Home and Identity

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Abstract

Understanding our homes is essential to understanding ourselves, for our homes influence and are influenced by our identities. Though we often equate our home with our house, in the majority of cases, people describe home as more feeling than structure. It is a personal and, therefore, undefinable place, a space endowed with unique meaning that provides for its inhabitants a sanctuary of stasis necessary to help them adapt to a rapidly changing world. At work within our rapidly changing environments, however, is placelessness, an erosive force on the home and all other places of meaning in our society. Our identities are bound up with our homes, and challenges to the latter put the former at risk.

On a cold autumn day in early November, Dorothy Thompson of Richland Center, Wisconsin narrated stories of home. We sat at her dining room table, in a small house on the outskirts of Richland Center, Wisconsin, surrounded by artifacts from all over the world, a lifetime of travel. The wind whistled about the little house as she told of her upbringing on military bases in faraway places, of learning to shape her home around her even while on the move, of honing a love of travel and of finding home on the road. In a tenth-story lunchroom we listened to 38-year-old Lili Gundy describe her relationship to Madison, Wisconsin, her home. Through the floor-to-ceiling windows behind her, we could see the city itself laid out before us like an accompanying illustration, lakes and little houses and numerous treetops. In a coffee shop, we leaned in to hear Adam Thorson above the rumble of conversation and café music as he discussed his sense of detachment from any place as home, and of his feelings of having come to peace with that uprootedness.

Generations of geographers, sociologists, psychologists and other scholars have studied the complex concept of home. They have quantified, qualified, analyzed, constructed, deconstructed, and defined it in numerous ways toward divers ends. For all this study, there is still no definitive answer to the question of what home is, and that is perhaps the point of this
research, that home is a highly subjective construct. For all the confusion it causes the scholarly, the idea of home is intuitive to all people. Each of us is intimately connected to and affected by home. The word ‘home’ itself, at least in English, is a deep breath, a sigh, full and warm, the ‘h’, a glottal fricative, forcing out a deep breath, the ‘o’, a low back vowel, giving the mouth and lips a full, rounded shape and the ‘m’, a bilabial nasal, bringing it all together with a satisfied hum.

Each of us has, or has had, a home. For some of us, it is our house; we conflate the two. For some, home extends outside the house. For others, home is elsewhere. Even those of us who make no claim to home, whether or not we have a house, have some idea or ideal of home. We can envision homes we hope to have, long for homes we wish we had. What all of this shows is that home and dwelling are actually separate concepts. For some, for many, they are clearly separate geographic entities. We use the term “geographic,” for while the consensus is that home is more emotional than physical, more feeling than place, place is always involved, as we will seek here to show.

The Question

How do our concepts of home affect our notions of identity? More specifically, how is home viewed and defined by people of differing backgrounds and experiences? On what scales do we depict and identify with home? And ultimately, what social and environmental elements bear on our depictions and identifications of home? We seek to better understand the reciprocal roles of home and identity through the narratives of people from various experiences within the Midwest.
The Methods

We believe that because of its heartland nature, the Midwestern experience of home and identity will give us a picture that can be abstracted to a wider, more universal experience. Our focus, then, will be the populations of Madison, Wisconsin and a few surrounding communities; namely, the urban and suburban populations of Madison and surrounding suburbs, rural communities of Richland County, Wisconsin, and a sampling of students at the University of Wisconsin. Each of these groups represents one of the component environments of a Midwestern experience, the final group representing more of a “negative” environment, that is, a population away from home.

Our operational plan was simple but involved and executed in three stages:

1. Disseminate surveys.
   The purpose of the surveys was to draw out key themes and generalizations, which we used to augment data gathered during the interviews.

2. Interview key subjects from each target population.
   The purpose of the interviews was to capture a much more elaborate sense of the human experience of home and identity through the narration of stories and personal expression of feelings with regard to the concepts of home and identity. The weight of our primary data comes from these interviews.

3. Presentation of surveys, interviews, and our own analyses to experts in the field (Geography Department professors) and then acquire interviews from them.
   From this final round of interviews, we formulated an educated assessment of the specific cases we encountered in the course of our project.

Finally, concerning the validation for our geographic area of study, we have two justifications. First and more immediately (that is to say, the more coercive element) is our own
geographic location and resource limitations. In all respects, we are bound to the Midwest, more specifically to south-central and southwestern Wisconsin. Secondly, and rather fortuitously, Yi-Fu Tuan asserts that for all its lack of glamour and fame, to any foreigner, the little known states of the Midwest are, indeed, the heartland and model of the country as a whole. Of Wisconsin specifically, he asks and answers the question: “How can the heartland—the core and essence of a country—not command instant recognition? This is not as paradoxical as it sounds, for words such as “heartland” and “core” suggest home or “homeplace”; and home’s virtues, which are many, do not include striking or sparkling images that catch the attention” (Tuan, 1997, 531). In the forgoing, we have sought to justify our means, methods and area of study in our attempt to answer what we hold to be the important questions of home and identity.

The Story

Home

A wealth of material exists on the topics of home and identity. Before exploring this, we must attend to a question of value: What necessity is there in achieving an understanding of home? Many have sought to answer this same question, but we will look to the words of well-known geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, who emphasizes the understanding of home in a essay entitled Wisconsin: Place, Time, Model. “Self-understanding is an important part of being human, and there can be no such understanding unless, sometime, we have made the effort to understand the habitat and habit that constitute our being, the hills and valleys, the peoples and institutions, that have made us, sometimes directly and more often indirectly (and very subtly), into the sorts of persons we are” (Ostergren, Tuan, 1997, 532).

Home as Identity
We began by questioning the effect home and homeplace have on identity. The assumption is that in some way home does affect identity. In trying to understand the effect of a thing taken for granted, in this case something as common and ubiquitous as home, perhaps the best way is to see what happens when it is removed. To this end, we begin at the end, with *Domicide*.

*Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home*, (2001) looks at the “deliberate destruction of home against the will of the home-dweller” (Porteous, Smith, p. 3). It unveils a modern pandemic of loss of home, often in the form of government land seizures to allow for “development” and “progress,” and the (overwhelmingly negative) effects of this upon our world and lives.

In one of many passages on identity, the authors describe the changes in the state of elderly peoples removed from home, comparing their affliction to those who have their homes taken from them. “For some, however, last days are spent in euphemistic ‘homes’: homes with special names like old folks’ homes, nursing homes, retirement homes, sunset homes, and mental homes. ‘In the psychiatric wing, no one speaks of home,’ and people lose their identity (Porteous, 1990, 186). Porteous also emphasizes the one-way nature of the journey to the old people’s home and the consequent decline in health. This is similar to the effects caused by relocation during urban renewal” (Porteous, Smith, 2001, 47)

Porteous and Smith (2001) go on to look more closely at the ties between home and identity and the benefits of a strong place-based identity:

Self is seen as the most important, among other considerations, in the integration with home; being at home is defined as being close to self. Home is a second body, which is seen as a symbol of self and self-identity. Home shapes you and, in turn, is shaped in your image. Home may change you against your will or without your knowledge.
Ironically, the strong sense of self created by a strong sense of home may also be a factor that preserves you when home is lost. (48)

Thus by looking at situations that entail the forcible removal of one’s home, or one from one’s home, we find clear evidence of the effect of home upon identity.

We draw similar conclusions from our own findings. Most of our interviewees and survey respondents expressed that in some manner their identities and home, or their view of home, were very much related. Jennifer Hefty of Blanchardville, Wisconsin expressed the connection in perhaps the simplest terms. “My home is in the country, and, how do you say, I guess I consider myself country. So yes, I think my home is part of my identity” (Appendix A). Places are given identities on cultural levels (which we do not explore in this study) as well as by the personal meanings we ascribe to them. When we call a place home, we take that association even further, as seen in Jennifer’s case, taking on as our own, part of its identity.

