



Children Dwelling in the Absence of Home

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Abstract

The lived experience of children dwelling in the absence of home is explored through the memoirs of Haddy, who as a child of four moved with her family from Fiji to Canada. The recollections of some refugee children along with situations from the author's own life appear more nominally. The feeling of at-homeness, the act of leaving home, the experience of arriving in a new place, and making a new home are considered. Schutz's (1971) notion of the 'stranger' is applied to children living on the margin as they learn to be at ease in their new world (Lugones, 1987). The significance of language in the everyday lived experience of home (Heidegger, 1971) is also discussed. Moreover, Husserl's homeworld/alienworld dialectic as opened up by Steinbock (1995) is considered in some depth. The co-arising and interdependent nature of homeworld/alienworld is presented as essential to gaining insight into the lived experience of children between homes. Pedagogical considerations suggested for early learning and care settings include but are not limited to creating environments where homeworld/alienworld encounters can be lived out in rich and meaningful ways, promoting active engagement with difference and diversity, providing for home language and dominant language use, the establishment of homecomrade connections, and instilling a focus on the reciprocity of care for the other.

Introduction

It's quiet in here for a change. Everyone is always so noisy. I like when we sit on the carpet in a circle. Mrs Jones looks like she's about to read us a story. I straighten up and look forward. She smiles at me and says something, something that sounds like *Kalliday*. She is looking at me. I look to my left, and then my right, everyone in the kindergarten class is looking at me. Finally, I realize she must be trying to say *Khalida*, and is referring to me. But why is she calling me *Khalida*? Everyone back home calls me *Haddy*.¹

¹ Adult reflections on being a newcomer child in a Canadian kindergarten class. All reflections are those of Haddy unless otherwise noted.

This article explores what it is like for children when they find themselves in unfamiliar surroundings. It looks at what children experience when they leave the familiarity of home, whether it is for a short trip, an extended period of time, or forever.

Young children for the most part experience life as something done to them; they are passive recipients of the choices and decisions the adults in their world offer. My son Evan at age two, while on a family vacation, wept as he repeated over and over, "I miss my home; I miss my home!" I was taken aback. My adult notions led me to think that Evan would be just fine being away from his home on this trip, especially since many of the people of significance in his life were with him. Later, at age three, Evan began to stutter when my partner and I separated, and he and I moved from the only home he had known. When he was six, I asked him about that time and why he was

so upset when we moved. He said, "Because it was my first home, it's where I belonged!" This led to questions regarding what it is that children experience when they leave home. It raises questions regarding this sense of belonging that appears to be disrupted.

Some years back, while undertaking graduate studies, one of my classmates (Haddy), knowing of my interest in investigating the lived experience of young children new to Canada, shared her account with me. In her memoir, Haddy provides a detailed description of the circumstances of her initial leave taking from home, aspects of which are drawn upon throughout this essay.

We often go for rides, either by canoe along the mangroves, or walking out into the jungle for hours, or by car to the city, by tractor to the market or by seaplane to one of the other islands, and then we come back, so today seems no exception. The preceding days do not seem out of the ordinary. I spend my time outside with my grandfather weaving jewelry from the tall grass as we sit under the shade of the jackfruit tree. I even managed to sneak away to the coolness of the sugar cane field and doze off for a while. I go with my mother to the creek to wash clothes. The crabs pinch my toes. I love my life, though I miss my father. He has been away in Canada for nearly a year.

On this day, we are up early and my whole family is there to see us off, there must be thirty people, my grandfather and all my aunts, uncles and cousins. The wind is blowing; the palm trees, coconut trees and banana trees sway in the breeze, dust swirls up from the dirt landing strip, and it is hot. My grandfather is walking out of the grass hut that serves as the terminal. He has candies for my brother and me. This is turning out to be some special day! We are not usually given treats when we go for a ride.

I am confused though because everyone is crying and I don't understand. I ask, "Why is everyone so sad, why are you all crying?" Then I add, "We are just going for a ride, we'll be back."

It is so chaotic at the airport. I just can't make sense of it. I feel like I'm in a movie. I'm just watching everything, and because everyone is crying, hugging, and talking at the same time, there is no one holding me. So I am just silent, standing there, eating candy.

