

Making a place into a home: The Affective Construction of the Feeling<>Being Differentiation

KEVIN CARRIERE
Clark University, USA

Human beings, perhaps more so than ever, are constantly moving from place to place. This changing, ambiguous, environment is constantly reconstructed within the idea of the *Umwelt* (von Uxeküll, 1940/1982). Yet, there is almost always a place may call home. How can one construct the idea of home? Phenomenologically, there are times when, under certain conditions, the feeling of home can emerge regardless of where the person may be located. A person may visit a distant synagogue and upon hearing a family hymn is overcome by the complete feeling of home. While the synagogue may not be an individual's home, the feeling of home is instilled within the non-home. The dynamics between being at home and feeling at home provides an arena for in-depth investigation of the affective adaptation of surrounding environments to personal needs, and the adjustment of our needs to fit the environment. Using interview data on the construct of home, I will support the differentiating of "being" and "feeling" in surrounding environments by displaying the process of affectivation in regards to the goal-directedness of creating oneself constantly throughout time. This shall be done by analyzing the structure of these conceptual borders and conditions of the development of affective sign constructions.

Keywords: *Umwelt*, goal-directedness, affectivation, self-recursivity, feeling<>being

INTRODUCTION

*What is more sacred,
what is more inviolably hedged
about by every kind of sanctity,
than the home of every individual citizen?*
(Cicero; translated by Watts, 1931)

Sitting on a park bench, I watch joggers running by, a couple having a romantic picnic, and children playing by the swings. The joggers see the road and the sticks in the path. The couple is lost in each other's eyes. The children, lost in their fantasy worlds of pirates and spaceships, see a world beyond our wildest imaginations within the jungle gym. And the homeless man, digging through the morning trash, searches for a light lunch and waits for the crowd to leave so he can return to *his* bench, *his* home.

Each individual in this situation sees the park in a different light. For one, it is merely a route in which to work out. To another, a romantic get away. And to another, a grand escape from the throes of Kindergarten. In each setting, the park created in very different ways, and the affects that emerge from each different creation vary through each

individual. The individuals themselves vary – the runner, who slaves at work every day, may see his daily run as his athletic identity, his overweight identity, or just his escaped-from-work identity. The homeless man may not see himself as homeless once the park clears out for the day and he has his own personal space once again. These affects are not just from the environment onto the individual – the individual acts upon the environment to create these affects just as well. Consider the couple – the placement of the blankets under a shaded tree directly changes the environment to help foster the feelings of a couple’s day out. But by adding that into the environment, the new environment now activates these feelings within the individual that may not have necessarily been present without the effect of the single person’s actions.

These actions come with a specific goal in mind – to set the mood, to forget about work, to explore our imagination. The constructions of both how we feel and how we see ourselves are directed by the environment that we have personally created to direct us. In what follows, I seek to elaborate on exactly this point – that the constant construction of identity and emotion is dependent on a goal-oriented affectivation, in which we activate the environment to affect us in a primarily emotion first, cognition second, scheme of construction, which is theorized to be an affectivating mechanism. This will all be shown through interview data of how university students construct the idea of both being at home and feeling at home in college and within their everyday lives.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the theoretical underpinning of affectivating and extend it using subject/predicate building model of the self through examination of the construction of the home. Affectivating is when an individual places himself or herself primarily emotionally first into each individual’s person subjective environment in that moment (Umwelt) which in turn activates the emotions placed. By attempting to create an environment that can handle the emotional needs of the person, the environment is set to affectivate exactly those needs – restricting and promoting various affects.

After reviewing the theoretical underpinnings of the proposed mechanism, I will discuss the empirical examination of interview data. I will then apply the concept towards subject/predicate building by focusing on how it relies on the goal orientation of creating an environment capable of suiting the needs of the identity in the changing moments as well as other developments within the field that deserve further examination, including a further study of the *Umwelten* in everyday life.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In order to better understand affectivating within the scope of the Self, the following theoretical contributions are used to support its theoretical validity. Previous works on *Umwelten* and semiotic regulation theoretically validates affectivating, and previous work

on the concept of home will link affectivating to a deeper examination of home through interviews.