Lili Gundy of Madison, Wisconsin expressed the idea in somewhat more complex terms.

When I grew up, we never really got a lot of things. And as a kid you think, “Oh, this is terrible!” But when you grow up, you see—I mean, I don’t associate home with any material things. I associate home with the people I love, you know, a safe place where I know I’m loved….Yah, it is a place, but it’s about the people and feelings I find in a place. And I think that’s from the way I grew up. So, yah, I don’t know what way it goes, but my home and my identity are related. (Appendix A)

The expression of uncertainty as to whether it is home that affects identity or our identities that affect our homes is a common one. We ourselves have noted the interplay, and though we originally phrased our question in terms of the effect of home upon identity, we have
turned our attention to the reciprocal relationship of the two. One case where the relationship was expressed in direct reversal to our original question was that of Phil Saunders.

Phil narrated for us a story of growing up in isolated Nantucket, a highly rural upbringing. He remembers a time before the bridges went up and ferries were the only connection to the mainland. As a young man, he moved to New York City to “de-hick himself.” Through his work, he made his way from city to city until he ended up in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. His hippie-like appearance on a number of occasions prompted his customers and acquaintances to utter the following statement and accompanying question: “You’re really weird. Are you from Madison?” to which he replied, “No. But as soon as I’m done here, I’ll go and check it out.” So, before heading back to New York, he stopped by the city and describes his initial feeling of “finding” himself “right at home.” A few years later, Phil was looking for a place to go to college. He had one requirement. It had to be a riot school. His choices were Berkeley and the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He chose Madison.

Discussing the relationship between home and identity, he made the claim that “Madison didn’t shape my identity. My identity was pretty fully formed by the time I got here. But Madison and my identity were a solid match.” Hence, in many ways, it was Phil’s identity that shaped his home, in that the latter choice, or predetermined, the former. In his own words, “Madison is where old hippies come to die.”

Now, we said that most of our interviewees and survey respondents recognized the relationship between home and identity in their own experiences. A few, however, made the claim that there was no such interaction, usually predicated on the fact that they claimed to have no home, or sense of home. About 6 percent of our survey respondents said that home had no effect on their identities. Only one of our interviewees made that claim and the ensuing conversation was telling.
Adam Thorson of Altoona, Wisconsin, a recent graduate of UW-Madison, asserted from the start that he had no home. Not that he was homeless, he had a home in Altoona, where his family still lived, as well as an apartment in Madison, his current residence. No, his claim to not having a home was one of feeling (which we will later examine). For the present, he can be described as having no attachment to, or any sense of, home.

I’m from Altoona…three hours north of here….I was born and raised in the area….I really enjoyed it and it was a nice area for a while, but…I consider it my home because I was born there, but at the same time I don’t think it’s a place I would go to recuperate. It’s not a place of refuge….It’s not a sense of home like a lot of people associate. He describes feeling uncomfortable early on with his lack of a sense of home.

It used to disturb me, not having a real home. I used to see other people and how they would talk about home and feel like I wanted that. But over the last couple years, I’ve realized I don’t really need a home. As long as I have people I can be around and go to. I think the place just evolves. (Appendix A)

By our own findings, associating people with a concept of home was not uncommon. The claim to not having a home, or being affected by a sense of home, was unique, however. As Adam continued to describe his social and physical environments, his dining habits and preferences, it became clear that there was a view of home at work here. “A lot of people need a place to call home, but I feel like I’m becoming a bit of a nomad…a 21st century nomad.”

Adam’s claim to being a “21st century nomad” caught our attention. For the nomadic life style, or in this case, stance, is a view of home. Adam, in Madison, Wisconsin, was hardly living the life of a nomad. The self-description was ideological, a description of identity. Thus, whether it is this sense of home affecting his identity or the other way around, it is clear that even this claim to
a lack of any sense of home, or effect of such on identity, is indeed the expression of a relationship between the two. (Appendix A)

Home as Feeling

Another claim we make here is that “home” exists more as a feeling than as a structure, that is, as differentiated from “house,” but at the same time home remains bound to place, that is, geography. In English, this distinction is commonly understood when we make the claim that a house is not necessarily a home. It is less clear, however, when we make the claim that home does not necessarily have to be a house. In Home, geographers Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling provide an in-depth look at the numerous ways in which academic literature approaches the topic of home. In one long passage, they look at the work of Edmund Bunkše, a Latvian professor of geography who describes the notion of home as more than physical.

Missing his wife, and feeling that he was under surveillance within as well as outside the apartment in Soviet-occupied Latvia, he writes that “a very curious thing happened: I experienced protected intimacy, warmth, domesticity, security and homeliness in my shabby, Le Corbusier-inspired machine for living, a tiny, third-story apartment in a complex of concrete apartment blocks, brought to Riga by the Soviets” (91-2). This apartment became, to his surprise, “one of the homiest domiciles I have ever lived in,” and his “small worktable in the living room became my essential home” (93). Describing the few hours that he spent writing at this table each evening as a refuge from the outside world, Bunkše writes that “Home is sometimes a state of mind” (94). (Blunt, Dowling, 2006, 13)
That Bunkše can describe home as a “state of mind” clearly underscores the nature of “home” as differentiated from “house.” As Blunt and Dowling argue, however, it does not detract from its geographic place-bound nature.

Home is much more than a house or the physical structure in which we dwell. Home is both a place or physical location and a set of feelings… home is a relation between material and imaginative realms and processes, whereby physical location and materiality, feelings and ideas, are bound together and influence each other, rather than separate and distinct. Moreover, home is a process of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging. Home is lived as well as imagined. (Blunt, Dowling, 2006, 14)

Home, therefore, is an experience for all of our senses from the hand to the heart. Here, we might turn the old philosophical question and ask: If a house is built in a forest and no one experiences it, is it really a home? We would have to answer no.

Again, our findings tell the same story. Nearly all of our interviewees expressed, perhaps unwittingly, that home for them was more than just a structure. In describing their homes, in response to our opening question, the majority used adjectival descriptions that listed specific emotions and feelings that were necessary to the notion of home. The quality of responses indicated the linguistic awareness of the distinction between home and house and, therefore, the legitimacy of the claim that home is more feeling than structure. In the case of the interviews, where we were able to discuss our study and concepts with the interviewees, this quality of responses was expected.

Interestingly, we received qualitatively similar kinds of answers from our survey respondents, who were incapable of conversing or asking for clarification. There was a noticeable gradient of change in the answers as respondents progressed through the survey.
When, at the start, they were faced with the multiple-choice question, “At what scale do you 
most view your home?” with answers; House, Neighborhood, City, and Country, 89 percent 
chose “House.” At the end of the survey, seven question later, participants were asked to 
complete the sentence; “Home is…” to which only two out of 110 responses indicated their 
house: “My physical home and the members that live with me” (Appendix B). “Where I have my 
mail sent” (Appendix B). The remainder claim home to be, for example, “warm, comforting and 
safe”; or a place where there exists “a sense of love, trust and respect”; or a place of “sanctuary,” 
a place “where one is always welcome to return and receive love,” where “I am happy” and 
“where the heart is” (six respondents answered with the latter phrase). All of this reinforces the 
claim that “home is more a feeling than a place” (Appendix B).

To what extent do you consider your home to be at the scale of your House?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th># Responses (100 total)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Much</td>
<td>89%</td>
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Home as Undefinable

It may seem strange for us to view home as truly undefinable after all our attempts to define it, but the fact is all of our inquiry has led ineluctably to the understanding that home, as a feeling, an experience, is never the same from one person to another. Looking again to our data, while we found many similarities between descriptions of home, the most consistent factor was the highly personal meaning ascribed to home.

Umar Hussain recently moved from a northshore suburb of Chicago to a south side Madison neighborhood. He emphasized a common expression of home, as a place of social connections.