I smile up at my grandfather and see tears in

his eyes. My heart rises up to form a lump in my throat. I open my mouth to say something, but my grandfather puts his fingers to my lips and says, "You should not turn around. Don't look back Haddy. Get on the plane and don't look back." I do as I'm told and start to walk towards this huge monstrosity of a plane. I stand under the nose of the plane and look up; transfixed; I have never seen such a huge airplane. My knees start to wobble, I feel as though I might fall. At this point, I don't have a thought for all these people crying, my thoughts are for myself and how am I ever going to get inside this huge airplane. Small for my age, having been born premature and now malnourished because of widespread poverty throughout the Fijian countryside, I panic, I want to race back into my grandfather's arms, but I remember his words, "Haddy don't turn around. Don't look back." I can hear my aunts, uncles and grandfather crying and crying, and I am happy because I think, I'm coming back you know, I'm just going for a ride.

My mother is carrying my brother in one arm. Though older than me, he has always been sickly and in need of my mother's care. Across her shoulder she is carrying her purse and in her other arm, the one not holding my brother, she cradles a tape recorder. They walk up the stairs to the plane. I stand at the bottom, looking up, and not looking back. The stairs are steep; the plane is a long way up. What am I going to do; the spaces between each step look like gaping holes and I am so skinny. What if I fall through one of the holes? I have always had that fear; if I miss a step, I will fall through. I grip tightly to the rail trying to get up the stairs and they are so huge. I step cautiously. My mother and brother are nearing the top and I haven't yet started to climb. My grandfather's words keep repeating in my mind; "Don't look back Haddy. Get on the plane and don't turn around."

At-Homeness

For Haddy, home was a joyful place, a place of freedom and fun and open spaces, and the place where family members spent time with her. Home was far more than the physicality of the building of her home or the things inside this building. She recalls that when she left Fiji she left behind few personal possessions, "A house with a dirt floor, no electricity, no telephone." In her remembering, the tropical climate and people with which she shared time and place meld together to form her conception of home. She also speaks at length about the

importance of her grandfather, how much he had played with her and how as an *Imam*, a Muslim teacher, he should have been aloof and distant, but somehow when she was born, a fragile, premature infant, “All the rules were thrown out.”

I came to Canada in 1975 and in October of 1980 I became a Canadian citizen. Shortly after that my grandfather died. That was the point at which I became a Canadian, when my grandfather died there was no reason to be Fijian; there was no reason to go home.

Haddy was not alone in this feeling:

My grandfather used to send us tapes every couple of weeks. So then I understood why my mother clutched the tape recorder to her as if it were a diamond as we left Fiji. She could not hold on to my hand, for fear of losing her own connection to home.

I wonder if Canada would have become home for Haddy if her grandfather had made the trip with her. Perhaps all her aunts, uncles and cousins needed to be with her as well. I wonder whether having the people would have been enough to satisfy her connection to home. This was not the case for Evan; although he had his family with him, he still missed home.

Leaving Home

Haddy was at home, the south pacific wind was blowing, her loving family surrounded her, she was going for a ride, and she had treats. Home had never been so good. However, there was also confusion, fear, uncertainty and at the same time resolve to do as her grandfather insisted. Strange feelings began to overtake Haddy's usual experience of home.

Even if young children are consulted at all about the plans to leave home, they may lack the life experience to comprehend the full nature of the change that is about to happen. In this case, Haddy's father had already left for Canada to find a way to provide a better life for his family. Now that he was able to bring his wife and children to join him, Haddy was unclear about what was to happen. She believed that they were simply “going for a ride”, a usual happy family event. She did not know that this was the most significant ride of her life, and the last time she would ever see her grandfather.

Adults may at times pay little heed to the feelings and experiences of children. Adults also, as in my case of taking Evan on vacation, make assumptions about how children will experience an event. Fantino and Colak (2001), in describing the grief refugee children experience over their loss of home, suggested that

adults often dismiss these children's feelings or do not notice them at all. “This may be attributed to a long-held belief that children adapt quickly, bolstered by the tendency of children to not express their sadness and their mourning in words” (Fantino & Colak, 2001, p. 590). When Evan began to stutter as a consequence of no longer being “where he belonged” I became alarmed. I wanted him to be ok, to be happy to be with me. I felt that after all, I was his mother, we were together, and I wondered what else he could possibly need. I did not want to be confronted with his feelings about leaving home every time he spoke.

Both Haddy and Evan had had little if any input into the leave taking that disrupted their sense of home. In the case of refugee children, not only are they not consulted in the decision to leave, but the leaving is also often associated with violence.

