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New meanings of "home" in South Africa

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The search for a place we can call "home" and where we feel we can truly belong is a common human experience. This article explores the different meanings attached to the concept of home and how these influence our experience of belonging. These will be discussed in the context of individual as well as family and cultural experiences, with special emphasis on the contributions of family therapy towards this understanding. The article will also explore how finding a "home" is particularly relevant in present-day post-apartheid South African society. In conclusion it will be argued that "home" may be a fluid concept which requires mobility and flexibility in order to accommodate the complexities of a postmodern world.

Nuwe betekenisse van "tuiste" in Suid-Afrika

Die soektog na 'n "tuiste" waar ons werklik geborge kan voel, is 'n algemeen menslike versugting. In hierdie artikel ondersoek die outeur die verskillende betekenisse wat die term "tuiste" inhou en hoe dit ons ervaring van om iewers tuis te hoort, raak. Hierdie aspekte word bespreek in die konteks van individuele sowel as gesinsverband en kulturele ervarings, met besondere klem op die bydrae wat gesinsterapie lewer tot 'n beter insig daarvan. Die besondere relevansie van die soeke om 'n "tuiste" in die post-apartheid Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing te vind, word ook in die artikel onder die loep geneem. Ten slotte word gefokus op die moontlikheid dat die behoefte aan 'n "tuiste" 'n vloeibare konstruk is, wat die beweeglikheid en buigsaamheid van 'n komplekse post-moderne wêreld in ag moet neem.

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The search for a place we can call "home", and where we feel we can truly belong, is a common human experience and has been examined by a number of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, literature, psychology and family therapy.

Various languages also have different words and concepts to voice this yearning. The English word "home", with all it represents, does not easily translate into other languages. As Giamatti (1989: 254) argues:

> 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.

Italians use the word *nostalgìa* (which is pronounced differently from the English "nostalgia") to try to capture this wistfulness and yearning. The concept of *nostalgìa*, coined in 1688 by Johannes Hofer, finds its roots in the Greek *nostos*, which means return, or the return home, and *algos*, which means pain or sorrow. Originally used to describe a source of organic diseases, the word 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: 118).

Rubenstein (2001: 4) differentiates between nostalgia and homesickness, the latter being more connected to a physical or geographical space. Nostalgia, on the other hand, is more of a temporal feeling, which represents the presence of absence and is an existential condition shared by all adults.

In Afrikaans we find the term *heimwee* to describe this yearning for a bygone world (milieu, nature, social reality, culture), which finds its literary expression in the form of the Afrikaans *plaasroman* (farm novel).[1] It may indicate a wish to return to the familiar, which also goes deeper than mere homesickness.

1 Karen deWet, personal communication, 23 August 2005.

However, in this article the focus will fall specifically on the concept of "home" and its importance in a number of areas of human experience.

1. Different perspectives on "home"

Magat (1999) using the terminology of Turner (1957, 1976) 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 not even be just 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 an element of reconciliation between immediate (proximate) and ultimate (abstract) concerns (Magat 1999: 120).

Rubenstein (2001: 1-2) urges us to see home not as a physical structure or a geographical location but rather as an emotional space closely linked to some of our earliest psychological experiences and exerting a ripple effect throughout our lives. Therefore, the concept has a strong idealised dimension and because of this, evokes strong feelings of nostalgia for what might 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 what has been lost, for which one yearns, has a long history. It probably begins with the search for a "Paradise Lost" after the Fall of Man, beautifully captured by Milton in the epic poem of the same name. This theme permeates 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* (*Purgatorio*, Canto VIII).

It is also fascinating how one often finds creative expressions of this theme in children's literature and stories. A classic example of the longing for home is to be found in the fairy tale *Hansel and Gretel*, by the brothers Grimm. In this story the two children are abandoned in the forest by a wicked stepmother and ineffectual father and have to experience many dangerous adventures in their determined attempts to return home, where in the end they all live happily ever after. One could ask: why go to all

that trouble to return to a place from which they had been evicted and to people who had abandoned them, but this perhaps merely illustrates the views of McGoldrick & Giordano (1996: 1), that finding a sense of belonging and of historical continuity is in fact a basic psychological need, and that we will go to great lengths to return home.