I wouldn’t say my house [in Lincolnwood] is my home. It’s part of my home, but so is the mosque I go to in Morton Grove, and also to an extant the whole Muslim community is part of my home….But I would have to say home is where my family is. And even then, I have multiple homes. My wife and son are here with me in this apartment [in Madison], but my parents are in Chicago and my in-laws are in Richland Center….I guess it’s the right people in the right places. Because if I had my own family, my parents and siblings with me in Richland Center, it wouldn’t be home. (Appendix A)

Umar’s description of home as the correct pairing of “the right people in the right places” is not uncommon; however, the combinations result in a unique tripartite home geographically situated in three very different places.

In yet another work called Home (it’s hard to find a better title), Estonian professor of geography Tiina Peil writes:

A person’s home, in Western culture, is usually understood to be situated in space and time, a place to lay one’s head, but it becomes ‘home’ when it is inscribed with (social, psychological, and emotive) meaning for individuals and groups. The meaning is,
however, personal, and therefore different people are likely to understand ‘home’ to mean different things at different times (Peil, 2009, 1).

She further elaborates on the social elements of home, saying: “In an attempt to elucidate the relationship between house and home, the latter is seen as a spatial and social unit of interaction between the individual and society; a residence inhabited by family, people, things, and belongings; and a space where particular activities and relationships are lived” (Peil, 2009, 2).

A more recent paper looks at the home-places of young men whose daily lives are lived more outside the home than in it, again emphasizing the distinction of home and house, where the former can exist without the latter. Akile Ahmet’s work looks closely at how young men of mixed descent living in London define and find a sense of home. She shows how, in most of the cases she looked at, home was defined as a place of security and identity, often outside of the house. A park, a football pitch, even a walk along a canal—all were identified as places of home. (Ahmet, 2013)

This research furthers the notion that home is often more than just a structure. Rather, as Bunkšē put it, it is “a state of mind,” reaffirming the idea of home being defined in drastically different ways by different people. As noted in our own findings, however, with Adam’s view of the “21st century nomad,” it also shows how even these more abstract views of home interact with identity and are usually place-bound. The requisite feelings of security and inclusion that the subjects expressed are brought on by specific places and activities and relations with those places. Here is an excerpt from an interview of one of her participants:

I think the canal walk from XXXX Road to XXXX Park is like home to me. I like to find routes to walk and walk to different spaces. And I walk to various different spaces. But,
erm [vocalization], that is one of the walks I like doing. It is a walk I can do blind now. I can see the spaces in my mind. I like walking along the river also past the big wheel. That is a walk I like to do in the summer. The canal walk is one of my home spaces because I am free. (Ahmet, 2013, 625)

It is walks along a specific canal that Ahmet’s participant expressed as home, not just any place to walk.

Losing Home

The loss of home is something we touched upon when examining Porteus and Smith’s Domicide. A final much more on-the-ground study that we will examine about home (to which Ahmet’s work bears some similarity) is William Bunge’s famous (perhaps infamous), Fitzgerald. This book is the result of a prolonged study of Detroit’s Fitzgerald neighborhood conducted by Bunge and his students. The narrative goes into extensive detail describing what is essentially the struggle of a community to build and defend a home. Once again, home to this community is not merely a house, nor is it merely the expression of a single person. Rather, it is the combined imaginations and materials of all the people that make up the one square mile of Fitzgerald. In presenting the story of the home that is Fitzgerald—positioned, almost metaphorically, between the urban slum and wealthy suburbs—Bunge argues for its greater suitability than either of these two residential polarities to bear the title of home.

The concept of home implies a geographic permanence. Among other things, home is a place, a setting, a view of a landscape. Deep psychological, perhaps biological, feelings of territoriality are part of the appeal of homeowners’ rights. Normally well-behaved people become hysterical if they feel that the geographic sanctuary of their homes, their resting place, their private place where they love each other and gain strength to fight the
fights in the outside world, is threatened. Yet Americans have become a gypsy people. Their geographic instability is a symbol of the greatest forced migration in the history of mankind—the necessity to move ever outward from the city. (Bunge, 1971, 129)

This brings us, naturally, to the exploration of another phenomenon.

Placelessness

In interrogating the concept of home, we found the notion of place—that is, space endowed with unique meaning—to be highly critical. But one cannot look into the concept of place without coming across discussion of its arguably rising antithesis. That is, placelessness.

There is a widespread and familiar sentiment that the localism and variety of the places and landscapes that characterized preindustrial societies and unselfconscious, handicraft cultures are being diminished and perhaps eradicated. In their stead we are creating, in Norberg-Schulz’s (1969) terse phrase, ‘a flatscape,’ lacking intentional depth and providing possibilities only for commonplace and mediocre experiences. C. W. Moore (in Lyndon, 1962, pp. 33-34) has written that “the richly varied places of the world…are rapidly being obliterated under a meaningless pattern of buildings, monotonous and chaotic.”… Such comments indicate the possibility of a placeless geography, lacking both diverse landscapes and significant places, and also imply that we are at present subjecting ourselves to the forces of placelessness and are losing our sense of place. (Relph, 1976, 79)

While a sense of the loss of place has been at issue among geographers and other scholars since the first gratings of the industrial era, Canadian geographer Edward Relph was one of the first to characterize the condition of placelessness as pandemic, chronicled in his well-known
book *Place and Placelessness*. The title itself is of significance, for in order to understand “placelessness” one must first understand “place.”

The essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centers of human existence. There is for virtually everyone a deep association with and consciousness of the places where we were born and grew up, where we live now, or where we have had particularly moving experiences. This association seems to constitute a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security, a point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world. (Relph, 1976, p. 43)

So as we discovered in looking at the conceptualizations of home, those spaces that we have vested with a kind of personal meaning play an integral part in the formation and security of our identities. Such claims add to the severity of placelessness and its effect on identity. To underscore this idea, we might think back to Porteous’ description of old people’s homes and how, in them, “people lose their identity” (Porteous, Smith, 2001, 47).

Like home, place is defined as greater than the merely physical.

Place is not only a cognitive phenomenon. It refers to the experience of having a place and being in a place in a holistic sense, in an emotional, embodied, and cognitive sense. From an experiential perspective, place is basic for how human beings orientate themselves in the world; it is immediate, more lived than known, tacit and discursive at the same time (Tuan, 1977; Casey, 1993, 1996). It expresses feelings of wholeness and integrity in people’s lives, making them feel at home in the world (or not) in an existential sense. (Birkeland, 2008, 292)

Birkland furthers this idea of place with the claim that place is not only experienced but taught. In other words, place is “an attitude, a part of a modern way of life, a way of thinking,
doing, and communicating that is learned” (Birkeland, 2008, 292). Again these views of place are not so different from those of home that we inspected earlier. However, reproducing them in the context of place is essential to understanding placelessness.

We now have an idea of place and can turn to an investigation of placelessness. We look again to Birkeland. “The human experience of placelessness is loss of place, of not belonging or not having a place in the world. This encourages insensitivity towards the particularities of place and separates human beings from ground, or context, according to Relph” (2008, 287).

In our discussion of home we took up Bunkše’s description of home as being a “state of mind,” and Peil’s claim that “the meaning [of home] is… personal.” Here we find what is essentially the reverse of this idea in that this “insensitivity to the particularities of place” is a cultural mindset. Placelessness is, however, also an intentioned force. As Birkeland continues: “On the one hand, placelessness is produced by the unplanned destruction of distinct places. On the other hand, placelessness is a planned process of standardized landscapes based on insensitivity towards the subjective experience of place for human beings” (Birkeland, 2008, 287). Thus, the development of placelessness runs along both sides of a loose dichotomy of intentionality and unintentionality.

Mahyar Arefi, a professor of urban design and community development, looks at the forming processes of places both intentional and unintentional.