I was five when the civil war started. I remember waking up to shouting one night, “Get up! Get up! Hurry! Go! Now!” Rebels pulled my father out of the house and shot him while my mother herded us out the back door. I could hear screams coming from within my aunt's house next door, but the flames rising up through the roof made it impossible for us to help. We just started walking. I never saw my home or my father again. (Remembrances of a Congolese refugee now living in Canada.)

Three Kurdish youth, who fled first to Turkey and then Canada, each expressed different feelings about leaving home. Elind, who was fourteen at the time, knew that they would leave Kurdistan at some point; it was simply a matter of when. She knew that war was a continual part of life and that once they left they would never return. Eleven-year-old Nasik did not understand the long term consequences of leaving - she felt they would come back in a while after the fighting had stopped. Jawero, who was three years old at the time, recalls this period as one of great adventure, with one of the highlights being a trip to an extraordinary toy store in Turkey. Clearly, many factors influence children's conceptions of leaving home.

Arriving in a New Place

Actual arrival in a new location can make leaving home more concrete. Elind and Nasik knew Turkey was only temporary and that they would be moving on, but on arriving in Edmonton they were confronted with the reality of their new life. Elind commented, “What choice did we have, this was our life now.” Nasik, not as resolved to the situation said, “It was cold and I hated it. I did not want to go to school, the kids made fun of my name. I have been to five different schools since I came to Canada; it is always

the same.” Jawero recalls being very pleased with the new winter boots and jacket he received at the settlement house. Each of the children experienced the arrival and settlement process differently, just as they each experienced the departure from home uniquely.

For Haddy, the ending of the ride would mark the arrival in a new place.

We landed in Canada in November and it was cold. My dad and his sister and brother-in-law came to meet us at the airport and brought us winter garments to put on. I was exhausted and ready for this ride to end. But no one talked to me. I was a small child; they thought I was a baby. They talked to my brother but no one was asking me anything or telling me what was happening. So I was just very silent.

Silence is a theme that runs throughout Haddy’s experience of leaving home and arriving in a new location. Although speaking of the adult stranger, Schutz (1971) could very well be describing the world of young children, and Haddy’s world in particular, as they find themselves displaced and voiceless.

The stranger [child], however, has to face the fact that he [*sic*] lacks any status as a member of the social group he is about to join and is therefore unable to get a starting-point to take his bearings. He finds himself a border case outside the territory covered by the scheme of orientation current within the group. He is, therefore, no longer permitted to consider himself as the center of his social environment, and this fact causes again a dislocation of his contour lines of relevance. (p. 99)

Haddy had previously been surrounded by a large, loving extended family, now suddenly she was set adrift. Nasik also expressed this feeling when she spoke of being the center of attention to so many adults when in Kurdistan, she now found herself located in a reception house in Canada where no one spoke Kurdish.

In further describing the feelings of a stranger, Schutz (1971) stated, “The discovery that things in his [*sic*] new surroundings look quite different from what he expected them to be at home is frequently the first shock to the stranger’s confidence in the validity of his habitual ‘thinking as usual’” (p. 99). Haddy described how she experienced shock to her habitual way of thinking when she first arrived in Edmonton.

I saw the snow and I did not know what it was. There was so much commotion between my

parents and my aunt and uncle; they did not have time to deal with me. My parents had not seen each other for a year so they were like strangers. In Fiji we did not have a phone on the sugar cane farm so we only heard from my dad through letters. Now I felt like I was just tagging along. I felt really alone and isolated and I stopped talking. I felt so overwhelmed. Even if I could have communicated what I felt, I didn’t know what I felt because I was so overwhelmed. I didn’t know what to say to anyone, because one moment I was in this very hot, beautiful country and then people were crying and then I went on this very long ride, and I threw up on the ride, and then I landed here and I just wish this long ride would end.

The next thing I remember I’m sitting inside this car and this is the first time I had experienced a car like this, a car with a heater. I sat squished in the back seat straining to look out of the window. I saw this white stuff everywhere, all over the ground and I thought it was garbage. I just kept thinking to myself, this place is filthy. This country is filthy. There is so much garbage here they don’t even know where to put it. It never occurred to me to ask my parents what this white stuff was. On the side of the road where the snow had been pushed by the grader it was three meters high. I thought this has to be garbage because in Fiji this is how garbage was piled up and it was beside the real garbage, so it must be garbage. Why hadn’t the sisters at the convent school told me about snow, they must have known I was going to Canada?