In recent times *Shrek*[2] and *Shrek II*[3] have provided us with humorous depictions of such a longing. The beautiful princess — turned — ogre, having been locked away by her parents for "being different", still longs for resolution with them and returns home with her new ogre husband Shrek in an attempt to reconnect and feel a sense of belonging. The process through which this is achieved is difficult and painful, but the heroine is prepared to undergo it in order to find true happiness.

Other films have also often poignantly explored these themes. One which very sensitively depicts this search is *Cinema Paradiso*,[4] which won an Oscar for best foreign film in 1989. It tells the story of Totò, a young boy who grows up fatherless in post-war Sicily and who loves films. He develops a friendship with Alfredo, the projectionist at the local cinema. The parish priest censors all the love scenes, which are duly cut by Alfredo and collected as "out-takes" by Totò, who hides them away as precious little treasures. After a fire in the projection room Alfredo loses his sight and Totò becomes his apprentice, eventually taking over as the cinema's projectionist.

Totò grows up and falls in love with a girl from the North. The romance ends in heartbreak and Totò leaves Sicily for Rome, being told by Alfredo never to come back while he (Alfredo) is still alive. Totò keeps his promise and returns only many years later — after having become a successful film producer, albeit leading a very empty personal life to attend Alfredo's funeral. He finds that as a parting gift Alfredo has put together all the "out-takes" into one whole beautiful film. It is at this moment that we get the impression that Totò has finally "come home".

This film is a celebration of the history of cinema and the love of films, but also explores in a very poignant manner what it means to leave home and how this process can leave one feeling displaced until

2 Dreamworks LLC 2001.
3. Dreamworks LLC 2004.
4. Miramax Films 1989.

one is able to return and make sense of one's past. Finding one's way back home may ultimately also entail an attempt to make sense of the very different and often apparently dissonant "out-takes" of one's life.

This process of finding meaning may lead to spiritual and psychological liberation. McGoldrick (1998: 216) 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.

Maya Angelou (1986: 54), 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". However, she believes that because of issues of class, gender and race, most people have never had this experience, as "home" is not in fact a safe place.

The link between finding "home" and achieving some kind of resolution may be important. This idea may resonate with the use of O'Reilly Byrne & McCarthy (1998: 389) of the concept of the "fifth province" of Irish mythology, used to describe a place of imagination and possibility, where conflicts may be resolved through dialogue. These authors make use of this term in a therapeutic context as an approach to dealing with diversity in an ethical manner, but 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" (Rubenstein 2001: 2), family therapists such as Framo (1976: 193), who have focused on the importance of one's family of origin, have argued quite strongly that one can and should "go home again". DiNicola (1997: 327) is of the opinion that we in fact never leave our home, but carry it with us wherever we go, just as a snail is bound to its shell. This idea is reminiscent of the words of Paolo Friere (1994: 32):

> 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.

At this point it is apparent that the process being explored here is intricate and almost impossible to encapsulate in a single verb, and at times even difficult to define at all. 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; on the other, the "longing for home" is also an idealised and abstract concept containing a number of fantasies relating to resolution, the end of conflict and a yearning for a place of safety where we can truly belong. Ultimately, and very significantly, this concept will have different meanings for different people and cultures. It must be understood as a complex phenomenon which, although containing very powerful individual elements and experiences, is simultaneously situated in a number of larger contexts such as one's family of origin, one's community, and one's culture, as well as being influenced by other social phenomena.

2. The relationship between identity and "home"

Strongly linked to finding a sense of belonging and home is the question of personal identity. McGoldrick (1993: 333) argues that our sense of personal and even cultural identity is closely linked to the concept of "home", while Magat (1999: 120) also maintains that "home" can provide us with a centre, which is the indispensable origin of our identity.

The nature and scope of the concept of identity have been widely debated (cf Sampson 1993: 1219-30), and the debate often reflects the tensions between modernist and postmodernist approaches. The former emphasises a well-defined sense of self and identity, seen as:

> a bounded, unique, more-or-less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment and action, organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against other such wholes and against a social and natural background (Geertz 1979: 229).

Postmodern views place more emphasis on the role played by social structures and processes in the formation of self and identity, as well as exploring the historical and ideological practices that inform them, as exemplified in the work of Foucault (1988a: 16-49, 1988b: 145-62). From this perspective, the self is a more fluid concept, strongly influenced by one's social contexts and experiences.

