

*Looking For Home: A journey into nostalgia and (Be)longing*

Inaugural Address Presented By

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## *Curriculum Vitae*

Maria Chiara Marchetti-Mercer was born in Milan (Italy) on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1964. Her parents immigrated to South Africa in September 1975 where they settled in East London. There she attended Clarendon Primary and High School for Girls. She began her studies at the Rand Afrikaans University in 1983 where she obtained the following degrees: BA (Humanities) with Psychology, Philosophy and English as majors (cum laude), BA Hons (Philosophy), BA Hons (Psychology)(cum laude), MA Clinical Psychology (cum laude) and a D Litt et Phil (Psychology) with a dissertation entitled, "A critical appraisal of the work of Mara Selvini Palazzoli" which she obtained in 1993.

During her university career she held various leadership positions at the Rand Afrikaans University, including Head of Residence and member of the Students Representative Council. In 1988 she was awarded the prestigious Abe Bailey bursary for a month's travel to the United Kingdom representing RAU.

After obtaining her MA Clinical Psychology degree, having been awarded the Leon Harris HSRC scholarship in her second year at University, she worked at the Human Sciences Research Council at the Centre for Child and Adult Guidance. During this time she became involved in the national project on the phenomenon of Family Murder in South Africa. Subsequently she published a number of articles on family murder both nationally and internationally. She is regularly consulted on the topic by the media and has been interviewed on both television and radio.

In 1991 she was appointed as lecturer at the Rand Afrikaans University where she worked for four years before moving to the University of Pretoria at the beginning of 1995 to take up a position as senior lecturer in the department of Psychology. She was appointed as Head of Department in October 2001 and has recently been reappointed until October 2009. She was promoted to associate professor in January 2000 and full professor in January 2004. She has been actively involved in the training of MA Clinical Psychology students especially in the field of family therapy. She has attended a number of international family therapy courses both in Milan with Mara Selvini Palazzoli and Rome with Maurizio Andolfi.

She has also published a number of articles both locally and internationally on family therapy training and the focus of her work has been on family-of-origin issues. She has presented her work at a number of national and international conferences and has given lectures at a number of overseas universities such as Bond University (Australia), Yale University, The University of San Francisco and Georgia State University (USA).

In 2004 she was chosen to represent the Italian community in South Africa and presented a paper at an international meeting of the Association for Italians living abroad in Adelaide (Australia).

She has been married to Christopher Mercer for 10 years and they have two children Connor, who is turning eight tomorrow and Francesca who is six years old. They live in Sunninghill, Johannesburg with a cat and two dogs.

Her father Dr Vincent Marchetti is a retired pediatrician and her mother Marina Marchetti has been the Honorary Italian Consul in East London for over 25 years.

Prof Marchetti-Mercer is also a very keen runner and completed her first Comrades marathon last year.

## Looking for home: A journey into nostalgia and (be)longing

### Prelude: My own story of looking for home

*As an immigrant who arrived to this country 30 years ago from Italy I have my own story of looking for home, which is very personal. As a psychologist working in South Africa today I also have a professional story, which informs my work as an academic and head of department.*



*Attempting to define what home means to me, as well as identifying where I belong, both in my personal as well as professional life has been somewhat of a journey to me, which has exposed me to a number of very different people and ideas. I have realised that the themes of “home and belonging” reflect very common human experiences and that they have been addressed by a number of disciplines such as literature, sociology, anthropology, psychology and family therapy.*

*What is also significant to me is that this longing is also voiced and expressed uniquely in different languages and by different cultures.*

*What will follow in this address reflects some of the ideas and sometimes emotions, which I have encountered on this journey. What I have chosen to discuss is largely driven by my personal experiences as someone who immigrated to a new country at a very young age and who has spent one’s adult life in contexts very dissimilar from one’s place of birth. Moreover my work as a family therapist and trainer, as well as a manager in the context of a University undergoing great social transformations has also further informed the choice of focus.*

### **Introduction and definition of topic**

One of the main dilemmas I faced when first approaching this topic was the fact that the three languages I speak have different words and concepts to describe the emotional experiences that are associated with the concept of “home”.

The English word “Home”, and what it represents, does not easily translate into other languages. Giamatti (1989) argues that, ... No translation catches the associations, the mixture of memory and longing,... the aroma of inclusiveness, of freedom from wariness, that cling to the word home.... Home is a concept, not a place, it is a state of mind where self-definition starts; it is origins-the mix of time and place and smell and weather wherein one first realizes one is an original, perhaps like others, especially those one loves, but discrete, distinct, not to be copied. Home ...remains in the mind as a place where reunion, if it were ever to occur, would happen.... It is about restoration of the right relations among things- and going home is where the restoration occurs, because that is where it matters most(p. 254).