Setting the field: The *Umwelt*

In our constant search for the new, we are constantly being called back to the old. The German notions of *Fernweh* (the longing for the afar) and *Heimweh* (homesickness) point us towards the constant yearning of the not-yet-known with necessarily striving to being close to the currently known (Boesch, 1991; Beckstead, 2010). As each individual transfers from the current known towards the unknown, never reaching it (for reaching it necessitates it becoming the known), they move from one setting towards another. These settings are each individual's *Umwelts* (von Uexküll, 1940/1982; c.f. Chang, 2009). They are "not only a genuinely existing and biologically instantiated set of agent-object relations, but...an *organizing principle* in the ongoing co-development, co-evolution and co-maintenance of interdependent living systems: a generative and recursive engine of both evolutionary stability and change" (Favareau, 2010, p.10).

Umweltens varies across time, spaces, and persons. Just as a student may interpret a class as torturous, interesting, or a time-waster, so does each sign within the environment carry various meanings that can be elicited at any point in time, depending on what the overall scope of the *Umwelt* seeks to be. "Everything that falls under the spell of an *Umwelt* (subjective universe) is altered and reshaped until it has become a useful meaning-carrier; otherwise it is totally neglected" (von Uexküll, 1940/1982, p. 31). The objects within the world are given meaning depending on exactly which *Umwelt* is being created – there is no singular meaning for any object just as there is no general *Umwelt* that can exist at multiple points in time.

Umwelts, while constantly being rebuilt, are also future-oriented in that they are built for the unknown *Umwelten* still to come (Zimmerman & Valsiner, 2009). *Umwelten* mediate down on the signs within it but yet is determined by the signs in its place. The changes in meanings within the given social environment (from friend<>pet, unfamiliar road<>home) start directly with us keeping a continual dialogue with the environment we are placed within.

Weisfeld (2009) helps tie the emotional primacy with the affective life of the *Umwelt*, stating "our emotional life consists of experiencing not just affects that arise from our current circumstances, but also affects that are prompted by our memories of previous affective experiences and by our identification with others whom we observe (pg. 68)." By acting within this *Umwelt*, we act as emotional creatures. The *Umwelt's* creation - the focusing of specific stimuli over another – is done at an emotional level. Others have echoed this point of view, including Zajonc (1984) and Ittelson (1973).

"The first level of response to the environment is affective. The direct emotional impact of the situation, perhaps largely a global response to the ambiance, very generally governs the directions taken by subsequent relations with the environment. It sets the motivational tone and delimits the kinds of experiences one expects and seeks" (Ittelson, 1973, p. 16)."

If emotions are constraining the boundaries in which experiences can occur, then the power of emotions in guiding our experiences (and by experiences, cognitions) is even more important than before.

The *Umwelt* promotes the signs that determine the environment based off of the goals of the individual. Furthermore, *Umwelten* have been shown to be affectively based, which ties in with the affect-first axiom of a semiotic cultural psychology (Valsiner, 2007).

Semiotic Regulation

It has been established that an emotional driven *Umwelt* exists and is placed as boundary conditions within the person in the given situation in terms of meaning-making. But boundary conditions do not simply push in on the individual – the individual pushes back out towards the boundary, constantly negotiating between what is heralded and what is suppressed.

Take for example, a student who is talking about how they created their home within their dorm room.

"...in my room, last year I went on a gap when I went to the different countries I collected a flag from each country. And I have them up on my wall. And so that makes me feel like, in the home, with all the people in my gap year and all of my friends from that. And I have pictures of my family and that makes me feel at home. And I have my blanket, my comfortable, quilt, whatever, is the one from home. And it sort of – it's the things that are close to me and personal to me, and have that connection with home, that makes me feel connected to home."

The subject's room – what is presented as a blank room, constrained with the emotions of away-from-home, aloneness, uncertainty, is challenged by the individual through placing objects within the environment to bring connections from home and emotional reactions that go against the environmental restraints. The participant is acting on the environment by placing objects that signify his past experiences, but by doing so allows the environment to act on himself. He tunes the environment towards himself so that the environment creates new emotional constraints beyond what the original boundaries of the emotion-range were. The individual acts upon the environment to activate certain emotions, suppress others, and expand (or shrink) the range of emotions the environment has.