McGoldrick (1998: 7) encourages a perspective on identity that focuses firstly on one's uniqueness as an individual, secondly on the various group identities that define who one is in relation to others, or give one a sense of "home", and thirdly on the common partnership one shares with other human beings.

Personal identity is, therefore, influenced by various levels of experience while also influencing our relationships with a number of contexts. Native Americans believe that one finds completion only in relation to others and by having a respect for one's past as well as for place (Rubenstein 2001: 44). This may be a powerful acknowledgement of the significance of our roots, both physical and historical, as well as of the role of other people in shaping who one is.

Who one is and how one defines oneself are inextricably linked to where one comes from, where one finds oneself, and where one may be going. One must make sense of these different levels of experience in order to develop a sense of one's identity and find out where one truly belongs. However, the goal of this process should not be to achieve a fixed, one-dimensional sense of identity, as the journey is closely linked to one's social and historical experiences. Rather, one must make sense of, and find meaning in the many ambiguities and contradictions that often inform who one is.

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.

3. The family-of-origin and "home"

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

However, our families are a strong point of reference from which we learn what it means to belong (and sometimes also to be different). Furthermore, they provide the first context from which we develop our

own personal identity. The family is, after all, where we first get a name, along with a surname or family name which links us to people and to previous generations.

It is in the context of our families, too, that we acquire much of what is known as culture, which is also an important determinant of personal identity. Since these concepts are so closely interlinked, this relationship will now be briefly explored.

3.1 The relationship between culture and families

The debate surrounding the concept of culture is a highly complex one. On the one hand defining what culture is may seem very simple — mere common sense — as it is so intrinsic to our daily experience and how we operate in our world. On the other hand any choice of definition will reflect a certain theoretical orientation and be influenced by issues of power and social discourse. However as Laird (1998: 30) reminds us,"we cannot escape culture; we can only try to meet it on its own terms".

Much of the debate around the term of culture is centred on the postmodern critique of its more traditional conceptualisations, which are perceived to be easily abused to disguise dominant power discourses, excluding those "others" who are different. An example of a more modern approach would be that of Helman (1994: 2), who sees culture as a set of guidelines (implicit and explicit) that individuals inherit as members of a particular society, indicating how to view the world, how to experience it emotionally and how to behave in it with regard to other people, supernatural forces or gods, or the natural environment. Laird's (1998: 19-20) postmodern approach has quite a different emphasis:

> [...] culture [...] is an individual and social construction, a constantly evolving and changing set of meanings that can be understood only in the context of a narrativized past, a co-interpreted present, and a wished-for future. It is always contextual, improvisational, transformational, and political; above all, it is a matter of linguistics or of languaging, of discourse. It is meaning-defined and itself definitional and constitutive.

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 all have similar values, norms and behaviours, resulting in an attitude that focuses on difference beween groups and may lead to stereotyping.

Thus postmodern thinkers reject the traditional idea of culture as a static, fixed concept without taking into consideration the strong social and historical elements that in fact influence and transform it. They criticise traditional views, which may disguise certain ideologies used to protect some groups' rights and privileges at the expense of other "cultures". South Africa provides us with a very tragic example of how an attempt to emphasise the supremacy of one culture proved to be to the total detriment of other people.

Psychology, and family therapy in particular, have long struggled with the issue of culture as it relates specifically to the therapeutic context. Does one need "special knowledge" of other cultures in order to work as a therapist in multicultural contexts? Can a therapist from a certain cultural background ever be effective with a family from a different background? Can a therapist use his/her own ethical norms to judge behaviours that reflect cultural values different from his/her own?

Taken to the extreme, a postmodern position on these questions holds that "culture" does not really exist, as argued by Friedman (1980: 429-60), who sees it as a "camouflage" used by the family as a red herring to hide away its real problems. Montalvo & Gutierrez (1983: 16) believe that family therapists do not need any special knowledge of other cultures and that if one is a good listener, what is relevant about "culture" will become apparent.

However, McGoldrick (1993: 335) argues that by pretending that there are no patterns unique to specific cultures we are merely mystifying and disqualifying human experience and that this will perpetuate negative stereotypes. The danger of stereotyping is of course seen as the natural consequence of an approach that focuses strongly on the "uniqueness" and peculiarity of cultures.