In Italian the literal translation of the word “home” would be “casa”, but this is more like the English word “house” and in no way captures the feelings described above. Italians rather use the word, “nostalgia” (which is pronounced differently than the English “nostàlgia’ ”) to try to capture this wistfulness and yearning. The concept of nostalgia finds its roots in the Greek “nostos”, which means return or the return home, and “algos”, which means pain or sorrow and was coined in 1688 by Johannes Hofer. Originally used to describe a source of organic diseases it now points to a yearning for something, which holds emotional significance for an individual and, which is regarded as absent or even lost (Rubenstein, 2001).

In Afrikaans we find the term “heimwee” to describe this yearning for a world gone by (milieu, nature, social reality, culture), which finds its literary expression in the form of the Afrikaans “plaasroman”(farm novel) (DeWet, personal communication, 23 August 2005) It may indicate a wish to return to the familiar, which also goes deeper than mere homesickness. However I have been particularly captivated by the concept of “home” and what the nostalgia for it entails.

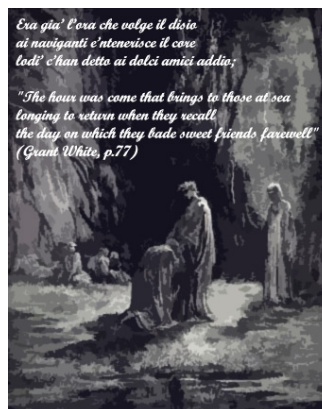
Turner (1957, 1976 in Magat, 1999) proposes an idea of home as a folk concept, which is prevalent in human discourse, and which can be a structure, a feeling, a metaphor or a symbol. He argues that home can be anything from a trailer, to one’s land of origin or even the universe. It may vary from person to person and it may change over the course of one’s life. He makes the very powerful point that it may be not even just be where one wants to live but also where one wants to die and be buried. It may serve as a centre, which contains an integration of past, present and future and ultimately contains an element of reconciliation between immediate (proximate) and ultimate (abstract) concerns (Magat, 1999).

Rubenstein (2001) urges us to see home not as a physical structure or a geographical location but rather as an emotional space, which is closely linked to some of our earliest psychological experiences and has a ripple effect throughout the rest of our lives. Therefore the concept has a strong idealised dimension and because of this evokes strong feelings of nostalgia for that which could have been or could still be. Because of this powerful emotive component it may remain a significant driving force in our lives.

This search for that which has been lost, and for that for which one yearns, has a long history. It probably begins with the search for a Paradise Lost after the fall of man, which was beautifully captured by Milton in the epic poem by the same name. This theme has subsequently permeated many realms of our thinking and mythology. Although Homer’s Odyssey is probably one of the most famous literary expressions of the struggle to return home, Dante also explores the theme in the “Divine Comedy” in the Purgatorio Canto VIII,

Era gia' l'ora che volge il disio  
ai naviganti e'ntenerisce il core  
lo di' c'han detto ai dolci amici addio;

The hour was come that brings to those at sea  
a longing to return when they recall  
the day on which they bade sweet friends farewell (Grant White, p.77)





It is also fascinating how classic fairy tales such as the brothers Grimm's "Hansel and Gretel", or the more modern Shrek movies, also illustrate people's need to return home in the face of incredible difficulties.



The Italian movie *Cinema Paradiso*, which won an Academy Award in 1989 for best foreign movie is also a poignant illustration of what leaving home means and how this process can leave one feeling displaced until one is able to return and make sense of one's past. Finding one's way back home may ultimately entail an attempt to make sense of the very different and often apparently dissonant "outtakes", or discrete images, of one's life. This process of meaning making may lead to spiritual and psychological liberation. McGoldrick (in McGoldrick, 1998) writes, "Home is a space where we could all belong, with each other-strengthened by what we take from those who have come before us, creating a safe haven for those who are with us in our time, and insuring that we leave a safe space for our children and all those who will come after us" (p.216).



Maya Angelou, an African-American therapist, who came to live in Africa as part of her personal search for "home" writes of, "the ache for home (which) lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned." (Angelou, 1986, p. 54). However she is of the belief that because of issues of class, gender and race, most people have never had this experience, as "home" is not a safe place.

I believe that linking "finding home" and achieving some kind of resolution may be important. This idea may resonate with O'Reilly Byrne's and McCarthy's (in McGoldrick, 1998) use of the concept of the "Fifth province" which is used in Irish mythology to describe a place of imagination and possibility and where there was the hope of conflicts being resolved through dialogue. These authors make use of this term in a therapeutic context, but I think it may also be useful as an analogy for a place of psychological resolution.



Having looked at the promise and hope attached to the concept of "home", the question we may now ask is whether this can ever be achieved? Although the writer Thomas Wolfe has argued that, "you can never go home again" (in Rubenstein, 2001, p.2) family therapists who have focused on the importance of our family-of-origin such as Framo (1976) have argued quite strongly that you can and should go home again. DiNicola (1997) is of the opinion that we in fact never leave our home, but as a snail is bound to its shell, so we too carry our home with us wherever we go. This latter idea is reminiscent of the words of Paolo Friere (1994) who argues that, "No one leaves his or her world without having been transfixed by its roots, or with a vacuum for a soul. We carry with us the memory of many fabrics, a self soaked in our history, our culture; a memory, sometimes scattered, sometimes sharp and clear, of the streets of our childhood" (p.32).



