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San Diego, California

Home's Deception

Dollhouse, wood, clay, wire, fabric, foamcore, paint

While flying home to San Diego, the bird's eye view from the plane captivated me. The view allowed me to see my home in a perspective that felt like 'the bigger picture'. It was this that inspired me to create a miniature model in order to capture the multifaceted concept of home.

My sculpture is a representation of home's true nature. Through its creation, I was able to further understand my complex relationship with home. Home can deceive an outsider, as it is hard to know the reality of what goes on inside. Trauma during childhood causes home to be both a place of immense fear and one's only source of comfort and familiarity.

Safety is a vital aspect of home, it is something we share with trusted and reliable people. Familial relationships are the first ones formed in life, having positive relationships with parents and siblings help children grow into healthy and functioning adults. Parts of my sculpture depict some of the most important parts of home, how it is a source of serenity and love. It is these parts of home that allow us to find comfort in difficult times. Simultaneously, these associations can cause outsiders to overlook what a child may be experiencing at home, continuing the cycle of abuse.

Home provided me with a space that feels my own. A relaxing place where I spend time with my loved ones. Even so, my home has been dangerous and unreliable. In creating my piece, I was shown how I have found comfort in home regardless, allowing me to rebuild my relationship with it.

Home's Deception



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OS46

Writer's Note: Home's image of safety and security makes it a tool that is easily abused.

Outsiders are deceived by what it stands for. This paper discovers the relationship between what home is supposed to be and a child facing abuse in the home. How does one find comfort in times like these?

Introduction

One's perception and experience of home influences one's sense of identity. For many, home is a complicated subject. Its role in our lives is not as simple as a dwelling in which one resides. The connection between our home experience and our sense of self is often overlooked. Most people's definition of home is associated with safety, comfort, and privacy. Home is a safe haven, it is warm and secure. It is where life lessons are taught. It equips people with all of the necessary tools to lead a fulfilling life. If an adequate home environment is disrupted, it puts the familial development of children at risk. One of the most common reasons for an inadequate home environment is a parent who is diagnosed with a severe mental health disorder or substance abuse disorder (SUD). The safe and loving conception of home can be misused in order to hide abuse. This paper will dive into the ways that home can be used as a tool for deception because of its image of safety and privacy, making it easier for an abuser to hide the chaos inside.

I. Concept of Home

Human beings have a deep-rooted psychological need for privacy and security. The meaning of the home as privacy arose in Europe in the seventeenth century. Before this time, domestic spaces had a public and multi-functional character.¹ Home was not identified with one's private spaces or

¹ Somerville, Peter. "THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF HOME." *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1997, pp. 226–45, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030210>. Accessed 21 Apr. 2022.

dwellings, but with one's village or country. Since then, private spaces have been created within communities, and home has become a place of intimacy and personal fulfillment in which privacy is necessary.² Privacy was popularized alongside the “nuclear family” household, which rose in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is said that the separation between the nuclear family and the rest of society is what caused the demand for privacy.³ Looking at other time periods, one can gain more insight into why privacy is prioritized in households. The desires for privacy in the nineteenth century are as follows: In the first half of the century, the middle class sought social superiority and righteousness, hoping to emulate the higher class from the two previous centuries. By the second half of the century, working class families in Europe emphasized the privacy of their homes as a tool to enhance and maintain their social righteousness.⁴ It was also seen as a place to be free from interference from neighbors.⁵

Safety is a vital part of a home and it is longed for by people of all ages. Home is usually shared with trusted and reliable people. *Place*, in terms of home and belonging is tied to our community. Community is about people coming together as a group and knowing one another. Home is a source of community. In one way or another, everyone belongs. Such belonging is important, not only as a state of mind – as much as it feels good to individuals. It also matters because of how belonging organizes people. It joins people together socially, informing their actions.⁶ Social organization provides people with control throughout daily life. It can guide

²Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵Ibid

⁶ F. Maine, B. Brummernhenrich, M. Chatzianastasi, V. Juškienė, T. Lähdesmäki, J. Luna, J. Peck, Children's exploration of the concepts of home and belonging: Capturing views from five European countries., *International Journal of Educational Research*, Volume 110, 2021, 101876, ISSN 0883-0355, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2021.101876>

people's lives, giving them a source of stability as well as a group of people who understand them. Categorizations can also provide children with a resource to understand their social environments.