This “I activate you to activate me” links towards Valsiner’s (1999) idea of levels of semiotic regulation and where the constructor operates down towards the environment, controlling what can come up, while at the same time, the constructee operates upwards, restricting the growth of the higher level. “Such stability is overcome by conditional opening of possibilities for altering the system, or for creating a new (still higher) level that would subordinate the others” (Valsiner, 1999, p. 29). As he constructs the environment to control himself, he is the creator of the environment and therefore has control over what environment he chooses to create. While the environment places borders that constrain the individual, the individual constrains the environment at the same time.

Past Literature on the Home

Previous work on the idea of the home can be seen in geography, sociology, and psychology. Wiensfeld (1997) explored the development of three types of homes for Venezuelan workers – a rancho, a house, and a home. They concluded that the meaning of home draws on security, tranquility, and continuity of past homes, future homes, and home as growing as a product of the community. Kidd and Evans (2010) explore the idea of home through interviewing homeless young adults on the streets of New York City. Home, through their eyes, meant a place of control, of identity exploration, of security, of family. Home here is a state – an emotional feeling that transcends place and time. “Homeless meant a lack of connections and valued place in terms of physical space, in family and in community” (Kidd & Evans, 2010, p. 753). White (2002) examines the home towards young adults who remain within their childhood home, concluding that due to the aspect of control, the home is the room inside of the house the kids live inside, and that to truly gain their own home, they must move out and go on their own – that moving on is a way to express who we are and what we intend to be.

All of this previous work has examined how individuals define home. They have concluded various themes as outlined above. Yet, having one of these themes does not give sufficient conditions for home to appear. If it was security, I would feel at home in a jail. If it was community, I should feel at home within any community. If it was exploration, I should feel at home within myself at all points. And yet, even if one could agree upon a correct definition of what home was, it would not answer how home is created – by which process or mechanism a sign of a place emerges. By placing the theoretical construct of affectivating within the context of home creation, we can better understand how individuals make sense of their subjective environments.

Empirical Examination

Uniting the process of affectivating with the previous literature on ‘the home’, I set out to examine *how* individuals constructed their homes and what feelings they felt it brought to them and what feelings they brought towards it through interviewing students.

Research questions and elaborations.

The research questions were designed to go beyond current understandings of the affects provided or found within the 'home' environment, and to study exactly how these affects come to be created and how they move over space and time. The research questions were as followed: (1) How does one understand the concepts of homes and houses? And (2) How is a 'home' created and managed through space and time?

Method

In order to properly uncover how individuals understand their feelings towards their created environments, a semi-structured interview was conducted to see how students who move to a new environment (a college dorm) make sense of the new environment in comparison to their household environment.

Design

The interview was a semi-structured interview, in which there was a set outline of questions in which to probe understandings of the concept of 'home' and how these homes can change over space and time. See Appendix A for list of the questions.

Subject Pool

Data was collected from undergraduate students attending a northeastern University. The participants were recruited from an introductory psychology class. Participants received credit from their psychology class. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed through the proper handling of data and agreed to through the signing of the consent form. There were a total of twelve participants, with five males and seven females. Age and location of primary residence outside of the University were not collected for its relevance lies outside of the scope of the research. All participants lived on campus (did not commute to school).

Procedure

Participants were welcomed into the researcher's office and asked to sit down. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed through the proper handling of data and agreed through the signing of the consent form. After reading and signing two copies of the consent form, the researcher turned on the recording device and began recording and asking questions. If the answer of the participant encouraged elaboration, they would be prompted to do so by further questions along the same line by the researcher.

Coding

I approached the data with a focused content analysis approach (Krippendorff, 1989; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), in which I looked for the main themes of previous research on the affective qualities of the home, as well as any discussion about how one began to feel 'home' and created places 'as homes'.

Results

Results reflected that the affects received by the participants hit on all of the major themes currently in discussion over prior research. However, as the research question focused further on the construction and power of the feelings, rather than of strictly the feelings themselves, the analysis here will highlight how the emotional setting created helped construct further feelings in the future to help the participants make sense of their new life on campus.