At this point it is already apparent that the process which I would like to explore is an intricate one, almost impossible to encapsulate in a word or verb and at times even difficult to define. On the one hand it carries the memories of our childhood, our connection to our family- of- origin and our cultural and ethnic roots or even a geographical place, while on the other hand the “longing for home” is also an idealised and abstract concept which contains a number of fantasies around resolution, the end of conflict and the yearning for a place of safety where we can truly belong. Ultimately, and very significantly, I am of the belief that this concept will hold different meanings for different people and for different cultures.

### ***The search for Identity***

Strongly linked to finding a sense of belonging and home is the question of personal identity. McGoldrick (1993) argues that our sense of personal and even cultural identity are closely linked to the concept of “home”, while Magat (1999) also maintains that “home” can provide us with a center, which is the indispensable origin of our identity.

The nature and scope of the concept of identity has been widely debated (Sampson, 1993) and often reflects the tensions between modernist and postmodernist approaches. The former approach emphasizes a well-defined sense of self and identity, as for example in the work of Geertz (1979), while the more postmodern views of self and identity place more emphasis on the role that social structures and processes play in its formation, as well as exploring the historical and ideological practices that inform it, as exemplified in the work of Foucault (1988; 1988). From this perspective the self is a more fluid concept, which is strongly influenced by a person’s social contexts and experiences.

I am in agreement that personal identity is influenced by different levels of experience and that it also influences our relationships with a number of contexts. Native Americans hold the belief that an individual finds completion only in relation to other people and by having a respect for one’s past as well as place (Rubenstein, 2001). This is a powerful acknowledgement of the significance of our roots, both physical and historical, as well as the role that other people play in shaping who we are.

Who we are, and how we define ourselves are both irrevocably linked to where we come from, where we find ourselves and where we may be going. Making sense of these different levels of experience is essential in order to allow us to develop a sense of our identity and find out where we truly belong. However the end goal of this process should not be to achieve a fixed and one-dimensional sense of identity, as this journey is strongly linked to our social and historical experiences; but rather to make sense of, and find meaning in, the many ambiguities and contradictions that often inform whom we are.

One of the most significant social experiences, which may influence this process of identity formation, is to be found in the context of one’s family-of-origin and I will discuss this next.

### ***The role of the family***

On a very basic level our family-of- origin, in other words the family in which we are born and which provides us with our first home, gives us a sense of who we are. This primary experience is also closely linked to the place where we were born and where we spent our childhood. Naturally this is not a uniform experience for all people. Some may have never known their parents, some might have left their place of birth before they could even remember it; for some images of family and home might be extremely nurturing and reassuring, while for others they may elicit images of neglect and abuse.



However I am of the belief that in general our families are a strong point of reference from whence we learn what it means to belong (and sometimes also to be different) and from which we develop our own personal identity. It is after all where we first get a name and furthermore a surname or family name, which links us to people and generations that came long before us. It is also in the context of our families that we acquire much of what is known as culture, which is also an important determinant of personal identity. Because these concepts are also closely interlinked I would now like briefly to examine this relationship.

### ***Culture and families***

Entering the domain of the debate around culture feels akin to entering a theoretical and political minefield. On the one hand defining what culture is may seem very simple and common sense as it so intrinsic to our daily experience and how we operate in our world.

On the other hand any choice of a definition will reflect a certain theoretical orientation and be influenced by issues of power and social discourses. However as Laird (1998) reminds us, "we cannot escape culture; we can only try to meet it on its own terms"(p.30).

Much of the debate arising around the term of culture is centred on the postmodern critique of its more traditional conceptualisations. Postmodern thinkers reject the traditional idea of culture as a static and fixed concept without taking into consideration the strong social and historical elements that in fact influence and transform it. They criticize traditional views, which may disguise certain ideologies used to protect some groups' own rights and privileges at the expense of other "cultures". A further dilemma arising from a fixed view of culture is that it may lead to a belief that people from a specific ethnic background are all similar in their values, norms and behaviours. This may easily result in stereotyping. We do not need to look very far to understand how trying to emphasise the supremacy of one culture may lead to the total detriment of other peoples.

Psychology and family therapy in particular have long been struggling with the issue of culture as it relates specifically to the therapeutic context. Do we need "special knowledge" of other cultures in order to work as therapists in multicultural contexts? Can a therapist from a certain cultural background ever prove to be effective with a family from a different background? Can we use our own ethical norms to judge behaviours that reflect values different from our own?

