained, "the concept of home no longer rests in a place, or in people, but within myself." Through the internalization of their sense of home, participants who have relocated often in the past are better able to move to new places in the future and feel "at home" there. Although these participants do not all manifest the same type of sense of home, they nevertheless share this particular idiosyncrasy specific to people who have frequently relocated. Thus, this theme of an internalized sense of home is participant-specific rather than a type-specific characteristic.

In addition to an internalized sense of home, the current study's findings also demonstrated an alternative meaning of home that is limiting as compared to the other more positive senses of home. Analyzing college students with an extensive range of senses of home revealed that home can be associated with unfavorable characteristics. That is, findings indicated that home is not always a

positive experience for every individual and the attachment to home can even be viewed as an emotional impediment during residential relocation as in the case of Chloe. Studying Chloe's experience led to the identification of a typical structure in which home limits mobility and freedom.

Interestingly, this same limiting experience of home was found in Romanelli's (2013) study on young adults participating in a gap year program abroad. Lack of a home definition emerged as one of the meanings of home uncovered from those data. The only participant in that meaning type of home wished to be free and felt that home was ultimately unimportant and unnecessary as she did not feel that she had a true home or family (Romanelli, 2013). Similarly, Chloe from the current study did not feel truly at home anywhere and has adapted to no longer needing a sense of home to feel comfortable and content to live in a place. Although both studies each only had one participant with this experience, it is still important to learn more about the negative aspects of home in future studies. A review of past literature showed an underreporting of negative home experiences and the overwhelming number of positive home associations over negative ones (Moore, 2000). However, one can readily conceive of a scenario in which home involves a limiting and even negative experience depending on the type of home and the people who live in it. Thus, the present study makes a contribution by identifying an alternative meaning of home that limits mobility and freedom.

Establishing a Sense of Home in College.

In learning more about college students' overall sense of home, the current study also explored the reasons behind students feeling "at home" or "not at home" living in college. Katie, Kiara and Jhordan feel at home on campus, while Cara, Chloe, Shelby, Wendy and Zia feel not at home, with Aspyn sometimes feeling at home and other times not at home. Participants' varying senses of home on campus may be explained through their home needs. Israel (2003) adapted Abraham Maslow's model of human needs into a hierarchy of housing needs (see Figure 23). According to this model, more basic needs such as home as shelter and home as satisfaction of psychological need must be met before the individual can advance towards other needs and achieve home as self actualization. Home as self-actualization referred to a complete sense of satisfaction and fulfillment of existential needs, as well as physiological needs (Israel, 2003).

Using Israel's (2003) model as a guide, the current study has constructed a tentative model specifically for college students' housing needs as one useful way to understand how students' experience a particular sense of home (see Figure 24). The model consisted of three stages: physical needs, psychological needs and existential needs. Each stage must be satisfied before progressing to a higher stage. The most basic and lowest need is a personal sense of safety. Once physical safety has been fulfilled, psychological needs such as support, privacy and control need to be satisfied for students to achieve self-actualization in the form of a

fulfilled sense of home. A home is used for self-actualization by satisfying existential needs, as well as physical and psychological ones.

For participants who feel “not at home” on campus, their lack of a sense of home can be explained by unfulfilled psychological needs in stage two. For instance, lack of control is part of why Cara feels not at home living on campus. With Mount Holyoke being a residential college, mixing schoolwork and home is unavoidable. As a result, tensions from being forced to mix schoolwork and home emerge during stage two. Similarly, stress from school work leads Cara to prevent mixing school and home in her dorm room. However, participants who have all their psychological needs satisfied and been able to resolve these tensions between work and home feel “at home” on campus. For example, since Jhordan was able to easily mix school work and home, she now feels completely “at home” living in Mount Holyoke College.

Well-Being.