In the following four sub sections, I will examine the four different possibilities of how feelings of home and constructions of home emerged through the interview data, and what each one shows about the overall process.

I feel X, I am X.

Affectivating is first an affective process. The process of feeling occurs primarily before the cognitive portion. We affect (and then effect) the environment and the environment affects (and then effects) us. I may feel towards an environment (I feel happy, I feel at home) and at the same time feel that I am something (I am happy, I am at home). Here, accepting the conditions that the environment is already placing upon us allows for a seamless creation of the self.

P: Well that's, cause like, I feel at home *here*. Cause like I feel like I'm home when I'm home because I'm with my parents. But I also feel at home here because I feel like I'm in a loving, caring, environment. Yeah.

K: Can you think of a specific time when you felt at home here?

P: Probably with my PA group. Like during week one. Particularly. Especially right after I left my parents, so then I felt like, homeless. With no one around. But then when I was introduced to my PA group I felt like I had a little family that I could retreat to when I needed it.

I feel not-X, I am not-X.

Likewise, the opposite of the above emerges through the idea of X. In this situation, the environmental constraints are accepted by an individual. If the environmental restraints are making me feel in despair, and I feel in despair, then I am accepting the boundaries of the restraints. It can be seen as the same as I-FEEL-X, I AM-X, but towards the natural opposite or even it's ambiguousness of "I do not know how I feel" and "I do not know who I am." In this case, I cannot feel a certain emotion because the constraints of the environment do not allow this case to occur. A large, tens of thousands student school sets the conditions to I-FEEL-NOT-INDIVIDUAL to YOU-ARE-NOT-AN-INDIVIDUAL and simply become a number. It is these conditions that the large colleges seek to fight.

“So the dorms – I just think of the bathrooms. Like, eww. Like I was loving [redacted], the classes, the people, I felt at home here, but with the prospect of taking a shower and going back there – that was not homely. That was disgusting. So it took awhile to feel comfortable in that aspect. And even like having a roommate. I’m not used to a home like that. I’m a single child so that just like mind blowing. So, it didn’t – it almost felt like a camp more than a home at first.”

The bathrooms, to this participant set specific borders against the “feeling at home here” to “that was not homely” due to being disgusting. Here, the environment is activating the individual to feel in a certain way in which the person accepts (I cannot feel at home in a disgusting place). The individual of course could clean the bathroom, or rephrase how they think of home (my room is not always very clean) – but chooses not to. The boundary condition here is both home<>not home and private<>public. Private and public negotiations of the bathroom have been studied in how the space acts as a dialogue between the two (Islam, 2010). The bathrooms, while private to some degree (students each have their own stall with curtain), are necessarily public by the shared space of the bathroom.

When the situation is ambiguous, meaning can help reduce the ambiguity of the room.

“I felt it was just a space. It was just a house. I think that the reason why I put all of that stuff up was to make it more personal. To make it different than every other room. To make it different from what it started as. And I think that’s what sort of made it – I don’t know, I don’t think of that room as being my home as much in the same way as I do my home home, I think part of that is because it is so new. I’ve only been here two months. “

The participant here focused heavily on how to act in a goal-directed manner towards the future. The participant wanted to create something out of the ‘space’ they were given. While it cannot, for them, represent the same thing as their familial home, there is a lot of focus on the temporal aspects: “from what it started as”; “it is so new” “been here two months.” Certain feelings may take longer than others to gain full control over the system within the environment; but that control depends on the amount of control the individual is willing to give in. What is “only two months” to one individual may be “It’s been two months!” to another – the subjectivity of the individuals allows for variability within the constructions of environmental affectivating.

I feel X, I am not-X.

This then leads to the next section, in which we feel something, but are not that something. Places work well in recognizing this predicate connection – such that I feel in a jail, but I am not in a jail (frequently seen in children’s groundings, or graduate student’s work space).

“I guess now it’s Czech Republic, we were in the synagogue on Friday night, and they did that same tune, and besides the amazing connection I had made between that, it just , I felt very at home because it was that personal connection that I had between my grandfather and I, that was there.”