There is a large body of work in family therapy literature that reflects this debate (for example, Friedman, 1980; Montalvo & Gutierrez, 1983; McGoldrick, 1993). A useful approach might be that of Falicov's (1995) who argues that it is important to understand how *common* human experiences are approached by *diverse* groups of people, rather than to think in terms of ethnic groups or entities. It may also be relevant to take cognisance of the words of Schutzenberger (2004) who argues that we are all in fact "cultural hybrids" as we are always the product of the mixture of two different families or cultures, our mothers' and our fathers'.

Even when both families are similar with regards to factors such as race, religion, social status and so forth there will still be noticeable differences. It is likely that one of these families may become more dominant in the life of a couple, while the other one may be the "excluded" culture. This interesting perspective allows for the fact that we may be more "culturally flexible" than what we think and thus able to negotiate and move between different cultures.

I am of the opinion that we all have a sense of what the accepted cultural norms, in the context in which we grew up and in which we live, are. These may not be always useful and we may not always agree with them, but they undeniably influence our behaviours in a specific social context.

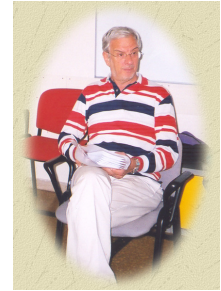
As I grew up my family had its own particular culture, which was strongly informed by the experiences and stories of its members. In this context I learned certain behaviours and was taught the importance of certain values and norms. I also learned to speak a certain language, which also forms an essential part of a person's culture. This does not of course mean that every Italian family living in Milan in the 60's and 70's taught their children exactly the same rules and norms of behaviour. However in spite of certain differences, all people born and living in Italy at that time in history would have shared some common understanding (although not necessarily agreement) of the general norms and behaviours acceptable in that society. Therefore in this process our family-of-origin plays a central role. Pare' (1995) views families" as storying cultures" (p.12).

He bases this concept on the use of the word culture by Howard (1991) who defines it as," a community of individuals who see the world in a particular manner-who share particular interpretations as central to the meaning of their lives and action" (p.190) and consequently views the "family-as-culture."

Similarly DiNicola (1997) believes that the life of a family represents a private world, which has its own expressive language, its own symbols and rules. He also draws parallels between the structures and functions of the two systems of culture and family with regard to the role they play in the shaping, as well as the claims they lay with regard to the identity of an individual. As we develop a cultural identity so there is also a cultural costume that accompanies it. This cultural costume is made up of the sayings and the mythology from the larger community in which the family lives and which also defines that family's experience (DiNicola, 1997). Consequently once we move outside of our family-of-origin, we are moving into a foreign "culture". DiNicola (1997) argues that as we move outside our family context some things that were familiar to us can become foreign, and consequently every door that is opened can be both an entrance and an exit. This movement into the unfamiliar is likened to a "dance of polarities: the dance between the self and other is a pivot between the strange and the familiar, between personal and social being, and a fluid switch of perspectives between insiders and outsiders"(DiNicola, 1997, p.29). This metaphor of a dance is useful insofar as it implies motion and somewhat discomfort, both useful concepts as we attempt to view the process that informs culture.



The question that faces us in our work as therapists is whether recognising and appreciating uniqueness and difference will necessarily lead to stereotyping and prejudice. Denying difference may become almost an extreme form of political correctness and may lead to what Andolfi (personal communication, 6 July 2005) refers to as a “globalisation of mind”. The phenomenon of globalisation seems to be increasingly taking away the peculiarities and richness of cultural heritage unique to different countries. The dilemma is however that in our world not all cultures are considered equal; the dominant culture can easily become something that can be exploited in order to emphasise difference rather than encouraging diversity (Laird, 1998). Seeking out universalities and commonalities may be a useful exercise in that it may be the beginning of dialogue between different people and introduces a critical element to any belief that one has an absolute take on the ‘one truth’ but should not become a means to ignore differences between people.



Perhaps ultimately when dealing with cultural diversity it is essential to foster a sense of curiosity, as opposed to mere tolerance (DiNicola, 1997), as the latter will only allow us to remain closed up in our own worlds (Andolfi, 1997, p.ix). In conclusion we should not avoid discussing and approaching issues of culture and ethnicity. We should appreciate the role that families play in this regard and enter into this relationship driven by curiosity cognizant that every other person, every other family, every other community contain an element of unfamiliarity yet may be worth knowing.

### ***Family therapy and looking for home***

Having explored the important role that the family plays in the context of culture I would like to examine the contributions of family therapy towards resolving the issues of home and belonging.

Although family therapy should in no way be seen as a homogeneous discipline as reflected by the major theoretical differences between its exponents, yet all these approaches in a way are based on the underlying assumption that individual problems are to be understood in a contextual framework which allows for a much richer explanation of human behaviour. The more recent postmodern approaches focus on the narrative nature of problems and tend to see family problems as “stories gone awry” (Howard, 1991,p.326) and therefore in need of re-writing or mending.

Essentially going back home and issues of belonging may be closely related to the relationship between an adult individual and his or her family-of-origin, and a number of family therapists have made important contributions to this theme. I have chosen to focus specifically on some of those whose work has particularly influenced my thinking and my own work.

