Psychology for the Other Conference – Call for Papers Submission

**Title**: What the Lived Experience of Alzheimer’s can Teach Us About Justice: Memory, Dwelling, and Alterity

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**Abstract**:

What happens to a person when Alzheimer’s tugs loose the chiasmic threads that weave her into the places, people and things of her world? And what happens to the places, people and things from which she becomes unwoven? I propose that memory is lived as the chiasmic threads that weave a person to her being-field, housed in and recalled through the matrix of places, people and things themselves. In other words, memories are not simply stored in the brain, but are rather the invisible matter which bind us to our lifeworld and constitute us as dwelling beings. Dwelling, Levinas says, situates and makes possible any consciousness that proceeds from it through the process of recollection (1969). By examining how my Mom dwells with and embodies Alzheimer’s, how she relates to things, and her lifetime of co-existing with other beings, I will shed light on the lived experience of Alzheimer’s.

Alzheimer’s is a disease that frustrates our tendency to narcissistically view others as extensions of ourselves. The depth to which alterity of the “Alzheimer-ed subject” feels threatening reveals the unjust structures and relational dynamics of our society. I will suggest that if we listen to what Alzheimer’s can teach us, we may hear an important critique of neoliberal capitalism, as well as an invitation to a more just form of relating to people and other beings, the land, time, and things.