Understanding that different students feel “at home” or “not at home” on campus led to examining how sense of home affects well-being. For participants who feel at home, it was helpful and even necessary that they feel at home to feel fulfilled and happy in college. Thus, a sense of home could facilitate college adjustment in terms of a social and an academic life. In contrast, for participants who feel not at home, their lack of a sense of home on campus did not seem to impair their well-being. Thus, a sense of home in college may ultimately be

unnecessary for their well-being. There certainly could have been more enjoyment and happiness if they did feel at home on campus, and it might initially have been easier to adjust to college life with a sense of home. Instead, participants who feel not at home on campus usually begin to feel happy only in their senior year of college. Cara and Shelby were the only participants who felt happy living on campus earlier in their college years among participants who felt not at home.

Interestingly, the relationship between sense of home and well-being is particularly noteworthy in Shelby. Among the participants, Shelby was the only student who did not want to feel at home in college. For other students, they all wanted to feel at home but not everyone managed to feel completely at home. In fact, Shelby feels comfortable on campus for the simple reason that it was different from her home. Her anomalous wish for a lack of a sense of home in college poses a unique challenge for residential educational institutions like Mount Holyoke College. It certainly adds to the complexity of campus housing in which colleges have to decide how to cater to their students' vastly differing needs for them to feel fulfilled. Because Shelby still feels fulfilled due to other amenities that Mount Holyoke offers despite feeling not at home on campus, it is possible that college students gain an enriching college experience aside from a sense of home. Thus, colleges might simply have to be all-rounded and have different aspects to appeal to students' contrasting needs.

Limitations

In discussing college students' experiences of home, it is important to note several limitations of the current study. Because this study specifically analyzed students' sense of home living in college, some themes that emerged might not be as prevalent in other types of populations living in different places and contexts. For example, the theme of tensions between work and home would not be observed in elderly individuals living in nursing homes. Additionally, the internal validity of the study is limited by having only one researcher analyzing the data. Other limitations of the study included the small number of participants recruited which could have affected the number of types identified. The small sample size also in turn could limit the ability of the study to determine if experiences reflected in the essential types of home were group traits or individual traits characteristic of only that participant and no other in the same group.

In studying sense of home, the present study utilized photographs to inform the context in which participants experienced home in college and further understand how their room reflected their sense of home. With the rationale of aiming to include every part of their dorm room, I chose to take photographs of participants' rooms myself instead of asking participants to generate the images themselves. Thus, the contents of these photographs reflected my decision as a researcher to take photographs of certain parts of a dorm room and not others. Although the interview largely helped me determine which parts of the room

ought to be photographed, participants ultimately did not decide on the contents of these photographs themselves. A major focus of photographic analysis is to understand and investigate the reasons behind the selection of an image (Reissman, 2008). Reissman (2008) discussed how researchers could interpret the many choices that go into the construction of a photograph, from framing and camera angles to arrangement of objects. However, since the current study's photographs were taken by the researcher, there was no need to interpret the photographer's reasoning behind choosing to photograph a particular part of the room. Therefore, the current study's photographic analysis was limited.

In terms of participant demographics, the current study was also limited in its inadvertent selection bias towards more domestic and upperclass students as opposed to younger and other non-traditional students. Aspyn was the only sophomore and Katie was the only Frances Perkins scholar. If they had been sorted into their own separate types of sense of home, it would have been harder to determine which of their characteristics were participant-specific or type-specific. However, Aspyn and Katie experienced the same nurturing and supportive sense of home as two other seniors which indicated that individuals can come to have the same type of experience despite being different ages and hailing from various backgrounds. Thus, the validity of the typical structure in which home is an ideal haven that nurtures and supports is further confirmed for

having the same experience from demographic outliers like Aspyn and Katie among other participants.

Directions for Future Research

Identifying four distinct types in the experience of home in college students, the current study illuminated the different needs and priorities specific to students for their sense of home and well-being. However, the current study could be improved in terms of participant diversity and method of photographic collection. With the aim of recruiting a pool of participants with different experiences from diverse backgrounds, the study sought experiences from international students, as well as domestic students. Although Kiara and Zia identified as international students, they had relocated multiple times and have had the experience of living in different places before college. It would have been interesting to study and understand the experience of an international student who have lived in only one place before relocating to a college in America.