Jay Haley (1980) one of the most important pioneers in the field of strategic therapy wrote a whole book on the phenomenon of leaving home where he concentrated on the family dynamics at play during the sensitive transition of the adolescent leaving home.

Murray Bowen (1978) provides some far reaching insights on the relationship between the individual and his/her family and has described the process that each person must go through when leaving the parental home in depth. He looks at achieving a balance between the experiences of belonging as opposed to separation and describes the goal of adult development to be individuation from one’s family-of- origin, and becoming a differentiated individual.

Ultimately an individual should find a balance between achieving an autonomous sense of self and maintaining close connections with important others, most importantly one's family (Skowron, 2004).

However being connected to one's home does not necessarily imply being physically part of it and may in fact require a process of leaving it and separating from it. This reminds us of the words of Alfredo to Toto' in Cinema Paradiso

*Get out of here... You must go away for many years. Before you come back and find yourself and your land...*

In order to truly find home you sometimes are forced to leave it. Unless we have an opportunity to explore the world beyond it and being confronted with other views and cultures, we may never truly find out where we belong. Williamson and Bray (1988) have explored the process of differentiation further and have introduced the idea of "family differentiation" where a family allows its members a certain amount of independence and autonomy (Williamson & Bray, 1988).

Their views of leaving the parental home reflect a multigenerational perspective on the family which looks at how interactional patterns develop and are passed on across generations. They propose that an adult must address two important psychosocial issues namely, how to leave the parental home psychologically, and secondly having done this how to stay connected to, and intimate with, the "former parents" (Williamson, 1981).

In essence an adult must give up "the need-to-be parented" and establish a peer relationship with his or her parents and essentially terminating the intergenerational hierarchical boundary (Framo, 1992). Eventually a person must be able to integrate one's own history and heritage while simultaneously being able to transcend the emotionality of the family (Williamson & Bray, 1988).

Framo (1976) in his significant contributions to the field of intergenerational therapy argues very poignantly that one, "can and should go home again"(p.193) and believes that many marital and family difficulties are the manifestation of relationship problems of the spouses' families- of- origin. If members of a marital couple are able to go back to deal directly with past and present issues in their own families-of-origin there is a possibility for change to take place in their present times. Going back home can therefore be seen as a resolution of family-of-origin issues that have not been addressed.

Consequently I am of the opinion that it is important to provide a context in the training process of professional psychologists which allows students to work with family-of-origin issues. In my work I have found that making use of genograms and family sculpting is an extremely useful approach to address these issues. A genogram is a graphic picture of a family's history and patterns and allows us to see the structure, demographics, functioning and relationships in that family (McGoldrick, 1999), while sculpting is a way of placing people in various positions and postures so as to represent family members and their relationships and interactions with each other (Barker, 1986).

I am of the belief that it is essential for professional psychologists to reflect and redefine their position towards their family-of-origin, making sense of those relationships before commencing their work as therapists with other families. Framo (1976) argues in this respect that a significant ingredient, which often goes unnoticed in family and marital therapies, is the presence of the ghosts of the family of the therapist. In the final analysis ignoring one's own history is not possible as it is part of who we are and attempting to bury it may in fact make it more powerful (McGoldrick, 1999).

An added value to the use of genograms in the training process is their cultural significance. In a previous work (Marchetti-Mercer & Cleaver, 2000) I have argued for the cross-cultural value of using genograms in training postgraduate students as it helps them learn about the families of students from different cultural backgrounds from their own. Allowing students to talk about their families and the cultural values embodied in those family stories creates a context within which students from different cultural backgrounds can learn about each other and in a way gives rise to a new cultural/training context.

All the theories discussed thus far emphasise a process of moving away, or differentiating from, one's home. One would be correct to ask whether this emphasis on differentiation, while trying to stay connected, is not more of a Western concern and reflective of a very individualistic culture and not truly of relevance to other cultures. In general non-Western cultures and societies tend to value a more communal sense of identity, which reflect a tendency towards, "We are therefore, I am" (McGoldrick, 1993, p.335). The same spirit is reflected in the concept of ubuntu, which is a term used in several African languages and which in essence refers to the fact that one's humanity is affirmed by recognizing the humanity of others and establishing respectful human relations with them. One is therefore a person through other persons (Ramose, 1999). This once again highlights the fact that the concept of "belonging," may hold a different level of importance for different people and communities.

Thus far I have described the experience of the individual in relation to his or her family as well as the process of leaving and going back home. I believe that a process, which bears strong resemblances to this, is that of the person leaving his or her own home country. It is probably within this sphere of human experience, namely immigration and exile, that people may struggle the most with the themes under discussion and I would now like to focus on this.