And then as if things couldn’t get any worse for me that day, I peed my pants. This had been one very long ride. When we got to my aunt’s place I felt overwhelmed again because this stranger, my aunt, stripped me down to my undershirt. I was sitting on the floor and I started to cry. They decided what I needed was a teddy bear to play with. One of my cousins gave me a teddy bear and my aunt got me some clothes. In the meantime, my parents and my brother were outside unloading the car. And I wanted to be out there too. I was standing inside the house behind the screen door pushing on the glass. This was the first time in my life that I had seen a screen door and I didn’t know how to open it. I was so upset again. I had never seen this kind of push mechanism and so I felt like they were out there, I was in here, I wanted to get out, I tried, I tried, and I tried to push the screen. All I could think of was to turn the handle but that didn’t work. And I am not talking to anyone

and they do not understand my actions. I can't get out of the screen door, and somebody has given me a stuffed animal that I have never had before in my life. I was used to making jewelry with my grandfather or riding on the tractor or being in the canoe with my father, or going to the creek with my mother or my aunt to do the laundry. I found comfort in my family and now I am separated from them and being asked to hold this thing that I cannot identify.

Feeling like a stranger

Magic doesn't work in this new place.
Native poetry has lost rhythm and rhyme,
Familiar food is labeled a curiosity,
And hostile stares replace familial love.
To be an immigrant
Is to be solitary in the midst of millions.
(Ming-Dao, 1992, p. 213)

Haddy's disorientation continued as she began Kindergarten.

I was so overwhelmed all the time. Everything was so new. Just to figure out where the door to my classroom was required so much energy. There was so much to figure out. And my teacher had no idea what to do to help me. She didn't realize that she should take me about the school and show me where things were and how to get from place to place. It all seemed so obvious to her and to the other children. And of course how could she have known what life was like in Fiji. I was left to navigate my own system. I was left to figure out my own way. I would count how many steps it was from the classroom door to outside. Then I would have to figure out what to do to get back. What I did most recesses was to worry about how to get back to the door to my classroom. I was afraid to go too far out. All the doors looked the same so there was no way for me to differentiate. Every door could have been my door. I came to realize early on that it was important to be at the right door, so I couldn't play at recess until I got the whole door thing figured out. I needed a buddy, a partner to show me things, to take care of me.

Haddy found little comfort in the things, people and experiences associated with arrival in a new home.

Making a new home

The question then becomes when and how children begin to make their present location their home. It is possible that all children, given enough time, begin to

consider the place they find themselves in their home.

After I had been in Canada for close to a year, I began kindergarten, and I remember one day thinking I have had enough, I am going home to Fiji. And so rather than going home after kindergarten I just started walking. It had never occurred to me that this was going to be our home. I always had it in my heart that we would leave. I am walking, walking and walking and I realize I am cold and tired and I just want to get back to my parents, but I am lost and I don't know where to go. Then I see a police car stop and my dad comes running out and he hugs me and the next day the kids at school say they saw my picture on the six o'clock news. My parents weren't angry; they were calm. I think they were so relieved. They asked why I hadn't come home and I said that I wanted to go home to Fiji and I think they just felt so sorry for me at that point. This was the moment that I realized I was not going back to Fiji and I realized how far Fiji was from Canada.

In this recollection, Haddy came to accept Canada as the place where she was to reside, but it was not until her grandfather died that she came to accept this new place as her home. In contrast, Elind, Nasik, and Jawero, after many years in Canada, still consider Kurdistan their home and would gladly return there to live if a peaceful Kurdish homeland was established.

Lugones' (1987) description of "being at ease in a 'world'" (p. 12) offers insight into the process of becoming at home in a new environment. Lugones (1987) suggested that becoming a fluent speaker in the language of the new home, adopting and understanding societal norms, being with loved ones, and having a shared history with individuals in the new home contribute to at-home-ness. For young children, this becoming at ease in their new world is often facilitated by the contagious play of their peers.

The playground was a great fear to me. I couldn't play there. I was afraid of the spiral slide. Usually when we went outside I just watched and walked around. Finally, after months of watching the kids on the playground, and staring as I was fascinated by the red spiral slide but I was afraid I would die in it. I didn't know how I would get out of it. It was totally encased. Finally, I decided I would try it. Then half way down I got stuck and I thought what should I do, and then someone yelled, "Push!" I did, and then I realized that I loved the spiral slide.