Falicov's (1995) argument 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, may be somewhat helpful in solving this dilemma. She advocates what she calls a "multidimensional comparative framework" in an attempt to look for "large categories which encompass connections as well as variations across groups" (Falicov 1995: 377).

Schutzenberger (2002: 97), on the other hand, argues that we are all in fact "cultural hybrids", as we are the always the product of the mixture of two different families or cultures: those of our mothers and our fathers. Even when the two families are similar with regard to factors such as race, religion, social status and so forth, there will still be noticeable differences. It is likely that one family will become more dominant in the life of a couple, while the other will represent the "excluded" culture. This interesting perspective allows for the fact that we may be more "culturally flexible" than we think and thus able to negotiate and move between different cultures.

Paré (1995: 12) views families as "storying cultures". He bases this concept on the use of the word culture by Howard (1991: 190), 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" — hence the "family-as-culture". Similarly, DiNicola (1997: 5) believes that the life of a family represents a private world with its own expressive language, 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 shaping an individual, as well as the claims they make with regard to his/her identity. The development of a cultural identity is accompanied by a cultural "costume" made up of the sayings and the mythology of the larger community in which the family lives and which also defines that family's experience (DiNicola 1997: 29). Similarly, McGoldrick (2003: 331) explores the link between ethnicity and the family:

> [A] group's common ancestry through which individuals have evolved shared values and customs [...] is deeply tied to the family, through which it is transmitted over generations, and it is reinforced [...] by the surrounding community.

She also emphasises the role that ethnicity plays in influencing the manner in which we think, feel and behave, in both obvious and subtle ways. It also influences a number of our daily activities such as what we eat, how we work, how we relate to others, how we celebrate holidays and rituals, and how we deal with issues like life, death and illness (McGoldrick 1993: 335).

Consequently, once we move outside our family of origin, we are moving into a foreign "culture". DiNicola (1997: 29) argues that, as we

move outside our family context, some things that were familiar to us can become foreign. Consequently every door that opens 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 the 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: 29).

This metaphor of a dance is useful insofar as it implies motion and also a certain discomfort, both useful concepts as we attempt to view the process that informs culture.

In the final analysis it is most likely that we all have a sense of the accepted cultural norms in the context within which we grew up and that in which we now live. These may not always be useful, and we may not always agree with them, but they undeniably influence our behaviours in a specific social context. Therefore they must be taken into consideration when observing human behaviour.

It also important to consider that recognising and appreciating uniqueness and difference will not necessarily lead to stereotyping and prejudice as is often feared. Denying difference between people, as an extreme form of political correctness, may lead to what Andolfi calls "globalisation of mind".[5] The phenomenon of globalisation seems increasingly to take away the pecularities and richness of the cultural heritages unique to different countries. The dilemma is often that 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: 29). Seeking out universalities and commonalities may be a useful exercise in that it may be the beginning of dialogue between different people and it introduces a critical element to any belief that one has an absolute graps of any "one truth", but it should not become a means of ignoring differences between people. Lichtenberg reminds us that ultimately, for most of us, cultural belonging is extremely important as it gives us a sense of feeling at home in this world, and although we may look at other cultures and often appreciate their "superior virtues", we still treasure the familiarity that is our own culture gives us (Hedetoft 2004: 27).

5. Personal communication, 6 July 2005.

Berry (1986: 37-51) tells us that in a multicultural society all groups maintain and develop their own group identities. It also helps to develop other-group acceptance and tolerance and to engage in intergroup contact and sharing and learning of each other's language. O'Reilly Byrne & McCarthy (1998: 387) believe that it is essential to think in a multicultural manner, otherwise one runs the danger of "silencing" minority groups in the context of politically and culturally dominant discourses. They do, however, warn that it is essential to acknowledge that there is always an interplay with dominant cultural narratives. DiNicola (1997: 85) argues that it is more useful to move away from homogenising metaphors to those of a mosaic, or a tapestry, or a rainbow. This latter was of course the metaphor adopted by bishop Tutu at the inauguration of president Mandela, to describe the spirit of the new South Africa.