Here, the participant had recognized “I am in a Czech Republic synagogue (non-home)” but that he still “felt very at home” within this non-home. By dissecting the I AM and the I FEEL, we can see the emergence of a catalytic condition (Cabell, 2011) – the song of the grandfather – in increasing the potential to add the predicate “I feel at home” in a situation in which “I am not home.” The grandfather’s song “provide(s) the conditions necessary to enable the production of novel phenomenon”... (the feeling of home)... “by activating one or more mediating mechanisms within the cultural-psychological system.” (Cabell, 2011, p. 8) Causality here does not follow a cause/effect relationship, but instead involves systemic, catalytic processes to create various outcomes.

I feel not-X, I am X.

Lastly, there are moments when we are in a place, but do not feel in the place. If I am home alone and not comfortable in being alone, then I may not feel the qualities that are attached to the place that is home, even though I am home.

“I had a friend, was it last year or two years ago, he came out to his parents – his parents were divorced, he lived with his mom part of the time and his dad part of the time – and his dad was like, “Oh, you’re just confused, you’re not sure.” Yeah, that whole spiel. And he just – since then, it has never felt that home – when he stays with his – well, he doesn’t have to stay with his dad anymore- that it is his home. I think that’s the perfect example. He has that physical space to go to, but he doesn’t feel like it’s a home.”

The participant pushes back against the emotional boundaries of “this is home, feel comfortable” by not feeling accepted with his father in regards to his sexual orientation. Take the scenario presented by Mohammed Sartawi and Gordon Sammut (2012) in regards to Muslims negotiating their Muslim identity within the context of British, western life.

“A man [telephone] called because he was making good money in retail and began to wonder what the legal percentage of profit was in Islam. He asked whether there was a limit to the margin of profit that can be set by the retailer on a product. The imam explained that as long as the seller and buyer are in agreement over the purchase and its conditions, there would be no violation of Islamic law. He was concerned that because he was having financial success that he was doing something un-Islamic.”(Sartawi & Sammut, 2012, p. 568)

The man is Islamic, but yet feels “Un-Islamic” due to his actions in the current environment.

This case helps show that the feel<>be is not an ordered process, where feeling necessarily comes before identity, but that the tension between the two is the interesting topic of concern. Sartawi and Sammut take the case as a matter of values and “transgressing the boundaries of his Muslimness” (Sartawi & Sammut, 2012, p. 568).

I have attempted to show that feeling and being are interconnected, though are not necessarily linked in a linear causality model (feeling x does not lead to being x; being x does not lead to feeling x), but instead there are multiple pathways in which the participant can feel and can construct signs based off the emotions and activation of the current environment. The individual strives to either accept or reject the emotional activation of the environment and manage what is activated through his or her personal needs. Thus, activation, and the construction of both I->FEEL and I->AM, lend towards a specific goal direction for the individual.

Self-Recursive Subject-Predicate Building

The impact of affectivation helps recognize the impact of the environment on many things – including the development of the self. The building of a self through a subject binding with a predicate (much like feeling binds towards being) has been developed by Valsiner & Cabell (2012). They talk of this recreation of the self through self-recursivity. Speaking on recursivity in relation to Dialogical Self Theory, they state:

“This self-recursivity of the self can be viewed as the starting point...in fact it is a dynamically recursive focus on the duality of the self (‘I am’ and ‘I am’ are not repetition of the same, but a dialogue of the self-as-being)... This developmental quality of binding new predicates to the *I* is the basis upon which any DS perspective is developed.” (Valsiner & Cabell, 2012, p.91)

They start at the beginning – “I am” – and discuss how the self constantly recreates itself through this circular process.



Figure 1 The binding of new predicates in the process of self-recursivity (Taken from Valsiner & Cabell, 2012)

The predicate is dictated in the graph to be “happy” – and can be taken to be an multitude of other predicates – “student”, “son”, “brother”, “writer”, “academic. I do not challenge that “happy” is not a possible predicate to be added – but yet, following the primacy of affect, the cognition of happy in the environment comes second to the affect of happy within the environment. Thus, prior to I->AM comes something more - I->FEEL, which then can build upwards to an I->AM which can then build back downwards towards a new I-FEEL. It also lacks both the I-centered *Umwelt* in which this predicate building occurs and the specific reasons the potential predicate would seek to be added within the environment. If I am constantly recreated my identity in this self-recursivity, there are certain environments in which identities are either made more or less salient. A Jewish person in the early years of the Holocaust may restrict their Jewish identity from being created in public to avoid discrimination, while at synagogue the same Jewish person may feel strongly to build the predicate of I->AM JEWISH to unite with their in-group.