After months of watching, Haddy was becoming at

ease in her new world. She had obviously also acquired enough of the new language to understand the instruction to “push” in order to make it down the slide.

A detailed look at the implications of young children being language learners while in the process of dwelling between homes is beyond the scope of this paper (See Dachyshyn & Kirova, 2011). Suffice it to say if, as Heidegger (1971) attests, language is the “house of being” (p. 5) then “losing one’s ability to name things in the new world is more than an inconvenience” (Kirova, 2006, p. 189). Kirova (2006) believes that the connections made between the people and the things of home are inextricably linked as it is the people of home who bring the elements of home to life through language, “Home, then, is where language gives being to the things at home” (p. 189). Pedagogical implications for newcomer² children who are new language learners are addressed briefly in the final section.

Homeworld/Alienworld

When we ‘change places’ or take up residence elsewhere, we do not simply leave the terrain behind ... *the terrain attaches to the lived-body.*

(Steinbock, 1995, p. 166, italics in original)

Steinbock’s (1995) invoking of a generative phenomenological perspective towards Husserl’s homeworld/alienworld dialectic offers much of relevance to the deliberations regarding the lived experience of children dwelling in the absence of home. The initial supposition is that within the typical experience of life, one has for a particular territory or place a feeling of being at home (homeworld). It is precisely due to this phenomenon that one also experiences other territories or places as being alien (alienworld). The construction of homeworld/alienworld is generative in that it is continually in process, being “*historical, geological, cultural, intersubjective, and normative*” [with normative referring to each individual’s experience being uniquely theirs and as such normal to them] (Steinbock, 1995, p. 178). As a generative phenomenon, homeworld/alienworld builds over time, both within the present generation as well as through historical generations and social movements that may be outside of conscious awareness. Homeworld/alienworld should therefore be seen as “liminal” (Steinbock, 1995, p. 179ff) in the sense both of continually becoming and continually renewed as well as being limited and delimited by our own lived experience.

² Newcomer is an umbrella term used to refer to immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, etc.

In short, a home is no longer a home when the sense of the homeworld is no longer appropriated, when it is no longer identifiable as *our* world (Steinbock, 1995, p. 235, italics in original).

Haddy undoubtedly felt herself in an alienworld. My son and I also have a sense of homeworld/alienworld, the result of having left Canada first to live in the United States and now in Aotearoa (New Zealand). Although all three countries are English-speaking western countries, we experience the alienness of colloquial expressions and unfamiliar traditions, and we are certainly considered alien with our Canadian accents. However, the homeworld connection goes deeper than the boundary of continent or country. I grew up in a small town and I was very happy living in our small community in Eastern Washington but Evan, having lived his early years in a large city, is much happier in our present location. As Steinbock (1995) suggested in the quotation above, the terrain of our early years has attached itself to us.

Another significant aspect Steinbock (1995) discusses is the co-generative, co-constitutive, and co-relative nature of homeworld/alienworld (p. 180). It is therefore impossible to know home devoid of knowing that which is alien, and vice versa. The two concepts are interdependent, interrelated and co-arising. Through a process of ‘appropriation’ (taking-up), individuals come to know that which is normal to their homeworld and through ‘transgression’ they come to know that which is not normal to their homeworld and is therefore alienworld. Thus, through knowing that which is alien I know more about myself. In a similar vein, Smith (2003) offers that, “‘You’ and ‘I’ are the terrain out of which ‘we’ work and shape our shared existence” (p. xvii). Some pedagogical considerations related to the shared co-arising of homeworld/alienworld are offered below.

The homeworld/alienworld as co-relative and co-arising has profound implications regarding self-responsibility and responsibility to the other.

Being responsible toward the alien would be implied in *self*-responsibility because the home becomes home in and through our encounters with aliens; the well-being of home co-develops with the well-being of aliens of an alienworld, letting them be and become precisely alien. (Steinbock, 1995, p. 184-85, italics in original)

It is precisely in our encounter with the other that we experience an opportunity to dwell in-between. In-between self-assurance and not knowing, in-between power and non-power, in-between having and not having – this is a neutral space, an empty space, and

yet a space filled with endless co-arising possibilities. "In-betweenness [is] the deep ethical ground out of which it could be possible to negotiate a conversation between factions, between persons, between traditions" (Smith, 2003, p. xvi).