Future studies on understanding sense of home could also incorporate alternative visual techniques such as photo-production. In photo-production, participants themselves choose and generate their own visual data (Reavey, 2011). Although the current study analyzed photographs collected by the researcher herself, it would have been particularly informative to involve participants in the meaning-making process by giving them more agency in generating their own photographs. A future study could ask participants themselves to take

photographs of specific significant parts of their home and show how they feel “at home” in it. Doing so would have allowed participants not only to narrate their experience but also to depict how they cultivate a sense of home and reveal the context in which their experience takes place on their own (Reavey, 2011). The researcher could then interpret the reasoning behind the photographs that participants generated. Another possible study using photographic data could be a longitudinal study that examines individuals’ homes throughout their lives as they relocate from place to place.

As with any method of investigation, the present study also gave rise to more questions than answers which could lead to studies in new directions. For instance, a future study could focus on participants with limiting and even negative senses of home who do not experience a need for home anywhere. An investigation of this sort could help researchers learn more about negative meanings of home and the reasons behind it. Future research could even question and investigate the necessity of a sense of home in different populations, if not across populations. For example, there could be more studies on what home means for people who are homeless. It might be of interest for researchers to explore the effect of being homeless on well-being.

In conclusion, the current study examined and came to understand the essence of college students’ sense of home and how their sense of home affects well-being. Although the typical structures emerged from using college students

as a data source, these four types of sense of home have been confirmed in previous studies on experiences of home in other populations. In addition, home was understood to be used and associated both positively and negatively depending on the individual's unique experience. Similarly, the effect of sense of home on well-being varied depending on whether the individual feels at home or not at home on campus. Although each individual's sense of home is subjective and experiences of home abound, the ubiquity of home is undeniable.

APPENDIX A

Mount Holyoke College
Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: How College Students' Sense of Home Affects their Well-Being
Investigator(s): Hnin Phyu Aye

Brief description of project and procedures to be followed:

This study aims to examine how Mount Holyoke college students feel at home or not at home living on campus and how their varying senses of home affect their well-being. The study involves a warm-up exercise in which you will be given the chance to express your feelings about home and Mount Holyoke, the collection of photographs of your dorm room and any place on campus that you call home and an interview on home and Mount Holyoke.

This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Mount Holyoke College. The following informed consent is required by Mount Holyoke College for all participants in human subjects research:

A. Your participation is voluntary.

B. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time. You may decline to answer any interview questions. You will not be penalized in any way if you decide not to participate.

C. The procedures to be followed in the project will be explained to you, and any questions you may have about the aims or methods of the project will be answered.

D. All of the information from this study will be treated as strictly confidential. No names will be associated with the data in any way. Any information that can be used to identify you will be omitted from the final report of the study. If you provide your address in order to receive a report of this research upon its completion, that information will not be used to identify you in the data. The data will be stored and secured in a locked room and the data will be accessible only to the investigator and her advisor.

E. The results of this study will be made part of a final research report and may be used in papers submitted for publication or presented at professional conferences, but under no circumstances will your name or other identifying characteristics be included.

If you understand the above, and consent to be audiotaped, interviewed and have your dorm room and other campus places photographed, please sign here:

_____ (Participant sign here)

_____ (Participant print name here)

_____ (Date)

If you have any questions about this research, please contact:

Hnin Phyu Aye at (aye22h@mholyoke.edu) or,

Professor Gail Hornstein at (ghornste@mholyoke.edu) or,

MHC's Institutional Review Board at (institutional-review-board@mholyoke.edu).

Would you like a report on the group results of this research project upon its completion?

YES

NO

Address to which the report should be sent: _____

APPENDIX B

Exercise on Home and Mount Holyoke

I am interested in learning more about how you feel at home or not at home at Mount Holyoke college and how your feelings of home on campus contribute to your happiness and satisfaction in college. In order to learn more about your sense of home and well-being, I would like you first to take part in some warm-up exercises.