The process of place creation under a fixed set of social relations strengthens local ties and identity, whereas globalization in general weakens local ties and fosters homogeneity and sameness based on the tenets of consumerism and capital mobility. These forces imply that as a result of the growing interconnectedness of social relations, the power of global capital determines the economic well-being of places instead of the events within the boundaries of place. (Arefi, 1999, 190)
That is to say, the creation of place under the forming forces of a local society leads to greater associations of local elements than those places that form in response to globalized moments.

Globalization, primarily from a corporate and economic standpoint, is a significant producer of placelessness. “Some argue that citizenship that guarantees our social values is about to disappear: our public life has shrunk, we do not interact publicly as much as we used to, and our public realm is becoming increasingly privatized; that is, being built and rebuilt by corporate values and capital” (Arefi, 1999, 187). This is the marked intentionality of placelessness resulting from globalized business. A key and concerted focus on consumption and the production of places of consumption is a defining feature of our society. “Communities of interest, rather than communities of place, are nowadays considered the successors of the original notion of place-centered community. The proliferation of secondary (instead of face-to-face) contacts, thanks to the emergence of cyberspace, has weakened the communal ties and bonds that were once considered the main characteristics of place-bound communities” (Arefi, 1999, 181).

Alongside the intentionality of globalization in the production of placelessness is an unintentional element associated mostly with modern communication. Philosopher Joseph Kupfer writes concerning the role modern communication technologies play in the loss of place: “Mail and phone were situated in a context of origin and reception. In contrast, with the flourishing of cellphones and emails, our spoken and written communications are from anywhere to nowhere in particular. Thus, even when we are somewhere, the transitioning force of cell phones and email keeps us mobile—not physically, but virtually, socially, and in thought” (Kupfer, 2007, 41). Thus as physical locations and destinations lose uniqueness and relevance, we find ourselves thinking less and less in terms of place. It is not important to know, in fact
impossible to know, where a tweet is going, and even the sender of the message may not be fully aware of where the message is coming from.

Kupfer explains the danger of such loss of orientation.

In what follows I sketch three dimensions of loss that accompany this exciting new electronic connectedness. With loss of place, with placelessness, we are deprived of the aesthetic experiences particular places provide. Second, we lose touch – with our bodies and other people. Last, we lose a sense of place altogether. Our entire way of being in the world may undergo such a radical change that we foreclose important aspects of our humanity and with it corresponding aesthetic appreciations. (Kupfer, 2007, 39)

It is clear that the changes our society is undergoing, for all their gleam and attraction, are darkly momentous.

Amid such change, we tend to seek a moment of peace, a moment to grasp what is happening. But we may find that that moment has been lost, collateral damage to the loss of place. Doreen Massey, a British geographer and social scientist, makes the connection.

Some argue that, in the middle of all this flux, people desperately need a bit of peace and quiet—and that a strong sense of place, or locality, can form one kind of refuge from the hubbub. A ‘sense of place,’ of rootedness, can provide—in this form and on this interpretation—stability and a source of identity. It seems as though ‘time’ is equated with movement and progress while ‘space’/‘place’ is equated with stasis and reaction. (Massey, 1994, 5)

Kupfer adds to this caution: “Text replaces context, cognition overrides perception, and image marginalizes direct experience. Ironically, the privatization of experience brought on by technology depletes social life without enhancing solitude. We forget how to be by ourselves”
(Kupfer, 2007, 46). We must maintain place, places of meaning, both personal and social, as the grounds on which we will learn to deal with coming change.

In our own interviews we found an interesting pattern of responses to the topic of placelessness, particularly in relation to communication technology. We posed questions looking to understand the role and prevalence of cell phones, email and social media in our interviewees’ senses of home. Unsurprisingly, such technologies were prevalent throughout descriptions of home.

Its role, however, varied. Jennifer of Blanchardville expressed gratefulness for those technologies that eased her way of living, such as her hearing aid and the cell phones that allowed her and her husband to contact each other when necessary. Umar, though he and his family make frequent use of smart phones and email, claimed, “If I need cell phones or social media to stay connected with someone or something, then I don’t consider them part of my home” (Appendix A).

On the other hand, while no one claimed that such technologies were essential to their concept of home, many viewed them as playing an important, if replaceable, role in their home lives, expressing that connecting with people who they view as part of their home would be made much more difficult without them.

Margo Ptace of Madison, Wisconsin, expressed an educated understanding of placelessness, immediately targeting airports and malls as locations of placelessness. Throughout our discussion, she leveled critiques against communication technologies and their social and cultural effects.

So many people use things like smart phones to keep from having to interact with the people in their personal, physical spaces and it’s like you no longer have public spaces. But at the same time it's like—I’ll see people at seven in the morning on their cell phones
talking at the top of their voice. And it’s like you also don’t have private spaces any more.
You don’t have privacy….People are not comfortable being with themselves. We can’t
stand silence (Appendix A).

As we listened to Margo, we were provided with an on-the-ground summary of much of
the literature on communication technology and placelessness. Sharp as her social criticisms of
communication technologies are, they are not uncommon. Many of our interviewees expressed
the same sentiment. The criticisms, however, are leveled at society, at the outside, that is to say,
not at home. But the erosive force of placelessness is not brought to bear on society beyond the
home alone, but rather on all aspects of place and all experiences and relations that are born of
place, including home.

Social Effects

We began discussing the effects of placelessness in the previous discussion under the
heading of placelessness. Here, however, we will look more deeply, though briefly, at the direct
effect it can have on communities, neighborhoods and the individual. Mahshid Ghorbanian, an
Iranian professor of urban planning, investigates the forming and eroding elements of
neighborhoods.

Neighborhood is a function of the inter relationships between people and the physical and
social environments. Its form is derived from a particular pattern of activities, the
presence of a visual motif, an area with continuous boundaries or a network of often
traveled streets… New virtuality in social networks and greater fluidity and superficiality
in social contact are further eroding the residual bonds of spatial proximity and kinship.
(Ghorbanian, 2011, 274)
As places are devalued by placelessness, the neighborhoods and communities that inhabit them lose their physical patterns. (Children prefer to stay indoors and play video games rather than run over to the park, halting a stream of movement.) This leads to eventual erosion of any sense of neighborhood.

The family, which depends on physical patterns of movement somewhat less than neighborhoods, is also affected. A wealth of research has been compiled on the topic of the family meal and its effect on identity. “From the moment we are born, the family food preferences ‘imprint’ themselves upon the child, creating emotional and cognitive associations that extend into adult life…. Eating is a primary biological function and can also be characterized as a primary social function” (Backer, 2004, 64). Such “Traditions and rituals promote unity, stability and routine in families” (Fruh, 2004, 20). All such elements are expressed as requisite to the formation of home.

The family meal, eaten together, is a tradition that fulfills many needs of children, in particular, and particularly in the formation of identity. As communities dissolve, however, so too does the tradition of eating together. In a survey conducted by the Division of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell University, researchers found that out of a sample of 663 participants in upstate New York, a whopping 72 percent of participants said that they rarely eat with others (Nelson and Sobal, 2003, 184). The study went on to say that “the McDonaldization of society may be rationalizing not only the food that is consumed, but also the relationships involved in engaging in food consumption” (Nelson and Sobal, 2003, 187).

In place of this identity-forming tradition, most children turn to technology. “Social media is an act of agency…a strategic making and remaking of selves, identities, activities, relationships, cultural tools, resources and histories” (McLean, 2010, 19). Even more dramatically, it has been found that “grief over loss or lack of care and home can result in long
lasting problems in peoples relationship to place and their own bodies…a relationship imbued
with feelings of loss and displacement” (Bowlby, 2011, 615). Thus, we find a number of ways in
which placelessness, however indirectly, can affect the identity of the individual, and especially
children, who are by nature intensively engaged in identity formation.

**Scales of Home**

Another topic we explored in our data was how people viewed home on different scales. There
are lots of components that we found effect people’s view of scale including mobility, family ties
but the biggest distinction was in urban and rural environments.