Our approach when dealing with cultural diversity should rather be to foster a sense of curiosity, as opposed to mere tolerance (DiNicola 1997), as the latter will keep us closed up in our own worlds (Andolfi 1997: 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 cognisant that every other person, every other family, and every other community will contain an element of unfamiliarity, yet may be worth knowing.

3.2 The contributions of family therapy

Having explored the important role that the family plays in the context of culture, it will be useful to examine the contributions of family therapy towards the issues of "home" and belonging.

Although family therapy should in no way be seen as a homogeneous discipline, as there are major theoretical differences among its exponents, all approaches are in a way 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: 326) and in need of re-writing.

Essentially, issues of belonging and going back home may be closely related to the relationship between an adult individual and his or her family of origin. A number of family therapists have made important contributions to this theme. Jay Haley (1980), one of the pioneers in the field of strategic therapy, wrote a book on the phenomenon of leaving home, focusing on the family dynamics at play during the sensitive transition of the adolescent.

Murray Bowen (1978: 467-528) provides some far-reaching insights into the relationship between the individual and the family, describing in detail the process that each person must go through when leaving the parental home. He looks at achieving a balance between the experiences of belonging and separation, with the dual goal of adult development being individuation from one's family of origin and becoming a differentiated individual. The concept of differentiation, describing the way in which people come into their own as independent beings separate from their families, finds its roots in psychoanalytical and psychodynamic writing. It was originally used to describe the manner in which an individual child would go through a process from initial symbiosis with the mother to perceiving himself/herself as a separate being (Mahler *et al* 1975).

In an effort to explain individual functioning from a systemic perspective, Bowen (1978: 467-528) asserts that the capacity for autonomy on the one hand and emotional connection on the other, are necessary for maturity and optimal personal adjustment. Bowen's systemic conceptualisation of the differentiation of self sees it as embodying the dialectic between the two life forces of togetherness/connection and independence/autonomy. It is the ability to find a balance between achieving an autonomous sense of self and maintaining close connections with important others, most importantly one's family (Skowron 2004: 447-9).

Thus, 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. In order to truly find home, one may sometimes be forced to leave it. Unless one has an opportunity to explore the world beyond it and to confront other views and cultures, one may never truly find out where one belongs.

Differentiation must therefore not be seen as a total disconnection from home leading to separateness and isolation. It should rather be seen as a process through which one can come back and have deeper and more meaningful relationships with those one left behind, and equal weight is given to autonomy and emotional connectedness (McGoldrick & Carter 1999: 35).

Williamson & Bray (1988: 359), in their work on family development and change across the generations, define in more depth the concept of individual differentiation as the degree to which a person is able to control his/her thoughts and feelings, as well as to discriminate between thoughts and emotions; to respect his/her own judgements as a sufficient basis for his/her actions, and ultimately to take responsibility for the consequences of those actions. When it comes to other relationships, differentiation refers to the degree to which a person is able to function in a manner that is autonomous and self-directed. They also introduce the idea of "family differentiation", where a family allows its members a certain amount of independence and autonomy (Williamson & Bray 1988: 359).

By contrast, poorly differentiated individuals are emotionally reactive, finding it difficult to remain calm in response to the emotionality of others. They engage in fusion with or emotional detachment from others when under stress or experiencing overwhelming anxiety, which is characteristic of those who do not have a clear sense of who they are or of self and who are emotionally over-conected. This results in two types of family interactions; the individual can either function in a very dependent manner or engage in emotional detachment from the family-of-origin as a way of getting away but never resolving the issues of differentiation.

The views of Williamson & Bray (1988: 358) on leaving the parental home reflect a multigenerational perspective on the family which considers how interactional patterns develop and are passed on across generations. They propose that an adult must simultaneously address two important psychosocial issues: how to leave the parental home psychologically and how to stay connected to, and intimate with, the "former parents" (Williamson 1981: 441-52).

In essence, an adult must give up "the need-to-be-parented", establish a peer relationship with his or her parents, and essentially ter-

minate the intergenerational hierarchical boundary (Framo 1992: 111-28). Eventually he or she must be able to integrate his or her own history and heritage while simultaneously being able to transcend the emotionality of the family (Williamson & Bray 1988: 366).