### ***Immigration and the search for home***

*Every man has a map in his heart of his own country and the heart will never allow him to forget this map. (Mc Call Smith, 1998/ 2004, p.16)*



No one probably experiences the sense of not belonging anywhere as much as the immigrant or exile that has had to leave the country of his/her birth to settle in a new country. Tuan (1984) argues very saliently that "we all want to be in place, oriented and accepted. The expression 'he is nowhere' captures the bewilderment and pain of placeless. We want to know our place.

We want to know where we are, to be accepted by society for who we are, and to set up home at a particular spot on earth so that we can come to know it intimately" (in Magat, 1999, p.115). This is strongly linked to a sense of being rooted and the need to belong in a certain environment. Simone Weil argues that, "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul"(p.43, 2002). Falicov (1995) sees the uprooting of meaning as the most disruptive aspect of migration. Semantically we make use of the term transplant as a synonym for migration, which further emphasises the need to have roots (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

Any attempt to explore the phenomenon of immigration must take into consideration its historical development. I do not in any way hope to address all the complexities inherent to it, but will rather concentrate on those aspects I believe are relevant to the topic under discussion.

The different type of immigrant as well as the various reasons behind the decision to immigrate are anything but homogenous and have changed dramatically. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries a lot of immigration took place from Europe to America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and also South Africa often as a means to escape political or economic hardships. Today we see many different trends, which reflect the socio-political dimensions of our times.

From the 1980's we have witnessed the phenomenon of refugees and asylum seekers as the main type of migration. It is perhaps an irony that Europe which must have exported the largest percentage of immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century is fast becoming the main destination of many migrants in the form of both refugee and exile. In particular, countries like Italy and Ireland with long traditions of emigration, are now becoming amongst the most sought after destinations for immigration.

Umberto Eco (1997/2001) argues that we must distinguish between the concept of immigration and that of migration. He believes that the former refers to a phenomenon where people move from one country to another. Migration on the other hand must be seen as some kind of natural phenomenon, which takes place and cannot be controlled and where ultimately migrants transform the culture of the territory they have migrated into. Interestingly enough he considers what is happening today in Europe as a phenomenon of migration, which European countries are trying to handle as immigration. He warns that, "The Third World is knocking at our doors, and it will come in even if we are not in agreement" (Eco, 1997/ 2001, p.95).

One may not agree with Eco's provocative views but it is certainly a fact that the phenomenon of globalisation has greatly influenced the movement of people across countries and continents and terms such as trans-nationals and living across contexts are to be found in the literature (for example Glick Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Westwood & Phizacklea, 2000). Some writers such as Hall (1989, in Westwood and Phizacklea (2000), go as far as arguing that "we are all migrants now," reminding us we now live in a postmodern world which is more global in its concerns.

McGoldrick and Giordano (1996), view the process through which we are all migrants as one closely linked to our family-of-origin, where we are forever "moving between our ancestors' traditions, the worlds we inhabit, and the world we will leave to those who come after us" (p.8).

Glick Schiller et al (1992) argue that the new type of migrating population which has come about possesses networks, activities and ways of life reflective of both their host and original countries. As a result of this, two societies are being brought into one single social field with their lives cutting across national boundaries. "Professional transients" who move mostly because of work opportunities bring about economic change and new cultural values in the countries in which they work; as well as in their own countries of origin when they eventually return (Castles & Davidson, 2000).

This perspective leads to a situation where belonging to only one nation is no longer a universal phenomenon nor even a desirable position. Christiansen and Hedetoft (2004) are of the opinion that the reality of "multiple belonging" may in fact be found in the social, cultural and political lives of many people. Castles and Davidson (2000) also point out that we are seeing an erosion of the context for a citizenship which is based on belonging to a single nation and that we must look for a redefinition of citizenship based on globalisation.

The stereotype of the poor immigrant sailing on a ship looking for fortune and a better life in another country and providing future cheap labour is no longer applicable. Serancini (2005) with specific reference to Italian immigration, has argued that it is today more appropriate to speak of "Italian citizens in the world," rather than of immigrants. This group of people differs dramatically from earlier historical groups of immigrants in that they have been able, mainly because of globalisation, to maintain links to Italy through the mass media, travel and other means of communications. They have also contributed greatly to the image of Italy across the globe and are up to date with the social and political events in their country of origin. This is a very different scenario from those immigrants who left Italy after the First and Second World Wars and who basically were cut off completely from their country of birth because of the distance and inability to communicate. It is interesting to note that Italians abroad will even be allowed to vote in the political national elections that are to take place later this year.

A few words regarding the specific experiences of exiles may be of interest. This term has its origins in ancient Greece where in Athens certain citizens were banished for political reasons. This is a very peculiar experience of migration as exiles are forced by ideological, political or religious circumstances to leave their countries of birth never to return (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

As far as South Africa is concerned we have also seen a number of peculiar phenomena. During the apartheid era many people left the country because of political reasons; many black and white people were forced into exile fearing arrest or even death, especially after certain politically explosive events such as Sharpeville in the 60's and the Soweto uprisings in 1976. A number of young white men also left the country in order to avoid conscription. For these people there was no possibility to return to the country of their birth until a change in the political system had taken place. This created a very specific grouping of people, many of whom returned after 1994, some of which may even had been born abroad but nevertheless still considered South Africa their home.