In our survey data we found 96% viewed home on the scale of their house. But, interestingly in our research we found people attached not only to their physical structure of their house but the places they interact with on a daily basis. Their idea of home was less oriented toward the house and more the pathways of everyday life that they access to go to work, study, relax and have fun with friends and family in the area. This was especially evident when interviewing people who lived in the Urban and surrounding suburban environments of Madison. These residents expressed that the spatial scale of home not only includes their house but places of interest and where they walked to and from each day.

Places of interest are what we call nodes and they are the spaces where we have fun, and help shape our identity, interactions and relationships with the city at large as a home. It is made up of the many different pathways we take that connect us to family, offices, schools, friend’s houses, places to eat and relax downtown, walk by the lake or sports arenas in the area. This was common throughout in stories heard from Madison residents like Phil and others who had less of a place based view of home as in the physical structure of the house, but more nodal points
where they live and interact everyday like Lakeshore Path, State Street, coffee shops, bookstores or places to see a concert.

Many urban Madison residents we interviewed had similar attachments to places of interest and the city at large. Professor Yi Fu Tuan had a view of home as the pathways to and from work, his house and everywhere of interest in between…He said, “Madison is my home. My house is my room. State street is my corridor…Its longer than most. Science hall is my study. I walk down state street, my corridor, to my office and know where to get a cup of coffee on the way…it’s where I am comfortable and familiar” (Appendix A). His view of home was being familiar with points of interest. It was an expanded view of home that was more than most rural residents expressed.

Rural residents like Osama tended to view home as more of a focused place than urban residents. They viewed home as their land or family farm. Often these folks grew up on a farm, but this is not always the case. Some moved there to escape city life like Osama’s family. Some had powerful connections to the landscape with birch trees like Jenny Hefty of Blanchardville. She called the tree in her yard the Kid Tree after she started taking pictures of her family’s kids, graduations, marriages, and major reunions in front of the same Kid Tree each year. She had stories of her daughter getting stuck in the tire swing in their back yard and growing up on a dairy farm as a child. These rural folks in Wisconsin often had an attachment to the landscape and found it hard to leave the peaceful escape in the rolling hills of the heartland.

Feelings of home change depending on where you live, your age, or how often you move around your house in life. Since leaving Middleton and a much more rural, small town, home environment to go to college the scale that I view my home today has shifted to my alma matter, or temporary mother in Latin. I live away from home but have found a new one in this city. My
rural view of home as a rooted house structure with family and close friends in the neighborhood and small town area has expanded to include all of the places I’ve loved and experienced throughout my four years in downtown Madison. In the words of David Byrne’s of the Talking Heads, “Home is where I want to be, but I guess I’m already there.”

For me that place is Madison, just like Yi Fu Twan, Phil, Lilly and others who consider Madison there home. Home is the place you live and experience on an everyday basis. It differs drastically in a walkable urban, college campus atmosphere of the urban Madison atmosphere versus a quiet, peaceful escape like the northwoods, or farmland outside of Mount Horeb where rural residents often commute to work in the nearby cities or area.

**Study Conclusions**

Before detailing our methods (which we have summarized at the outset of this paper), we would like to provide our conclusions. Through our research, our primary and secondary data, we have been able to describe different views and senses of home. We have determined, to an extent, the effects of various elements of our social and physical environments on our conceptualizations of home. Foremost among our assertions, however, is that no matter the varying definitions and scales on which we view home, the reciprocal play between home and identity is, in the Midwest, strong and mutually profound. We would like to know how the relationship between the two plays out in other parts of the country and the world. Yet from what we ourselves have now discovered, we feel that home is very much a part of our identity.

**The Methods Again**

Before concluding, we must take a look at the methods and restrictions we have been following in seeking out answers to our question. Before gathering primary data and producing preliminary results, it was important that we, as researchers, first reflected on the prominent
notions of reflexivity, subjectivity and positionality. The need to reflect on these notions is a result of the geographer's role as a moral and ethical agent. Though our intention was to do good instead of bad, careless delving into a research project, especially one involving human subjects, can produce harmful and unintended consequences. Therefore, we had to be, throughout the course of this research, aware of how our preconceptions and our subjects' preconceptions, power-relations and goals would affect our respective expectations and knowledge-production. We had to also be aware of how our choice of data collection and synthesis methods might have directed us toward certain kinds of knowledge at the expense of other kinds, or other people.

The goal of our research project was to reveal to ourselves and our audience patterns of knowledge. To spend time and effort during the research process to explore subjectivities in our methods and our positionality vis-à-vis our subjects, is to defer resources away from actually collecting and analyzing primary data. To spend too much effort exercising reflexivity would have been to run the risk of converting our research question into a “backdrop for authorial self-discovery” (Lancaster 1996, 130). Though it is important to maintain professional, ethical and moral standards “in our Oprah Winfrey world today” (Lancaster 1996, 130), reflexivity remains ancillary to the ultimate goal of teasing patterns and cause-and-effect out of geographic phenomena.

Complicating the role of reflexivity, whether as analytical aid or exhibitionist obstacle, our research relied on the so-called 'mixed-method approach,' or alternatively the 'classic triangulation approach' (Winchester 1999, 60). Our decision to use the 'mixed-method approach (hard quantitative data from surveys/questionnaires supplemented by soft qualitative data from interviews) is “based firmly within the hegemonic analytical framework of human geography,” wherein “empirical phenomena are identified as part of an open social system” (Winchester 1999, 60). In adopting this “empirical realist framework of scientific inquiry” (Winchester 1999, 60),
we assumed a compromise between positivist and humanist research paradigms and tendencies. The alternative was to assume a critical realist framework, where “structures, meanings and discourses [are identified] without recourse to measurement or quantification to lend academic respectability” (Winchester 1999, 61). Had we used that framework, we could have conducted interviews to “uncover underlying structures and causal mechanisms of social processes” without survey/questionnaire data as a so-called 'quantitative prop' (Winchester 1999, 60). We determined, however, that a 'mixed-method approach' to answering our research question better satisfied our collective appreciation of a shallower but more integrative and flexible research process.

We chose to proceed first with survey data collection and to follow-up with semi-structured interviews. The “generality of occurrence” (Winchester 1999, 64) across survey data will clarify the key ideas and prompts for the interviews. We expected our number of interviews to be low, shooting for about 5 or 6. However, finding willing interviewees proved easier than expected. One of the benefits, and possible difficulties, of studying home is that everyone is an expert on his or her home. As mentioned, in the end we interviewed 12 people (not counting Yi-Fu Tuan).

Understanding the personal nature of the topic of home, as well as the common difficulty of dealing with and thinking in terms of the concepts of space, place and placelessness, it was critical for us to give our interviewees time to consider and contemplate our study and questions. During this time, and well into the interview process itself, it was important to (a) be mindful of what our role as academics signified to our subjects, (b) acknowledge interviewer-interviewee differences, (c) suspend preconceptions and personal opinions, and (d) admit ignorance and a willingness to learn (de Wit 2003, 131). Developing a successful interviewer-interviewee relationship, especially in the pursuit of interview data, requires concerted and focused effort on
the part of the researcher to bridge the interviewer-interviewee gap. When this gap is bridged, both interviewer and interviewee alike should be able to communicate comfortably, as well as understand their mutual goals from the interview experience.

Given that the search for interviewees and interview-administration is time-consuming, we wanted the overall interview process to be as enjoyable and profitable as possible for both parties involved. We determined that an open-ended, semi-structured interview design would give interviewees the chance to freely discuss and explore topics and issues they personally deemed significant. We used small talk and introductions to initiate the interview and settle everyone (interviewer, interviewee and note-takers) (de Wit 2003, 135). The result, which proved successful, was more a series of conversations with people than interviews with subjects. Throughout, it was important for the designated interviewer to “guide the conversation gently now and then with a comment or another question” (de Wit 2003, 132), or to “invigorate a sluggish interview [with] place-provocative issue[s]” (de Wit 2003, 134). It was critical that the interviewee be allowed enough space to “gravitate toward subjects of personal interest” (de Wit 2003, 133) and—particularly important (in the context of ideas of home and identity, place and placelessness)—to discover previously “unrecognized feelings and thoughts” (de Wit 2003, 133).