Williamson (1982: 309) makes use of the construct of personal authority in the family system (PAFS) as a way of synthesising the inherent tension between differentiation and intimacy, the latter being the ability to maintain closeness while preserving clear boundaries for the self. The construct of PAFS should be seen as a continuum with personal authority at the one end and intergenerational intimidation (which implies a very hierarchical position of an adult parent keeping an adult son or daughter in the position of a child) at the other. When personal authority is achieved, one is able to reconnect and achieve intimacy with one's family of origin while operating from a differentiated position within it. This dual state creates a simultaneous consciousness of "being different from" and yet "belonging with" the family of origin (Williamson & Bray 1988: 363).

In his significant contributions to the field of intergenerational therapy, Framo (1976: 193) argues very poignantly that one "can and should go home again" and believes that many marital and family difficulties are elaborations of the relationship problems of the spouses' families-of-origin. If both spouses can go back and deal directly with past and present issues in their own families-of-origin, there is a possibility for change in their present situation. Going back home can therefore be seen as a resolution of unaddressed family-of-origin issues.

With specific regard to the training of professional psychologists, it may be important to provide a context in the training process which allows students to work with family-of-origin issues. This may also be of relevance for professional psychologists already in practice. Genograms and family sculpting may provide an extremely useful approach to these issues. A genogram is a graphic picture of a family's history and patterns which allows us to see its structure, demographics, functioning and relationships (McGoldrick 1999: 47), 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). It is essential for professional psychologists to reflect on and regularly redefine their position within their family-of-origin, making

sense of those relationships before commencing their work as therapists to other families. Framo (1976: 208) argues in this respect that the presence of the "ghosts" of the family of the therapist is often a significant but unnoticed element in family and marital therapies, is. In the final analysis, it is not possible to ignore our history as it is part of who we are. Any attempt to bury it may in fact make it more powerful (McGoldrick 1999: 48).

An added value of genograms may be their cultural significance in the training of postgraduate psychology students (Marchetti-Mercer & Cleaver 2000: 76). Talking about their families and the cultural values embodied in those stories creates a context within which students from different cultural backgrounds can learn about each other and in a way create a new cultural/training context.

All the theories discussed thus far emphasise a process of moving away or differentiating from one's home. It would be correct to ask whether this emphasis on differentiation while trying to stay connected is not more of a Western idea, which may not be truly relevant to other cultures. McGoldrick & Carter (1999: 35) argue that Bowen's theory does not address the fact that women and black people have more often than not been socialised in an oppressive manner which did not encourage the assertive, self-directed thinking, required for differentiation. Therefore, while differentiation may be encouraged and praised in white males, this may be not the case for women and black people. However, McGoldrick & Carter agree that Bowen was the first in the field to acknowledge that autonomy and emotional connectedness are equally important for differentiation.

In general, non-Western cultures and societies tend to value a more communal sense of identity, reflecting a tendency to feel: "We are, therefore I am" (McGoldrick 1993: 335). The same spirit is reflected in the concept of *ubuntu*, a term used in several African languages, which in essence refers to the fact that one's humanity is affirmed by recognising the humanity of others and establishing respectful human relations with them (Ramose 1999: 193-4). One is therefore a person through other people. This once again highlights the fact that the concept of "belonging" may have different degrees of importance for different people and communities.

Having explored a number of dimensions linked to the concept of “home”, it is now important to explore its relevance in the South African context.

4. Looking for “home” in South Africa

All the levels of experience discussed thus far may be relevant to the South African context. Now, more than ever, the people of this country may be struggling to define their identity with regard to their segregated past, their multicultural present and their often uncertain future.

Ambiguity and discomfort are surely an inherent part of the experience of the people of a multicultural nation with eleven official languages, where the overwhelming majority does not even use its mother-tongue to communicate with others. This makes the issue of language particularly salient. Isaiah Berlin’s comment on the emotional importance of a nation’s language seems to capture the South African dilemma:

> [T]he protection and defence of a nation’s language is such a deeply emotional nationalist cause, 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 (Ignatieff 1994: 7).

For most South Africans this experience is restricted to specific communities and is neither a national nor even a daily experience. Although the issue of language is easily abused as political expediency, often at the expense of other people’s rights, one can neither deny nor ignore the deep psychological meaning that it has in the life of every individual and group.