Bernstein (1994) believes that the experience of South African exiles is quite different from the accepted understanding of exile, as it did not result in the aftermath of a war that was lost or a coup or revolution that failed. Political activists that left South Africa during the years of the apartheid regime saw themselves as still very much part of the continuing and increasing struggle back home. There was also a constant stream of exiles from South Africa, which consists of quite different groups of people depending on the historical period when they left the country.

A further interesting phenomenon is that unlike other phenomena of exile when people leave their country with their families, South African exiles left mostly as individuals and were not able to make contact with their families sometimes for many years (Bernstein, 1994).

In the post-apartheid South Africa a large number of South Africans have chosen to leave the country of their birth because of political and economic uncertainty as well as increasing levels of crime and violence (Goldin, 2002). Many young white people continue to leave the country after completing their tertiary education and many South African families have been deeply affected as a result and find themselves with their children scattered all over the world.

### *Finding your home in South Africa*

I am of the belief that all the levels of experience discussed thus far are of relevance to the South African context. Now more than ever the people of this country are struggling to define their identity with regard to their segregated past, their multicultural present and their often uncertain future. The ambiguities and discomforts described earlier as part of the immigrants' struggle may well be similar to those experienced by the people of a multicultural nation which has 11 official languages and where the large majority does not even use its mother tongue in order to communicate with others. This makes the issue of language, particularly salient.

Berlin's words regarding the emotional importance of a nation's language seem to capture the South African dilemma, "... for it is language, more than land and history, which provides the essential form of belonging, which is to be understood. One can of course be understood in language and countries other than one's own; one can find belonging even in exile. But..., the warm sensation that people understand not merely what you say but what you mean, can only come when you are among your own people in your own native land" (in Ignatieff, 1994, p. 7).

For most South Africans this experience is restricted to specific communities and is neither a national nor even daily experience. Although the issue of language is easily abused as a political expedient often at the expense of other people's rights, one cannot deny nor ignore the deep psychological meaning that it has in the life of every individual and group.

In an attempt to create a home out of this country, South Africans are experiencing a number of conflicting transitions. For decades the majority of this country's inhabitants did not feel as if they belonged in the country of their birth and now have to redefine their identity from that of second class citizens to that of fully equal; a number of people who fled from the country in exile for fear of their lives, have being welcomed back and have had to readjust to a country which may feel very unfamiliar; many people no longer feel safe or at home in the new South Africa and are choosing to leave; many white people who felt safe in the old dispensation are now struggling with the issue of whether they can still call this country home.

Therefore every person, every family, every community and every culture is facing the issues of belonging and finding a "home" in this new South Africa. This search is sometimes reflected in the debate on "identity politics", especially regarding the question of who is truly African. It may also be reflective of a postmodern world characterized by more fluid borders and types of migration, as well as globalisation. In this world ethnic and minority groups are increasingly debating the issue of dual/multiple belonging while receiving societies are increasingly repossessing their territorial and cultural frameworks of belonging by dictating the conditions that newcomers must meet in order to be accepted and in order to belong to a new society (Hedetoft, 2004). This phenomenon may hold similarities for a South African context where there may exist an inherent tension between the conditions for belonging laid down on a national/societal level and the experiences of individuals who are struggling between their language and their national identity.

All South Africans today have to define for themselves what "home" means to the individual and whether they can truly belong to this country. Coming home may mean making peace with the past, dealing with the challenges of the present and planning for a future that is quite different from anything we ever dreamt of. Belonging may imply a bilateral process as argued by Castles and Davidson (2000) because it requires that individuals be able to identify with a certain type of community and on the other hand that a community may be able to see and construct itself as a container for individual belonging. Consequently belonging must embody the psychosocial agonies of the individual, as well as the political construction of collective symbols for identification.

The ideal of multiple belonging may hold very true for most South Africans who have strong cultural and ethnic roots associated with the communities of which they are part through birth, but then also a greater South African national identity.

The ability to alternate between cultures and show a constant sense of curiosity when dealing with difference rather than mere tolerance of each other's differences may help us greatly in dealing with the complex context of which we are part. Ultimately finding the "Fifth province", described earlier, may remain the pursuit of all those who live in this country.

### ***The University of Pretoria as "home"***

Every working context reflects the larger social macrocosm in which it operates and this holds true for the University of Pretoria and the different departments in which we work. The strategic vision of the University speaks of creating a context which," provides an intellectual home for the rich diversity of South African academic talent".