Our survey consisted of ten questions, using three different methods of answer: multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended—all of which were aimed at describing the interaction between home and identity, determining views of home, and deciphering perceptions of social and physical environments. We found the two most beneficial questions to be our survey respondents’ “views regarding scale of home” and, the final prompt, which asked for participants to complete the question: “Home is…”. In anticipating research outcomes, we needed to remain mindful of the fact that “different spatial scales represent psychologically different places” to different people (Jorgensen & Stedman 2011, 796). In our interviews, and even more so with our
survey, it was crucial to carefully construct questions so as to insure clarity and consensus of meaning. This was made all the more difficult by the one-shot-chance nature of a survey.

Concerning the distribution, web-based survey services provided standardized templates and fast, accurate data collection capabilities (Madge & O'Conner 2004, 144). Unlike manually distributed and collected materials, web-based materials can be easily extracted to word-processing, spreadsheet and database utilities (Madge & O'Conner 2004, 144). This manner of data-collection tends to over-represent groups with access to computers and the Internet (Madge & O'Conner 2004, 148). In an attempt to correct for this bias, we directly contacted individuals and groups which we felt best represented differing experiences.

Any knowledge accumulated will be partial and particular; positionality and space-time constraints filter and orient any and all knowledge production (Mullings 1999, 337). Our individual and collective characteristics and connections influence the types of information and informants we seek, the way we interpret our data, and the questions we attempt to answer (Mullings 1999, 338). However, establishing the objectivity or impartiality of our informants and ourselves could well have been unnecessary and even detrimental to our project (de Wit 2003, 128). In looking at the highly personal topic of home, it was necessary for interviewees to remain subjective to their own views and experiences. In asking such personal questions, it was also necessary that we remain personal and, to that end, subjective.
Appendix A: Interviews

Jenny Hefty

Jennifer lives on an old family farm near Mt. Horeb with her husband. She describes the place as her home. But when talking more freely about her relationship to home she spoke more often of family than of land or house. Yet her idea of home, or of attachment is strongly place bound, as she narrates stories of family gatherings, people congregating in the kitchen and around the yard. Stories of a photogenic birch tree and a landmark white horse sign further the placed bound idea of home.
What to do consider to be your home?

Place for family, Pets; Safe Place

Can you describe your home?

Rural setting, about 40 miles south of campus

In what ways has your home shaped your identity and vice versa?

Consider myself “country”; Technology is limited in the country

How do other people's interaction with your home affect your individual relationship to home?

Birthday's bring us together. Special for our family because we can now afford to celebrate them after

Who do you consider to be associated with your home? Can you rank these groups from least associated to most associated?

Relatives and close friends

What physical aspects of your environment places (parks, churches, etc.) are important in your idea of home?

Special tree with a tire swing (Story)

Special Birch tree where we used to take pictures (Story)

Wooden horse sign which has become a public story (everyone knows of this horse).

Sherran Pak
When asked about her concept of home Sherran immediately mentioned her dogs and her house in Stoughton. Throughout the conversation these her the most consistent attributes of her notion of home. She noted that a home for her had to be a secure place where she didn’t have to interact with others. She described things like her tall surrounding, privacy fence as critical to her home. Her home was clearly her house. Family ties were limited and conversation on connections always drifted back to her dogs.

What to do consider to be your home?

My house Stoughton, WI

Can you describe your home?

My dogs are at the center of my focus at home

physical descriptors: walls, fence, a “sanctuary”

In what ways has your home shaped your identity and vice versa?

How do other people's interaction with your home affect your individual relationship to home?

Who do you consider to be associated with your home? Can you rank these groups from least associated to most associated?

What physical aspects of your environment places (parks, churches, etc.) are important in your idea of home?

Are there certain foods or dining traditions that you associate with home?

Not big traditions because my diet is very restricted. I will make something for myself and my son will make something that he likes.
Are there any material items or treasures that enhance your attachment to home?

Grandmother's antiques: Bed and dressers

Could you describe some kind of holiday or celebration that you associate with home?

Christmas

Do you find social media and communication technology as inhibiting or enhancing your connection with home?

Generally it enhances my connection to home.

Lili Gundy

When asked about home Lili immediately claimed that she felt that she had two homes, Madison and Vancouver. Her discussion of her sense of home rarely if ever drifted into discussion of her house, but remained at the level of the cities of Madison and Vancouver and those social and environmental elements that she view as necessary to making home. Family too was critical to her idea of home.

Margo Ptace

In describing her idea of home Margo demonstrated a strong Wisconsin based sense of home, claiming that she believed her identity to have been greatly affected by growing up in Wisconsin. She described her experience growing up in Marshfield and how that led to her association of both small town values and diversity with home. Due to its clinic and UW campus Marshfield
has high level of diversity for a small town. She also expressed a great deal of opposition to most forms of modern communication technology and mall culture.

What do you consider to be your home?

Madison, WI

Can you describe your home?

Physical place, where one feels comfortable, where one fits in.

“Wisconsin is my home”

Diversity

In what ways has your home shaped your identity and vice versa?

Growing up in WI has shaped my identity.

How do other people's interaction with your home affect your individual relationship to home?

Other people provide community which I think is an important part of home. Family is important. Wherever one finds home, they can find a sense of community.

Who do you consider to be associated with your home? Can you rank these groups from least associated to most associated?

What physical aspects of your environment places (parks, churches, etc.) are important in your idea of home?

“I am a flat land person”

- walkable streets, comfortable walking around
Are there certain foods or dining traditions that you associate with home?

Specific foods from the Czech Republic

“Once in awhile I will a bake something, but most of my family does it instead”

Kusha. It was peasant food in the Old Country.

Czech Pastries

Are there any material items or treasures that enhance your attachment to home?

Some artwork and some bigger things.

What about everyday items, special rooms or household rules?

The more mundane the things are, the more the things feel like home. These are the things that held memories and meaning. Certain juice glasses

Could you describe some kind of holiday or celebration that you associate with home?

Not very big holiday people. My mother doesn't like Christmas. I don't necessarily find myself liking the “scene”. Not a big holiday that brings the family together anymore.

A little bit of a rebel. Whenever we want to have fun and get together, we do.

Do you find social media and communication technology as inhibiting or enhancing your connection with home?

Hates malls. Really despise cellphones because of the whole “mall culture”. I miss phone booths. I have really come to loathe email as well. I see the connection to home both ways. I prefer social media cause its easy and its there.
Phil Saunders

Having lived in Madison for more than forty years Phil had a lot to say on the city. Though he claims his identity to have been fairly fully formed he says in relation to Madison that, “We were a good match.” He spoke at length of the various elements of Madison that make it home for him and his wife, a third generation Madison resident.

What to do consider to be your home?

We have a starter house. In the hill farms neighborhood. It is a very bucolic area.

Can you describe your home?

Home is Madison. Resident since 1973. It is my home socially, culturally, politically, geographically. I think it is hard to beat.

In what ways has your home shaped your identity and vice versa?

I don't think it has. I was fairly fully formed when I arrived here. I think we are a good fit. Its where “old hippies go to die”.

How do other people's interaction with your home affect your individual relationship to home?

Who do you consider to be associated with your home? Can you rank these groups from least associated to most associated?

What physical aspects of your environment places (parks, churches, etc.) are important in your idea of home?
Home is where I am comfortable and I am comfortable here. There is culture, yet it is casual.

There are a tremendous amount of things to do and places to go. Some of the resources are world class. You can drive 15 miles from anywhere and you are in the country.

Are there certain foods or dining traditions that you associate with home?