The significance of home is immeasurable to growing children. A study conducted by researchers Maine and Brummernhenrich titled “Children's exploration of the concepts of home and belonging” dove into the perceptions of home from children around the world. The results of this study comes from classroom discussions from 56 different lessons in which three different age groups of children were represented. The most common point of view showed that young children associated home with family and people they love. Family shapes children’s perception of home as well as almost every part of their life. Familial relationships are the first ones formed in life, having positive relationships with parents and siblings help children grow into healthy and functioning adults. Having a supportive and close-knit family provides emotional support, well-being, and increases overall health.⁷ A healthy family dynamic consists of every family member feeling equally loved, cared for, and supported by one another. This is usually achieved through spending quality time with family as well as working together to communicate through problems.

Home being a symbol of safety and comfort was the next most significant in the study. It was shown that children of all age groups often defined home as where one feels safe and comfortable.⁸ This was also associated with notions of care and physical safety from hurt. As the children who participated in the study explained their ideas about what a home is, they built on ideas of comfort and warmth, some comparing the feeling to tangible objects such as a fireplace.⁹ Home is a place where one feels at ease, safe, and comfortable. One of the children named Abril,

⁷ *Unite for sight*. Family Dynamics and Health. (n.d.). Retrieved April 27, 2022, from <http://www.uniteforsight.org/gender-power/module1#:~:text=Having%20a%20close%2Dknit%20and,tends%20to%20be%20negatively%20affected>.

⁸ F. Maine, B. Brummernhenrich, M. Chatzianastasi, V. Juškieñė, T. Lähdesmäki, J. Luna, J. Peck, Children's exploration of the concepts of home and belonging: Capturing views from five European countries., *International Journal of Educational Research*, Volume 110, 2021, 101876, ISSN 0883-0355, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2021.101876>

⁹ Ibid

who was in the 8-9 age group, said that home “is a place where you are treated well.” Many children attribute their home experiences to the way they are treated. Some of the young children compared their views of home to metaphors. One said that home is like a warm hug or a shield, with another saying it is a place of “happiness and fun”.¹⁰

II. Trapped in Home

Negative impacts on the home environment can have detrimental effects on growing children. Early years of a child’s life are crucial in the formation of personality, intelligence, and social behavior. Proper care at an early age is necessary. It creates an assisting environment for children, ensuring the preservation of health, nutrition, psychosocial and cognitive development. An assisting home environment should provide a sufficient level of stimulation for a child to explore their surroundings while also being given support in stressed situations¹¹. Loving and stable relationships with family members also play a large role in an adequate home environment. ‘Nurturing care’ is a set of conditions given for the most adequate care of early-childhood children. It refers to a stable environment created by caregivers which ensures good health and nutrition, gives them opportunities for early learning, and protects children from danger.¹² This is usually achieved through connections that are emotionally supportive and responsive. Nurturing care is a necessary part of child development. It lays the foundations for and provides children with the necessary resources for adult life. Nurturing care consists of five different sections: health, nutrition, safety and security, early learning and responsive care. It is said that all five domains are

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Thorup, A.A.E., Gantriis, D.L., Greve, A.N. *et al.* Exploring protective and risk factors in the home environment in high-risk families – results from the Danish High Risk and Resilience Study—VIA 7. *BMC Psychiatry* 22, 100 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-022-03733-5>

¹² Kumari Arti, Sangwan Sheela, Sheoran Sumit, “Early childhood and long term development: A systematic review”, *Indian Journal of Health and Well-being*, Accessed April 24, 2022, from http://www.iahrw.com/index.php/home/journal_detail/19#list

required in order to meet a child's developmental potential¹³. Another vital factor for child development is environmental health. Access to clean water, good cleanliness practices, clean air and a safe environment are all essential to a child's well-being.