In their attempt to create a home out of this country, South Africans are experiencing a number of conflicting transitions. For decades the majority did not feel as if they belonged in the country of their birth; they now have to redefine their identity, from second-class to fully equal citizens. A number of people who went into exile for fear of their lives have now returned to a country which may feel quite unfamiliar to them. 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".

Every person, every family, every community and every culture is thus facing the issues of belonging and finding a "home" in this new South Africa. This search is, however, not restricted to the realm of "identity politics", which — if one follows the various debates in the media on the question of who is truly African, especially with regard to the identity of the Afrikaner — seems to be a salient concern. Hedetoft (2004: 23) argues that the apparent popularity of the focus on the concept of belonging is strongly linked to a postmodern world characterised by more fluid borders and types of migration, as well as globalisation. Describing the processes inherent in migration, Hedetoft (2004) argues that ethnic and minority groups are increasingly debating the issue of dual/multiple belonging, while recipient 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 their new society. This process may have similarities to the South African context, where an inherent tension may exist between the conditions for belonging laid down at the national/societal level and the experiences of individuals struggling between their language and their national identity.

Every South African today has to define for himself or herself what "home" means to him or her, and whether he or she truly belongs 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 implies a bilateral process, as argued by Christiansen & Hedtoft (2004: 2-3), because it implies both that individuals should be able to identify with a certain type of community and that a community should 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. This emphasis on the relationship between individual and context reminds us again that belonging can never merely be an internal or an individual concern. One cannot belong to a place, to a community, even to a family or a relationship that does not welcome one's presence and to some extent accommodate one's psychological and other more

concrete needs. Furthermore, belonging is not merely restricted to blood ties or ethnic roots but also refers to a sense of commitment, loyalty and ultimately emotional connection with the " home" one has chosen. Many countries treat immigrants, exiles and refugees as outsiders or even outcasts and at best merely tolerate their presence. Tolerance of difference is not sufficient to create a sense of home. The definitions of "home" discussed earlier highlighted the fact that achieving a sense of safety and resolution were often important elements. Finding one's home in South Africa may be closely linked to such ideas, however one may express them.

As the issue of belonging and home will have different meanings for different people, these different experiences will be discussed separately.

As has been pointed out, prior to 1994 the majority of South Africans did not feel "at home" in the country of their birth. The struggle for liberation may thus be seen as an attempt not only to gain political rights but also to lay claim to one's "home". During the apartheid era many people left the country for political reasons; many black and white people were forced into exile, fearing arrest or even death, especially after certain politically explosive events such as occurred at Sharpeville in the 1960s and during the Soweto uprisings of 1976. A number of young white men also left the country in order to avoid conscription. For all these, there was no possibility of returning to the country of their birth until a change in the political system had taken place. This all created a very specific group of people, many of whom returned after 1994. Some of them may even have been born abroad but nonetheless still considered South Africa their home.

Steyn *et al* (2000) carried out a study on the experiences of returning South African exiles at the University of Cape Town. They make the very relevant point that the South African exiles are not a homogeneous group, as they comprise a number of different types of people, from those who feared death to those who left by choice as professionals. Their research reveals that South African exiles also had very different and ambivalent feelings towards "home". The concept involved on the one hand a fear of returning and on the other hand an idealised view of what the eventual return might entail.

Steyn *et al* (2000) argue that the exiles' attitude towards home was complex and somewhat ambiguous. Home, or South Africa, was seen

as the focus of their work and energy while abroad, and they had a number of fantasies about what "home" would look like when they returned. There was a sense that a return home was merely deferred, not yet accessible. There seemed to be a complex dynamic between enmeshment with home and alienation from it. Bernstein (1994: xvii) also argues that the exile experience of South Africans during the apartheid era was uniquely different from the accepted understanding of exile, in that they saw themselves as part of the continuing struggle back home, as opposed to having left in the aftermath of a lost war or failed revolution. It is also important to note that the three different decades produced different types of exiles, reflecting different political periods. A further interesting phenomenon is that whereas people generally leave their country in family groups, most South African exiles left as individuals and some were unable to make contact with their families for many years (Bernstein 1994: xvii). The impact of this on family life was enormous.