There is a very extensive top-shelf food culture and there is also a healthy food culture.

Are there any material items or treasures that enhance your attachment to home?

What about everyday items, special rooms or household rules?

Could you describe some kind of holiday or celebration that you associate with home?

How would the experience be different were you away from home?

Over all, how does distance to home affect your connection with home?

Do you find social media and communication technology as inhibiting or enhancing your connection with home?

In the event that you cannot use social media and communication technology, how will your interaction with home be affected?

Suzanne Broadberry

Like Lili Suzanne felt that she had two homes one in Madison and the other, the she felt an even stronger connection to, in the North Woods. When we asked how long she had lived there she said that they had only just bought the small, cabin like house a few years ago. And yet she claim that the feeling of home was much more pronounced there than in her home in Madison.
What do you consider to be your home?

I have a home both here and in the woods up north. I am kind of split on where home is. I feel more at home in the woods because it's on a lake, there are not many people around. 20 minutes north of Manitowish Waters, WI. I grew up in the suburbs in Milwaukee but it didn't feel like home.

Can you describe your home?

It is very cozy. We feel very relaxed and happy when we are there. When I am in the woods, I feel connected to them.

In what ways has your home shaped your identity and vice versa?

It is quiet and a good time to think. I am a bit more introverted so it's really nice. It felt right.

How do other people's interaction with your home affect your individual relationship to home?

My partner there and my dog. The other people are nephews.

Who do you consider to be associated with your home? Can you rank these groups from least associated to most associated?

Extended family, dog and partner.

What physical aspects of your environment places (parks, churches, etc.) are important in your idea of home?

Places for recreation. Kayaking

Are there certain foods or dining traditions that you associate with home?
We make Turkey and that can feel like home. I make my mom's French Toast. Basically anything that is home-cooked.

Are there any material items or treasures that enhance your attachment to home?

I have a picture of my mom. Some antiques and photographs

What about everyday items, special rooms or household rules?

Blankets

Could you describe some kind of holiday or celebration that you associate with home?

Christmas celebrations with family

How would the experience be different were you away from home?

If my partner goes with me, I won't feel homesick. Home is rooted for me.

Over all, how does distance to home affect your connection with home?

Do you find social media and communication technology as inhibiting or enhancing your connection with home?

If I am away, it will make me feel more there. Skype, Face time. I don't spend a lot of time on the communication technology when I am at home.

In the event that you cannot use social media and communication technology, how will your interaction with home be affected?

It would not be affected.
Adam Thorson

Like others the lack of strong familial connections and a strong sense of home were present in the discussion with Adam. He expressed ideas of uprootedness and a lack of any firm attachment to place, expressions typical for people of his age, 24, yet nonetheless well mulled over and offering good insight into the concept of home to a generation in search of way.

I’m from Altoona…three hours north of here…I was born and raised in the area… I really enjoyed it and it was a nice area for a while but

I just started to realize there was a lack of opportunities and I just didn’t want to call it home

I consider it my home because I was born there but at the same time I don’t think it’s a place I would go to recuperate it’s not a place of refuge…it’s not a sense of home like a lot of people associate. A lot of people need a place to call home but I feel like I’m becoming a bit of a nomad…a 21st century nomad.

I don’t feel like a have a home…I really don’t…

The past couple years ive asked myself the last couple years do I really need a home…as long as I have people around me that I can enjoy my time with and relate to in some sense I think that’s a place I can go to if I need to…I think it just evolves.

Places like this it’s nice to just meet up at a coffee shop… it’s nice to be in places where it’s nice to sit down and not do anything…I need some chill environments to meet up with friends that isn’t just a Starbucks…
You look around and it’s just more relaxing because it’s not so cookie cutter and defined and it’s not supposed to be mass produced… I feel like that’s very limiting at the subconscious level…

In our culture it’s eat and go and we don’t have the time to sit and talk for a while ‘supposedly’.

There’s a lot of times where I’ll eat standing up and I don’t have a routine… I like to make random dishes here and there and not necessarily a recipe dish.

My parents always wanted me to eat at the table… but there hasn’t been that time where it’s like that anymore. I like the socializing part more than just having a place to sit down and eat at a place. If you’re not at the table than you don’t have to worry about your manners…

One of my goals is to remove adding importance to things… it’s hard not to in this culture… we put so much importance on having goods and money.

There was things that I associated with home that aren’t there anymore… this little red chair my dad used to own would remind me of home if I saw it… The fact that it was my father and that it used to be his when he was more vulnerable causes an association to home… I wouldn’t even see it often when I was little
Dorothy Thompson

Dorothy Thompson of Richland Center, Wisconsin narrated stories of being raised on military bases, of learning to shape her home around her even while on the move. We sat at her dining room table, in a small house on the outskirts of Richland Center, Wisconsin, surrounded by artifacts from all over the world, a lifetime of travel. She described her home as “where I know where my stuff is.”

I was born in Denver Colorado. I’m a military brat so I moved 11 times in 12 years. When I was three we moved to Japan where we lived until I was six or seven. When my father was ordered back to the states my parents came to us and said, “we’re going home!” And I remember thinking, “This is home?” So I thought I was Japanese but I wasn’t…part of me was a little part…I lived off base in a village. But I had to move my home.

I think my concept of home has been shaped by my life…My experience has shaped my concept of home. I got really sick of moving all the time…so then finally I liked knowing where all my stuff is and I thought I’m not gonna move.

Also I travel a lot. I did as a kid and now I like to travel and see the world. So I have less of a placed base feeling of home…Home is wherever is coming up next where I’m traveling.

Home is where my stuff is

I like turtles and I’m kind of like a turtle because they have their home with them…my pet is a turtle…he’s real but he’s sleeping right now…his name is tank. He looks like a helmet but helmet seemed like the wrong name for a turtle.
Stuff does and it doesn’t add to a sense of home…when my parents got older they moved all their stuff away…they didn’t like that and they moved back to a house and got new stuff…ultimately you leave this world without your stuff.

Cell phones and internet connect you wherever you are. It has the potential to either make life a lot worse and a lot better for everybody. But its invasive to the idea of ever being away from home.

I don’t think home is a building necessarily

Once I was traveling back from South America and my plane landed in Puerto Rico and the guy said welcome home. I wasn’t ‘home’…but technically we’re in the United State. I said, “I guess you’re right I’m home in the U.S. again. But it doesn’t feeling like home.”

Richland Center is my home in a strange way I guess…I had never lived here but when my dad retired my parents were both from here…my dad’s goal was to retire before we got to high school before being on a military base full of men…He was able to do that and retired here in Richland Center

For a long time I was an outsider in Richland Center and in Wisconsin. I had the lovely blessing of being able to see the community as both an outsider and an insider which is kind of nice…because a lot of my friends didn’t have that. Some of my friends would say “I want to get out of this stupid town,” in high school I thought, “I’m not in a big rush to get out of here…I know where my stuff is.”

Umar Hussain
Umar recently moved from Chicago to Madison. He describes his home on many levels. Mostly he views it as the right combination of people and places. But he also expressed attachment to the Mosque he grew up near and the larger, global Muslim community. In terms of technology we gave an interesting view. He claimed that if cell phones or social media are necessary to remain connected to people then he doesn’t consider them part of his idea of home. Over all he expressed a strong sense of attachment to home.

I wouldn’t say my house [in Lincolnwood] is my home. It’s part of my home, but so is the mosque I go to in Morton Grove, and also to an extant the whole Muslim community is part of my home….But I would have to say home is where my family is. And even then, I have multiple homes. My wife and son are here with me in this apartment [in Madison], but my parents are in Chicago and my in-laws are in Richland Center….I guess it’s the right people in the right places. Because if I had my own family, my parents and siblings with me in Richland Center, it wouldn’t be home.

“If I need cell phones or social media to stay connected with someone or something, then I don’t consider them part of my home”

Appendix B: Surveys

See Home and Identity Survey Data document.