On a sheet of paper, please draw or write down your thoughts and feelings concerning the general idea of home or specifically, your home. On another sheet of paper, please draw or write down your thoughts and feelings concerning Mount Holyoke college. This is not a test of your drawing ability or neatness so please feel free to express as you wish. You will be given 10 minutes to complete both exercises. Feel free to take some or all of that time and please let me know if you have any questions. *(After the participant has completed the exercises)* Can you go over with me what you drew and wrote for home? Can you go over with me what you drew and wrote for Mount Holyoke?

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide

Now, I would like to interview you on your thoughts and feelings about home and Mount Holyoke. Because I am interested in learning about your unique subjective experience of living at Mount Holyoke from your point of view, there are no right or wrong answers. I will consider whatever you answer as true and relevant at this specific point in time. I understand that your feelings and thoughts may change at a different point in time. So, please don't worry about giving me "wrong" answers and just try to answer to the best of your ability.

- What is a home to you? What qualities do you think a home should have?
- Where is home for you? Please describe your home. What do you think makes it feel like home for you?
- Do you feel at home living at Mount Holyoke college?

If yes, feels at home

- Where do you feel at home on campus? Which place would you call home?

If home is dorm room

- What do you have in your dorm room? Can you go over the kinds of items you have in your room?
- Do you decorate your dorm room? How do you decorate your room?

- How do you feel about your current room on campus? Do you like it? Why or why not?
- How do you feel about your college life thus far? Are you generally happy or unhappy? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that college life has been fulfilling for you?
- Does feeling at home in your room have any impact on your college life as a whole? How and why?

If home is other campus place (not dorm room)

- Please describe that place.
- How do you feel about it? What do you think makes it feel like home for you?
- How important is this place to you?
- How do you feel about your college life thus far? Are you generally happy or unhappy? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that college life has been fulfilling for you?
- Does feeling at home in this place have any impact on your college life as a whole? How and why?

If no, does not feel at home

- Why do you think you do not feel at home at Mount Holyoke?
- How do you feel about your college life thus far? Are you generally happy or unhappy? Why or why not?

- Do you feel that college life has been fulfilling for you?
- Do you think feeling not at home has affected your college life? How and why?

LIST OF FIGURES



Figure 1. Art work, poster and photographs in Cara's room. This photograph shows a wall in the room that reflects Cara's artistic style and sense of self that centers around the idea of beauty.



Figure 2. The colors in Cara's room. The photograph offers a general look into the items in Cara's room. Since the color purple helps Cara feel at home, she uses purple for her curtains and bed sheets.



Figure 3. Calendars and schedules on Shelby's dorm room wall. This photograph shows how Shelby stays stress-free by having calendars and schedules that help her stay organized.



Figure 4. Warm yellow lighting in Shelby's room. This photograph sheds light on the way Shelby uses warm lighting in her room to feel comfortable and remind her of her home.

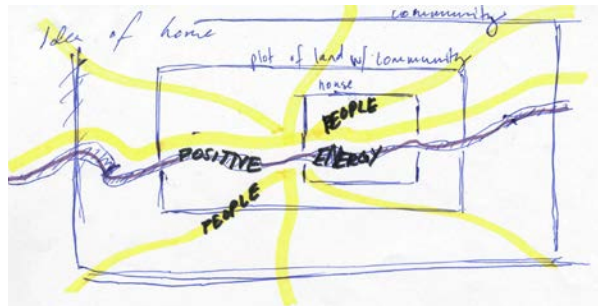


Figure 5. Zia's drawing of her idea of home. It consists of her house, a plot of land and community with people gathering at the center and positive energy flowing through.



Figure 6. Zia's nook of reflection in her dorm room. In this photograph, Zia has constructed a space with a mat, lamp, ukulele and books where she can reflect and get in touch with her self.