Coming back "home" was also extremely difficult: Steyn *et al* (2000: 44-5) describe the process of re-adjustment as acutely stressful and complex. Grinberg & Grinberg (1989: 176-83) argue that ultimately no return is simply a return; it is in fact a new migration. Neither those who return nor those who stayed behind are the same, as both have felt the impact of the separation and in some way might reproach the other as having abandoned them. Steyn *at al* (2000: 44-5) believe that the comlexity and complications of the relationship to "home" while in exile make the return very intense, characterised by conflict. Exiles who fought to bring about the political changes that could allow them to return, may have ended up feeling like strangers in their own country.

Not only people who have been in exile struggle to fund a sense of belonging within South Africa. Many black people who had hoped for a major social and economic transformation in their lives, and to feel for the first time true citizens of their country, have seen few practical changes in their day-to-day living. They still bear the brunt of racist attitudes which continue to make them feel like second-class citizens in their country of birth.

In post-apartheid context, 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: 4). Many young white people leave the country after

completing their tertiary education and many South African families have been deeply affected by having their children scattered all over the world. The main destinations for South Africans seem to be Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Britain and the USA (Goldin 2002: 4).

For those who have stayed behind, specifically for many white Afrikaners, the struggle with issues such as defending language rights and culture in the midst of a society which they perceive to be hostile and threatening to their sense of "home" is also significant.

A large part of the white population has strong European roots and represents fairly recent immigration to this country (ranging from first- to third-generation immigrants). This latter group is of particular interest as many were born in South Africa yet hold a second passport, indicative of an allegiance to another country, to other roots. However, these are people who have contributed much to this country and as a result have strong emotional and economic attachments.

After the 1994 elections the analogy of a rainbow nation, where different "colours" living side-by-side produce a beautiful whole, was very appealing and provided a unifying image for a nation deeply divided. It invited all South Africans to be part of a new nation and allowed all people to feel as if they belonged in the "new South Africa". Thirteen years later one may want to ask whether the invitation has become reality and what still needs to be done in order to make a true "home" out of this country. The increasing phenomenon of refugees from other parts of Africa brings unique problems often giving rise to xenophobia.

The ideal of multiple belonging — feeling that one belongs to multiple settings in different ways (Christiansen & Hedetoft 2004: 11) — may hold very true for most South Africans, who have strong cultural and ethnic roots associated with the communities of which they form part through birth, but also a sense of 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, may help us greatly in dealing with the complex context of which we are part. Turner's (1969: 95) use of the concept of liminality may be helpful in this regard. He argues:

> 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.

The power of this position may lie in the possibilities inherent in taking an insider/outsider position, which does not necessarily imply marginality (DiNicola 1997).

Ultimately, finding the "fifth province", as described earlier, may remain the pursuit of all those who live in this country.

5. Finding our "home" in a postmodern world

In conclusion, finding a place called "home" in a postmodern world may not mean only one place and may necessitate a more flexible approach; it may in fact require a constant movement between taking an outsider or insider position. We may have to develop multiple centres and have access to alternative systems of meaning (Magat 1999: 120). It is perhaps only in movement and multiplicity that we will eventually find our "home", rather than just security and constancy. This does not diminish the fact that there will always be places on this earth that feel safe and make us feel connected to those who came before us. However, ultimately more than just one place may have this effect.

McGoldrick & Giordano (1996: 8) argue that we are in reality all migrants and move constantly throughout our lives. Moving beyond what is safe and known into the unknown can be very frightening, yet it may allow us to encounter and experience new homes.

We all play a very crucial role in creating our own "home" and finding our sense of belonging. Birth and blood ties, which consist of our past, our family-of-origin and our culture, are only a part of this process. The possibility also exists that over the course of our lives we will find something quite unique and quite different from where we started. Our "home" may change over time, and this change may be painful and forced, or voluntary and exhilarating. It may ultimately be connected not only to a physical place or a geographical space, but also 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.

Consequently our quest for "home" may not be just our own individual endeavour and may require collaboration with others in order to create a community in which very different people feel they belong. It must never be at the cost of other people.

We may ultimately have different "homes," rather like summer or winter residences, and we may have to move between these to suit the different seasons of our lives. This does not render either less precious. In the final analysis, the ability to live with movement, with liminality, and with having to negotiate between being an outsider and being an insider are all part of the experience of living in this country, in this globalised world, at this time in history.

Now more then ever we are called upon to live with ambiguities, complexities and discomfort. The place or places we call "home" will have to accommodate all of these.

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