Bibliography


Bowlby, Sophie. Friendship, Co-Presence and Care: Neglected Spaces Department of Geography and Environmental Science at The University of Reading, Whiteknights, United Kingdom. Social and Cultural Geography, v 12, n 6, p 605-622, September 2011. Geobase.


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Home and Identity Survey
Last Modified: 12/10/2013

1. What age group do you belong to?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Bar</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>under 25</td>
<td>0.51401869</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25 - 35</td>
<td>0.25233645</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>36 - 55</td>
<td>0.14018692</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>56 - 70</td>
<td>0.08411215</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>70 +</td>
<td>0.00934579</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 107 100%

Statistic Value
Min Value 1
Max Value 5
Mean 1.82
Variance 1.05
Standard Dev 1.03
Total Respon 107

2. Are you currently living away from home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Bar</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.41509434</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0.58490566</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 106 100%

Statistic Value
Min Value 1
Max Value 2
Mean 1.58
Variance 0.25
Standard Dev 0.5
Total Respon 106

3. What scale(s) do you consider your home to be at?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
<th>Total Respon</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistic House Neighborhood City Country
4. Who do you consider to be part of your home? (choose all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Bar Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Immediate family</td>
<td>0.96226415</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Extended family</td>
<td>0.4245283</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Neighbors</td>
<td>0.11320755</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Co-workers</td>
<td>0.06603774</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>0.48113208</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.13207547</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Others
Roommates
pets
Pets
people I live with
My pet turtle Donatella
boyfriend
Significant other
Pets
church family
pets
Church Family
daughter's boyfriend
each family group gets larger
Church Family

5. How do you communicate with the members of your home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Never</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Email:</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Telephone:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
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### Face-to-Face Social Media Email: Telephone:

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Face-to-Face</th>
<th>Social Media</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Min Value</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Value</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respn</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Consider the physical spaces that make up your home. How does the existence of each of the following affect your individual sense of home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Detracts</th>
<th>Somewhat D</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Somewhat Ei</th>
<th>Enhances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Place of Wor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Schools and I</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Local Businesses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chain Business</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Public Parks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Place of Wor Schools and I Local Business Chain Business Public Parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Place of Wor</th>
<th>Schools and I</th>
<th>Local Business</th>
<th>Chain Business</th>
<th>Public Parks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Min Value</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Value</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.76</td>
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<td>105</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. How does each of the following affect your sense of home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Detracts</th>
<th>Somewhat D</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Somewhat Ei</th>
<th>Enhances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Eating with others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Long Distance</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Home Cooked</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Communal Celebrations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>49</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Eating with others Social Media Long Distance Home Cooked Communal Celebrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Eating with others</th>
<th>Social Media</th>
<th>Long Distance</th>
<th>Home Cooked</th>
<th>Communal Celebrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Min Value</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Value</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respn</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. To what extent is your home responsible for your current identity?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Not at all:Very Much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Min Value</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Value</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Dev</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respon</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Complete the following sentence: "Home is....."

Text Response:
the people who are most important to me and familiar places I know and livea
a place to ground ourselves, but one that we should not be afraid to break away from when c
where I'm happy
comfort
Comforting place where I can relax and be myself
my favorite place to be in the entire world.
where the heart is.
where my family and friends are at.
where I have my mail sent.
where my mail sent.
where I belong, can be myself.
The place you reference when you are somewhere else and tell someone you're "going back I
where the heart is, and that is right next to you.
where I belong.
Just a phone call away!
a feeling more than a place.
where I formed my identity and sense of self.
where one is always welcome to return to, and receive love.
where the heart is.
Sanctuary
So I says to Mabel, I says...
where I am with my family
Where I can let my hair down and feel safe.
a place where i can unwind and spent quality time with immediate and extended family and f
best
the foundation of who you are
Where the people I love are and where I can find familiar places.
Peace
a sense of love, trust, and respect.
a place for family to be comfortably happy while working on the same goals
where you can always come to
where your family is.  
wherever I’m with you...favorite quote from a song. As long as I have my loved ones with me  
wherever you live.  
a place of rest and identity shared through common experiences and traditions.  
the people who I find important to me  
where my family and friends are and the geographic landscape where I live  
my family, friends and community.  
Home is a place we identify growing up, spending time with family and friends, fellowship, sleep  
where I find myself to relax and to receive help with complicated issues.  
where it all started  
were family live through good times and bad.  
a place to relax and do what I want to do.  
where the people the I love are.  
family  
where the heart is.  
where is feel I truly belong.  
where my family is, where I have spent most of my life.  
Where I feel safe and relaxed  
a place, but more than that it is family, friends, and community.  
where you can be yourself  
Where the heart is ,,,,,  
where you feel safe. Where you go when your done with the day.  
What you make it.  
where I can be myself- away from the demands of work.  
where I feel like I truly belong.  
where you rest your head and can be yourself.  
My physical home and the members that live with me  
Where I can be myself, with a family who loves me.  
where the heart is  
what taught me to be who I am.  
a place of comfort, rest, and a place to express my hobbies  
Where the people I value are and where I can be myself without fear of being judged or havir  
where the heart is!  
...where I found my place in the world to be.  
Home is my childhood, my knowledge, where my parents are. Home is part of me.  
where the heart is  
where my family is.  
Safety, love, warmth, and yet restricting.  
solitude, contemplation, and tranquility, and a place where I can be myself.  
where my loved ones are  
Somewhere I feel comfortable with the people and things around me.
where your family is.
where I have lived all my life and I am familiar and comfortable with the people and places.
where you should want to go after a long day of work and just relax. It should be place where with my family.
where I escape to.
Home is where I am comfortable, where I am loved, and where I thrive.
where my possessions are.
is where I feel proud to make others feel welcome, safe, and comfortable.
very important to me.
where I feel comfortable.
Uw Richland
the foundation of my life which has prepared me for who I am, where I am, and what I will be where I began my journey.
where the heart is.
where my family is and where I go to relax and be at peace.
Where your heart is.
the first of all
where you belong, live, hang out.
a place where I am comfortable.
where my family is
supposed to be a happy place but yet i drown in misery
Where God is head of the household. Home is family and friends whether under the same roof where the heart is
where we love and support each other no matter what"
where I grew up with family.
where the family is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Respon</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. What is the name of your home city or county?
Text Response
Richland Center
Portland, Oregon
Gotham
Richland County
La Crosse
Richland County
Richland Center, WI
Wisconsin Dells
Richland Center
Vernon
Boscobel
Mauston
Richland
Richland County
Richland Center
St. Paul, MN
clyde
Richland Center
Oak Creek
Richland County
Richland Center
Richland Center
Richland Center
Lone rok
Skokie
Wausau WI
Trempealeau
Milton, WI
Dupage county. Illinois
Madison, WI
Richland Center
Chicago
Richland Center
Monroe WI
Chicago
Richland County
Gays Mills, WI, USA
Blanchardville; Iowa county
Chicago
Richland Center
Chicago
Bloomington
Ridgeway WI
Boscobel
Richland Center
Monroe County
Morton Grove, IL.
Richland Center
Richland Center, WI
Richland
Richland
Richland Center, WI
Richland County
Milwaukee
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Respon</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.31</td>
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</table>
Consider the physical spaces that make up your home. How do the following spaces affect your individual sense of home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>4.05</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
opportunities present themselves.

home"

friends.
e, I feel at home.

...eping, eating, and living.

rg to be someone I am not.
you and your family feel comfortable and safe to live.
perishing and we are all players in the great controversy between good and evil...nothing on
this earth will survive but the people who are sealed by Yahowah, His followers who believe i
in His Son Yeshua haMashiach and are covered by the Son's righteous blood...Yahowah bless Ḥ
not on this present earth but heaven and an earth made... blood...Yahowah bless you brother in your pursuit of true knowledge.