I->FEEL: Recursive Affectivating

The I->FEEL construction and the I->AM construction can happen by themselves and do not necessarily have to be linked together – but can. I->FEEL at home can lead to I->AM home (or not), and I->AM home can lead to I->FEEL at home (or not). While they may act upon each other, they do not necessarily force one way or another (see Figure 2). In the following section, I will show how the two (feel, am) are different yet connected. Figure 1's example that “I am happy” can be attached as a new predicate is valid, but our discussion leans towards perhaps that the predicate is negotiated with “I feel not-happy” or “I feel happy”.

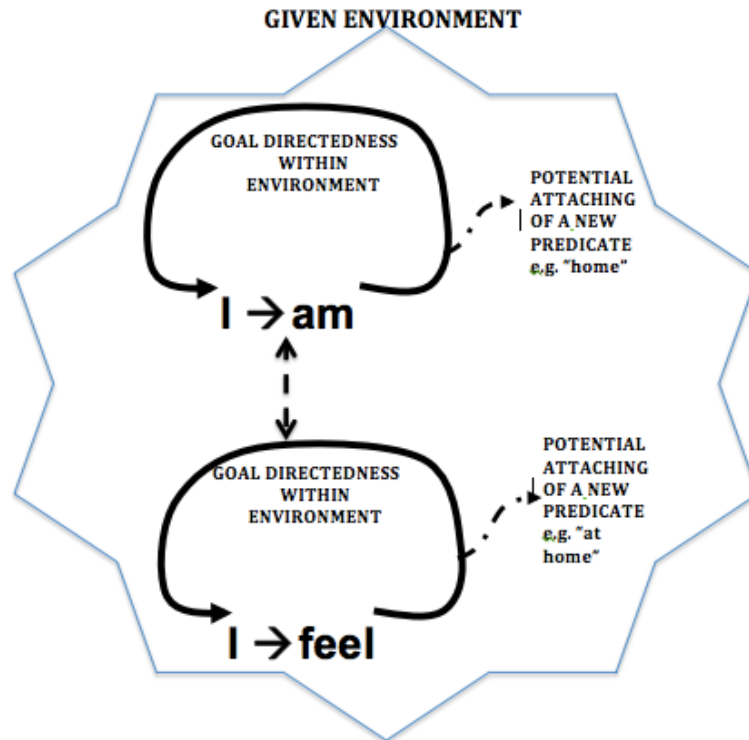


Figure 2: I->AM and I->FEEL affectivating

Figure 2 highlights the expansion of the self-recursivity model within the theoretical framework of affectivating. The model fits the adaptability of the space as examined within the scope of the research, as well as allowing further elaboration of an affective, goal directed, dialogical self-construction.

Goal Directedness in Affectivating

We adapt surrounding environments to suit our needs. The individual quoted with the flags was not placing the flags out of a random desire to place objects on his wall --- specific, important, chosen artifacts were hung in a certain order. Whether or not it is out of fear (skulls in a scare house), reverence (a cross in a Catholic church), or comfort (flags in a room), when we interact with the environment, there is a set goal in mind in which the environment is created. In literature, this idea is seen within the metaphor of Chekhov's gun - "If in Act I you have a pistol hanging on the wall, then it must fire in the last act" (Rayfield, 1997). Signs are placed in the environment for a directed purpose - to be acted on us by us and by the environment. If there are placed in the environment and not used - if they are not activated by the third act - the pistol on the wall becomes meaningless and one begins to question why it was placed there in the first place - much like von Uxeküll's quote at the beginning of this manuscript.