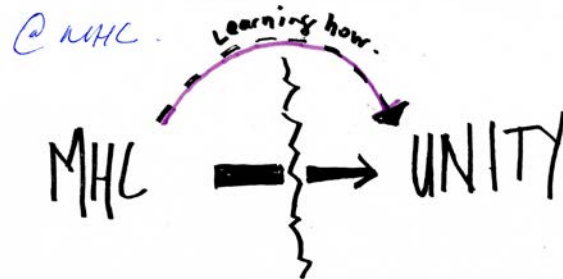


Figure 7. Zia's drawing of her feelings concerning Mount Holyoke College. The drawing represents how Mount Holyoke tries but fails to instill a sense of home and unity within its students and faculty. Instead, Mount Holyoke is still in the process of learning how to create true unity rather than just harmony.



Figure 8. Zia's wall decorations in her room. In this photograph, different types of maps line the wall which reflect Zia's past experiences of living in different places and wish to travel to more places in the future.



Figure 9. Aspyn's desk area in their dorm room. This photograph shows how Aspyn placed stuffed animals within reach of their desk to hold and relieve stress when they study.

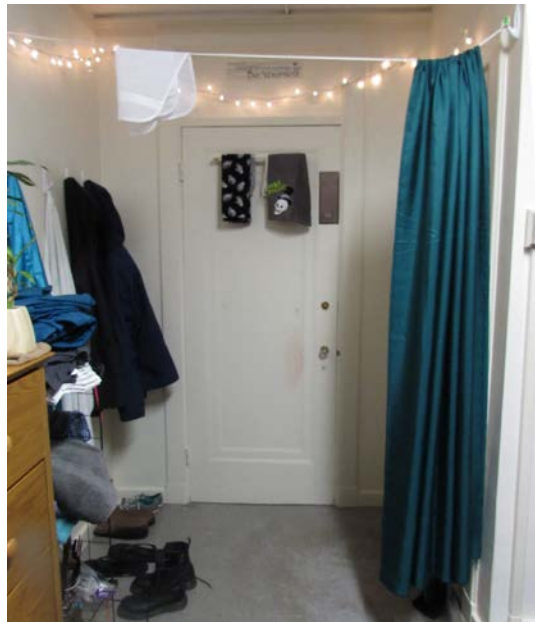


Figure 10. A constructed cloth partition in Aspyn's room. In this photograph, a curtain serves to separate the door area with the rest of the room.



Figure 11. Plants, books and homemade gifts in Katie's room. This photograph shows how Katie surrounds herself with objects that she loves, such as her plants and the custom made figure head on the wall.



Figure 12. Katie's drawing of her ideal home. This drawing shows that her boyfriend, cat, house, nature in the form of trees, sun and campfire, garden and kiln are important aspects of her home.



Figure 13. Katie's unfinished creative art project in her room. This photograph reveals Katie's efforts to engage in her artistic hobbies during college.



Figure 14. The common room of Katie's dorm. This photograph highlights the cozy and comfortable common room that resembles a living room in a house.



Figure 15. Katie's drawing of her experience at Mount Holyoke College. In this drawing, people are engaged in their own activities but hanging out together in a common room with a fireplace where there are music and food.



Figure 16. Kiara's collage of photographs on the floor. This photograph shows that Kiara's has not tried to stick the fallen collage poster back on her wall and is content to just leave it as it is.



Figure 17. The overall composition of Kiara's room. In this photograph, furniture arrangement, bare walls and floor could be seen, making it seem empty to Kiara.



Figure 18. Wendy's room from the point of view of her room door. This photograph shows how Wendy has decorated and arranged her dorm room.



Figure 19. Wendy's room from the point of view of the bed. This photograph reveals the way one side of Wendy's room is all barren of objects and colors.



Figure 20. Jhordan's desk area in her dorm room. In this photograph, all kinds of school-related objects, from pens to binders, can be seen.



Figure 21. Two small rugs in Jhordan's room. This photograph shows Jhordan's rugs that remind her of the carpet back at her mother's house but which do not have much practical use due to their small size.



Figure 22. Maps and photographs of places in Chloe's room. This photograph highlights the many places that Chloe has lived in and visited.