It is significant to me that the concept of an intellectual "home" is used here. We are referring here to a context where people from diverse backgrounds, with different ideas and beliefs can work together in an atmosphere that is enabling and which allows for respectful co-existence and collaboration. In other words creating a working context where people can feel at "home" and feel as if they belong. The Vice-Chancellor has on a number of occasions emphasised the fact that it is essential for people on the campus, both staff and students, to feel truly welcome. People can only feel truly welcome if there is a context where individual differences and opinions are not merely tolerated but respected, valued and most importantly encouraged.



One of the greatest challenges facing a Head of an academic department, especially one as large and diverse as the Psychology department is trying to create a sense of community and consequently a sense of belonging amongst its members of staff. This requires taking a real interest in, and a respect for, one's members of staff and their teaching and research activities. At times this may also require support at a more personal level. I am convinced that one cannot separate the personal from the professional and attempts to do so may at times undermine the functioning of a work context. In the past two years transformations such as the Mamelodi incorporation and the dramatic budget cuts have brought about a lot of anxiety and uncertainty amongst the staff of this University.



I am of the belief that such challenging times require a specific approach from management, which focuses not only on economic and political survival but which also values the very people who make up the fabric of our unique and diverse academic community. We must recognize the fact that ultimately the University consists of people who have aspirations, fears, uncertainties and who may often feel as if they are not heard.

The fabric of our University and the different departments have changed and will continue to change in the years ahead. This provides serious challenges for managers such; as the welcoming of many more new people into our departments and the University at large, having to create a sense of home and belonging for all newcomers, and the need to demonstrate respect for in situ staff who may feel displaced and marginalised by change. A continuous redefinition of what it means to feel at home in the department of Psychology will now be necessary and this will require not only tolerance of one another's views and opinions but also the encouraging of an attitude of curiosity towards those who may differ from ourselves.

It will require great effort not only from the management of the department, but also from its staff. As head I am committed to working towards the creation of such a context and the building of an academic and professional home for staff and students.

his however cannot take place in a vacuum and must be supported by other structures in the University. Ultimately we should all strive for more than mere tolerance of the diversity now so characteristic of our campus.

### ***Integration and conclusion***

In the course of this discussion I have used my own life experiences as a framework to discuss the themes of belonging and looking for home. My personal experience has been one of constant movement between being an outsider and being an insider, continually entering and exiting different contexts. For me this movement is powerfully captured by the concept of "liminality", which refers to a state of being on the threshold as described in the writings of Turner (1969). This author argues that, "the attributes of liminality... are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these people elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions"(Turner, 1969, p.95). The power of this position may lie in the possibilities inherent to taking an insider/outsider position and need not necessarily imply marginality (DiNicola, 1997).

I am of the belief that feeling at home is therefore not a static experience but in fact implies a constant movement between the outsider/insider position. I would propose that in this time in the history of the world and specifically of this country "home" may not only mean one place but may necessitate a more flexible approach. We may need to develop multiple centres and have access to alternative systems of meanings (Magat, 1999). It is perhaps in movement and multiplicity that we eventually will find our home, rather than just security and constancy. This does not take away from the notion that there are places on this earth that will always make us feel both safe and connected to those who came before us. However, it could be said that ultimately this may be more than just one place.

Earlier I referred to the work of McGoldrick and Giordano (1996) who believe that we are all migrants and move constantly throughout our lives. Moving beyond what is safe and known into the unknown can be very fearful, yet it may allow us to encounter and experience new homes. If my family had not immigrated to South Africa thirty years ago I would have missed out on so many wonderful experiences and would never have known this country as a home. This does not deny that a part of my home will always be in Milan, and other parts of Italy, as true now as it was thirty years ago.

In the end we must create our home and find our own sense of belonging. Birth and blood ties are only a part of this process, which will otherwise consist of our past, our family-of-origin and our culture, but also holds the possibility to be something quite unique and quite different from where we started. This home may change over the course of one's life, and this change may be painful and forced or, voluntary and exhilarating. Our home is also finally not only connected to a physical place or a geographical space, but is strongly connected to people and relationships, which we find in the families we create for ourselves, our friends and other people with whom we work and interact in our daily lives.



Our quest for home may be more than just an individual endeavour and may require collaborating with others in order to create a community where very different people feel they belong. It must never be at the cost of other people.

At the end of the day we may have different homes, a bit like a summer or a winter residence and we may have to move between these to suit the different seasons of our lives. This does not make either one less precious. I think that in the final analysis having to live with movement, with liminality and having to negotiate between being an outsider and being an insider are phenomena which we all experience living in this country, in this globalised world, and at this time in history.

As academics we are expected to contribute to the larger body of knowledge and to find answers to some of the burning questions that face our society. People often seek simple workable answers and are often unable to deal with complexity and prefer to eliminate discomfort from their lives. The field of family therapy has contributed greatly to our understanding of contexts and systems and encourages us to see that complexity is intrinsically linked to the human condition and experience.

Consequently we should not attempt to oversimplify human experiences, but rather to develop models and theories that allow people to live with complexities, ambiguities and discomfort. Ultimately finding our way home may involve all of these.

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