We can of course see a condition in which what I feel does not determine what I state that I am – during a presentation, I may feel nervous, but in order to succeed, than I must feel calm. In coming to a new school, I may be uncomfortable but tell myself I must feel comfortable. There is a goal-directedness tied to the environment to both what I FEEL and what I AM. The creation of the predicate – “I am X” is determined by both the environment (“Inside a classroom”) and by the goal (“I want to succeed”) to create the predicate “I am a hard-working student.” If I am in an environment that is discriminating against a certain identity, I may inhibit that identity in order to promote a more palatable identity. The recursivity of the self comes with a direction – I do not merely say I am a son for no reason, but because I want to be identified with my family. In each of the four previous conditions, we can see the goal directedness within each depending on the social context.

Going Further

In a discussion about the private and public spheres of graffiti art, Islam (2010) explored how graffiti was used to as a communicative tool within the place of a bathroom stall. In discussing the “the discursive space created through the graffiti texts,” (p.255) Islam shows how sign-placement transformed a private space with minimal interaction can invoke the ability to create dialogue and discourse. It is not *which* emotions or actions are evoked by a certain setting, but *how* certain settings evoke various feelings and behaviors. Affectivating calls for further attention towards the environment – how each individual must manage and understand the world as constructed by both himself and the collective culture around him.

The goal-oriented actions of individuals is regarded as axiomatic in a semiotic cultural psychology (Valsiner, 2007), which may have been a reason for it to not be clearly defined within the original self-recursivity figure of Valsiner & Cabell’s 2012 manuscript. Affectivating occurs because each individual has a reason for placing various objects within the room. When an individual strikes out to find the ‘perfect pebble’ on the beach to take home with them as a souvenir – what does that pebble become? Surely, it stays as a pebble – but the decision of which to pick, where to pick it, where to place it back home, what to use it as – all of these questions call back to the needs of the individual at a certain time. Remembering that these signs are created for a certain purpose, and examining exactly what that purpose is, can bring a better understanding of how the overall *Umwelt* of the individual is functioning at that point in time.

CONCLUDING POINTS

As the homeless man waits for his park to become less crowded in the opening example, what are his boundaries of home? The title given to him by others (homeless) disallows the opportunity to create a home (or else the homeless become homed). He can challenge this

by creating his own home within the environment. While his is restricted as people may enter, or as I sit on his bench, the man has the ability to create his space in his own way.

The self is constantly created in the moment in recognition with the current situation. The self being created in conjunction with the emotional side of the persona is critical to the understanding of the individual and the goals of the individual. Beyond the individual, examining the emotional conditions in which the collective creates, manages, and re-defines its goals can be examined in regards to the current *Umweltens* created by the group within the moment. The personal *Umwelt* should be explored in a more microgenetic manner, both through the borders of the *Umwelt* and the specific signs in which activates one Umwelt from another.

The goal-directedness of affectivation – why we place flags in a room to feel at home, why we place tattoos on our bodies to show our histories, why we strive for a home and the new – are all present to create a sense of being and feeling as oneself. Taking a larger appreciation into the power of the environment in being both created and creator can help us understand the meaning making processes of each individual in defining both themselves and the environment in which they are, they were, or they will be.

Acknowledgements:

This manuscript was funded in part by the Spring 2013 Psi Chi Undergraduate Research Grant.

References

- Boesch, E. (1991). *Symbolic action theory and cultural psychology*. Heidelberg/New York: Springer.
- Beckstead, Z. (2010). Liminality in acculturation and pilgrimage: When movement becomes meaningful. *Culture & Psychology, 16*(3), 383-393.
- Cabell, K. R. (2011). Catalyst: Cultural constructions and the conditions for change. *Journal of Integrative Social Sciences, 2*(1), 1-12.
- Chang, R. S. ed. (2009). *Relating to environments: A new look at Umwelt*. Charlotte, NC: IAP, Information Age Publishing.
- Cicero, M. T., & Watts, N. H. (1931). *Pro T. Annio Milone ; In L. Calpurnium Pisonem ; Pro M. Aemilio Scauro ; Pro M. Fonteio ; Pro C. Rabirio Postumo ; Pro M. Marcello ; Pro Q. Ligario ; Pro rege Deitaro*. London: W. Heinemann.
- Favareau, D. (2010). *Essential readings in biosemiotics: Anthology and commentary*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Islam, M. (2010). Backstage Discourse and the Emergence of Organizational Voices: Exploring Graffiti and Organization. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 19*(3), 246-260.