Figure 23. Fitness center at the Mount Holyoke College gymnasium. This photograph displays the many exercise machines that are uniformly arrayed, making the place appear modern and institutional.

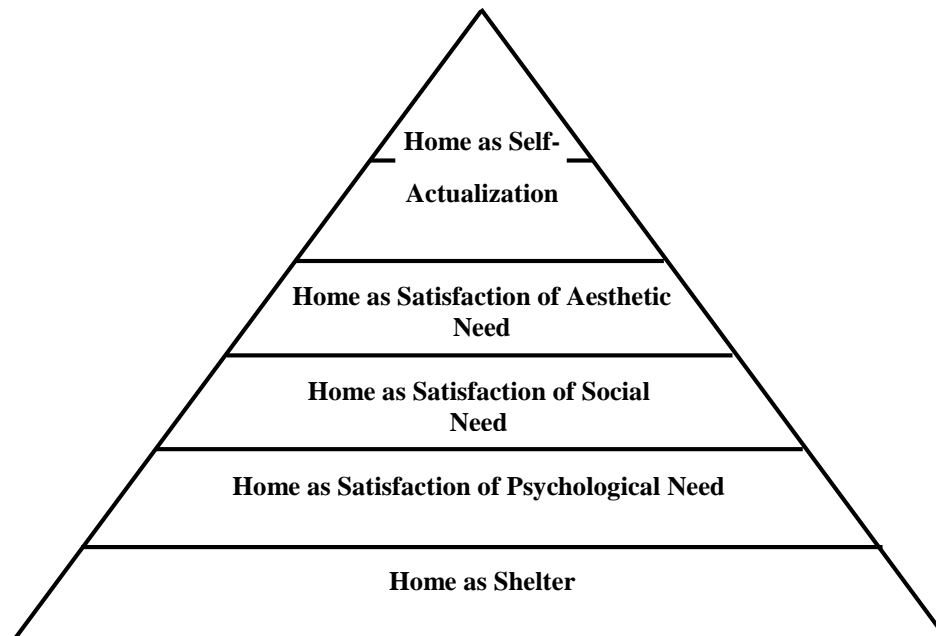


Figure 24. Israel's (2003) hierarchy of housing needs adapted from Maslow's hierarchy of human needs. Basic needs such as home as shelter must be satisfied before an individual can satisfy further higher order needs and finally achieve home as self-actualization.

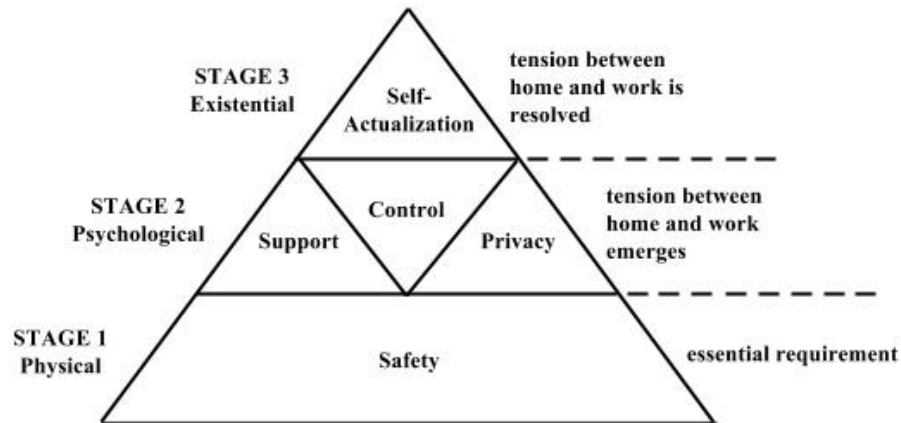


Figure 25. The current study's hierarchy of college students' housing needs adapted from Israel's (2003) hierarchy of housing needs. Physical safety is an essential need that must be fulfilled before psychological needs such as support, control and privacy can be fulfilled. It is during stage two when college students try to fulfill their psychological needs the tension between home and work emerges. When the tension between home and work is resolved, students then achieve a sense of self-actualization at home.

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