Steinbock (1995) also explored Husserl's concept of "homecomrades", who are those with whom we "co-live and co-constitute our homeworld" (p. 198). Although the people with whom we share daily encounters in our homeworld are clearly our homecomrades, Steinbock (1995) suggests that homecomrades do not necessarily have to be present: "They can be my ancestors or other homecomrades who lived generations before me and whom I know only indirectly through, say, world-stories" (p. 198). This is a profoundly important concept in the nature of self, and is echoed by my own experience. Although I am third generation Canadian I grew up in a small town in Western Canada where the majority of the population were of Ukrainian descent. I therefore grew up participating in Ukrainian culture and hearing Ukrainian spoken daily, and it was not until adulthood that I began to realize I was in fact Canadian, not Ukrainian. The homecomrades both living and kept alive through the traditions had instilled in me this aspect of my homeworld. However, homecomrades do not have to be people with whom we share a history; they can be people who we have just met, but with whom we share a common knowing and way of being in the world. These homecomrades could perhaps be described as soul mates.

I wish to make one final point before taking up the pedagogical implication of homeworld/alienworld in our work with young children and their families. This point is that the links between the homeworld and language are paramount in Husserl's phenomenology. Based on Husserl's words, Steinbock (1995) wrote, "From sensuous experience to practical affairs, our homelife as a communal life is structured and determined by language" (p. 209). Steinbock (1995) elaborated on the notion of narrative and its importance to the development of a homeworld. In this regard, I am struck by the image Haddy's memoir evokes of her mother clutching the tape recorder as she boarded the plane.

Pedagogical Considerations

Given that sensorial interaction in the world is a hallmark of early childhood, the notion of terrain attaching itself to our bodies seems a pertinent place to start this discussion of the pedagogical implications of homeworld/alienworld in the lives of young children. During a recent visit to Cairo, Egypt, I watched in amazement as young children successfully navigated their way across busy streets filled with all

manner of conveyance – cars, busses, donkeys, bicycles, and camels - all vying for position with no sense of order according to my western understanding of traffic. I dared not undertake what was commonplace to them. I reflected on how absurd it would seem to these children if they were to suddenly find themselves newcomers in a developed country and be asked to hold hands with their partner, for safety sake, as they walk down the sidewalk. In our work with young children and families we must recognize the deeply imbedded ways in which homeworld terrain is attached to our bodies. "It is not only the world we experience, but the world *from which* we experience" (Steinbock, 1995, p. 222, italics in original).

As educators, it is of paramount importance that we allow the deep embeddedness of homeworld/alienworld to come to rest within us. As alien as the ways of newcomer children and families are to us, our ways are also alien to them. It often seems that in our fear of alien ways we rush to find common ground and to minimize our differences. This can result in denying our true essence. It disturbs me a great deal as a newcomer to Aotearoa (New Zealand) when I am told of the similarities between Aotearoa and Canada. I do not want to be denied my deep abiding sense of who I am through being told that we are really not that different. If we try to minimize differences, we deny learning more about ourselves as it is in encountering the alienworld that we come to know our homeworld. If we isolate ourselves from knowing the alienworld, we are isolated from knowing ourselves. Encounters with young children and their families ought to be deep and rich explorations of co-arising homeworld/alienworld rather than some devolution of sameness that in the end results in 'funds of knowledge' (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) being lost as the majority culture's ways of doing and being becoming commonplace.

The self-responsibility that arises out of homeworld/alienworld offers us the chance to rethink the very essence of our individualistic child-centered early childhood pedagogy. The co-relative and co-arising nature of homeworld/alienworld means that if I am truly to care for myself then I must in turn care for you, since my sense of self is only made manifest in relation to you. It is only through a deep abiding concern for the other that I am able truly to care for myself. It seems to me that when children are reared through child-centered practice in their own special environments, with their own special materials, and with their own special curriculum, a sense of entitlement as opposed to a sense of care for the other becomes the norm. It is possible that looking toward child embeddedness, seeing children as a part and parcel of everyday life and integral to the health and wellbeing of community and of the earth itself, rather

than placing them in isolation from the world in their own special environments would make the world a better place. As Smith (2006a) suggests, it is time to begin “formulating notions of human community based on the profound interdependence of human requirements and of human-earth relations” (p. 134).