Child abuse and neglect is extremely detrimental to early childhood development. It throws off the foundations for lifelong health and well-being. Any behavior that is outside of the previously mentioned norms could be considered neglect or abuse.¹⁴ Neglect, in particular, can be unintentional. This paper will focus only on intentional abuse. While the frequency and length of the abuse experienced can influence a child's response, the effects tend to be similar. Trauma caused by caregivers has serious consequences on the development of a child's brain. There are many psychological consequences that children face when experiencing abuse. Research has shown that there is a strong relationship between mistreatment and a variety of mental health problems.¹⁵ It is common for children who have been in abusive environments to be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant and conduct disorders, substance abuse, and anxiety, mood, psychotic, and adjustment disorders.¹⁶ Overall, the affects of child abuse and neglect are serious and long-lasting.

III. Home's Deception

People's perception of home hides abuse in many situations. A child who is facing abuse is often taught to lie about what they are experiencing. Sufferers are silenced by their abusers. They often do not understand the severity of the abuse as it occurs. It becomes commonplace in the home,

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Hunter, Cathryn. "Effects of Child Abuse and Neglect for Children and Adolescents." Child Family Community Australia, 27 Jan. 2014, aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/effects-child-abuse-and-neglect-children-and-adolescents

¹⁵ Hunter, Cathryn. "Effects of Child Abuse and Neglect for Children and Adolescents." Child Family Community Australia, 27 Jan. 2014, aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/effects-child-abuse-and-neglect-children-and-adolescents

¹⁶ Ibid

making it harder for a sufferer to speak out or even understand what they are going through. When a child grows up in an abusive home with an inadequate parent, they become accustomed to the neglect they are facing. A child often believes that their environment is normal. Outsiders' perceptions of what a home should look like is also a factor in the continuation of abuse. As previously mentioned, home is associated with safety and security. People don't often question this pre-existing belief of home, making it hard to pinpoint when abuse and/or neglect is present in the home. Visible signs aren't always taken seriously because they are easily brushed off. It is common for children to be taught to lie about their injuries as an attempt to avoid repercussions. There are many hidden signs of child abuse. A child who is experiencing neglect may struggle in school or have low attendance¹⁷. A child who is experiencing physical abuse may be fearful of or evaluate their surroundings, have shy tendencies, or act out in fear when it is time to go home.¹⁸ Signs like these are overlooked. People may have a difficult time connecting these behaviors to abuse. This allows for abuse to prosper within the home.

While abusive homes can be extremely dangerous and detrimental to a child, their bedrooms or other parts of the home may be places of escape for them. A child may find comfort in having their own space at home where they can entertain themselves, distracting them from the chaos going on around them. It is also not uncommon for abusive or neglectful parents to have ups and downs in their behavior. It is very conflicting for a child to experience both extreme fear and comfort in their home. Simultaneously, it is vital for children in abusive homes to find comfort where they can.

¹⁷ Herring, Lea. "Hidden Signs of Child Abuse." Sharecare, Feb. 2022, <https://www.sharecare.com/abuse/hidden-signs-of-child-abuse>.

¹⁸ Ibid

Conclusion

It is not difficult for home to be used as a tool for deception due to its image of love and safety, making it easier for an abuser to hide the chaos inside. Children should feel happy and protected by their caregivers and in the place where they live. Children who are experiencing neglect or abuse in the home face many psychological consequences. The effects and memories of abuse are life-long. Because of the common perceptions of home, abuse goes unnoticed. The signs of abuse can easily be written off by bystanders. Sufferers of abuse need to find comfort in their surroundings in order to survive, creating conflict between the fear and solace they find at home. Home is both a tool for deception used by abusers and a tool for relief used by victims.

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