- Ittelson, W. H. (1973). Environment perception and contemporary perceptual theory. In W. H. Ittelson (Ed.), *Environment and cognition* (pp. 141-154). New York, NY: Seminar Press.
- Kidd, S. A., & Evans, J. D. (2011). Home is where you draw strength and rest: the meanings of home for houseless young people. *Youth Society, 43*(2), 752-773.
- Krippendorff, K. (1989). Content Analysis. In E. Barnouw, W. Schramm, & L. Gross (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of communications* (Vol. 1, pp. 403-407). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rayfield, D. (1997). *Anton Chekhov: A Life*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.
- Sartawi, M., & Sammut, G. (2012). Negotiating British Muslim identity: Everyday concerns of practicing Muslims in London. *Culture & Psychology, 18*(4), 559-576.
- Valsiner, J. (1999). I create you to control me: A glimpse into basic processes of semiotic mediation. *Human Development, 42*, 26-30.
- Valsiner, J. (2007). *Culture in minds and societies*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Valsiner, J., & Cabell, K. R. (2012). Self-making through synthesis. In H. J. Hermans & T. Gieser (Authors), *Handbook of dialogical self theory* (pp. 82-97). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- von Uexküll, J. (1982). The theory of meaning. *Semiotica, 42*, 25-82. (Original work published in 1940).
- Weisfeld, G. (2009). The umwelt and emotional experience. In R. S. Chang (Ed.), *Relating to environments: A new look at Umwelt* (pp. 69-88). Charlotte, NC: IAP, Information Age Pub.
- White, N. R. (2002). "Not Under My Roof!": Young People's Experience of Home. *Youth & Society, 34*(2), 214-231.
- Wiesenfeld, E. (1997). Construction of the meaning of a barrio house: The case of a caracas barrio. *Environment and Behavior, 29*(34), 34-63.
- Zajonc, R. B. (1984). On the primacy of affect. *American Psychologist, 39*(2), 117-123.
- Zimmerman, A., & Valsiner, J. (2009). The living, the un-living, and the hard-to-kill: Acting and feeling on the boundary. In R.S. Chang (ed). *Relating to environments: A new look at Umwelt* (pp. 119-143). Charlotte, NC: IAP, Information Age Publishing.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

HOUSE AND HOME Defined:

What is a house?

What is a home?

What is the feeling of being “at home”?

Can you describe a time when you felt at home?

Does everyone have a house? Explain your answer.

Does everyone have a home? Explain your answer.

How do you feel when you arrive at your home?

When does a house become a home?

When does a home become a house?

School Defined:

Do you consider where you live on campus a house? Why or why not?

Do you consider where you live on campus a home? Why or why not?

If Yes:

Where exactly is home?

Can you describe the first time you felt at home here?

Ask about old room

How can this feeling of home change?

How can this feeling of home move?

How can this feeling of home expand or shrink?

Will this University always be a home to you? In five years? Ten? Fifty?

If No:

What is your place where you stay called?

Would your room ever become home to you? Explain.

Would this University ever become home to you?

Would Worcester ever become home to you?

What would you need to call this your home?

Types of Homes:

The next couple of questions are where I'll ask you to fill in the blank. Please explain your answers as fully as you can.

“I feel at home when I am BLANK.”

“When I think of home, I think of BLANK.”

Thought Experiments

Imagine you were overseas for an extended period of time, such as studying abroad for a year with a host family with a positive experience.

What kinds of feelings would you have leaving this family?

Is this place home?
At what point on this journey are you home?

Imagine your childhood house was foreclosed or sold to another buyer. Your family has bought, or otherwise acquired, another house.

Is it still your home even with someone else there?
At what point does it stop being your home?

Imagine you have purchased your first house through a mortgage with the local bank. You have a plan that will take twenty years to pay off.

When, if ever, would you feel that you have ownership of the house? Why?
When would that house become a home?
Explain the feelings you would have.

Non-Home and Homelessness

Can places that were once home become a non-home? How?

What does it mean to be homeless?

Is it possible to be homeless and have a house? How?

Do you have any final questions, statements, or comments about homes OR houses?