The care for ‘other’ implied in homeworld/alienworld is not to be interpreted as patronizing superiority or pity. In the context of early childhood education relationships with families and communities, they are often positioned as needing to be helped in some way. This helping imperative usually relegates the helped to a position of inferiority and deficiency as well as the position of the exotic other (Razack, 1993). This is particularly the case with respect to offering help and programs for families of low socioeconomic status (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008), a category that can be applied to most newcomer families. The author bell hooks (2000) critiqued the middle class tendency to help the deficient other, “All too often people of privilege engage in forms of spiritual materialism where they seek recognition of their goodness by helping the poor” (p. 130). In fact, our supposed altruism legitimizes the status of the middle class as the “dominator culture” (hooks, 2010, p. 26) and “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” prevails (hooks, 1994, p. 197). White dominator culture offering its help results in “at home, the poor, the homeless, the disenfranchised, and the young are filled with self-loathing because what is offered in solution to their difficulties is so impossible” (Smith, 2006b, p. 65).

I believe that the aim should be in learning to live well, knowing that we are all inseparably linked through the generative nature of homeworld/alienworld. If, in the context of early childhood, we can begin to see and live out the care for self as a deep and abiding care for the other then we might begin to see future generations living in a world where diversity/difference/alienness are not feared but rather become the norm. I long for a time when children who are different from the majority are the most sought after playmates rather than the ones relegated to the margins. There are no easy ways or quick fixes, no canned programs to be implemented in order to achieve this goal. Instead, the journey can only be walked mindfully, presently, openly, in each lived moment, one encounter at a time. It means being with children and families rather than trying to fill them up with knowledge and skills (Fromm, 2005). For those of us from the dominant culture, it means listening more and talking less (Smith, 2008). Prakash and Esteva (2008) challenged that “the newly minted expert as well as the established scholar have much to learn about living well from the uneducated and the illiterate—if they can give up the arrogance of their expertise” (p. xii).

In our 21st century globalized world, where the movement of people between nations is becoming increasingly commonplace, early childhood settings are uniquely positioned as places where homeworld/alienworld encounters might abound. For many newcomer children and their families, the early childhood setting is one of the first places of day-to-day interaction with the dominant culture. Homecomrade encounters have the potential to occur naturally as parents find common ground in the mutual task of raising their children. One very practical way we can facilitate positive and helpful homeworld/alienworld encounters is by finding ways for the home languages of children and the dominant language to act together in meaningful ways. This sharing of languages by all children, both homecomrades and newcomers, will eventually benefit all the children. Although the practicalities of needing a shared common language cannot be denied, the advantages of bi and multi-lingualism should also not be denied. These benefits are not the economic benefits that so often are the focus of multiple language learning arguments, but rather relate to the everyday lived experience of children and adults as we learn to live in ways that value homeworld/alienworld through acknowledging the significant role language plays in calling forth an individual’s world.

I in no way suggest that coming to dwell within the interdependent nature of homeworld/alienworld is going to be easy or that it will make the position of children dwelling in-between smooth and painless. On the contrary, I believe that what Husserl offers us is a reminder that we need to learn to welcome that which is before us, whether hard or easy, whether understood or not, as being simply that which is to be met with openness and frankness. In our grasping for what we think might make our life easier or the life of the other easier, we often miss opportunities for deep and rich encounters with that which makes us human. Andreotti (2010) suggests that as educators we must learn to invite discomfort, difference, ambiguity, and complexity as we move beyond mono-epistemic practices, and in so doing engage in “more rigorous and lively intellectual spaces in education that will open possibilities for us to see, to know, to relate, to imagine and to become ‘otherwise’ – and to make different mistakes so that learning and conversations keep going” (p. 20).

To conclude, perhaps by way of epilogue, I wish to share a rare magical parenting moment. My son Evan is now 13 years old and as is often the case with youth of this age, it is difficult to know how he is really feeling about life, and in this case, how he is making sense of homeworld/alienworld. We were experiencing our first December summer here in Aotearoa and one evening while walking the beach at low tide in the setting sun, unsolicited, he gifted me

by saying, “Thanks for bringing us to New Zealand mom”. I guess he is working things out.

Acknowledgment

Much gratitude is extended to Haddy for so heartfully sharing her story with me. I humbly offer these small insights trusting they might in time find their way into the minds and hearts of those who encounter newcomer children in their classrooms and programmes.

Referencing Format

Dachyshyn, D. (2012). Children dwelling in the absence of home. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 12 (Special Edition, May: *Early Childhood Education and Phenomenology*), 10 pp. doi: 10.2989/IPJP.2012.12.1.7.1115

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