OUT OF CONTEXT: IDENTITY RUPTURE AND REPAIR

IN SELF-EXILED WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS

By

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Abstract

Cultural dislocation potentially poses a number of threats to the dislocated individual’s previously established sense of self. For the self-exile (who is nominally free to remain in her or his country of origin but chooses—both for reasons of conscience and a desire to escape—to leave) this occurs, in large part, because of context interruption (Barudy, 1989), the loss of the socio-cultural milieu in which the self-exile’s identity was created and maintained. A qualitative, phenomenological approach (using a case study method) was utilized to explore the experience and meaning of self-exile for white, English-speaking South Africans living in Canada and to examine the impact of cultural dislocation on the self-exiled person’s sense of self (identity). Identity was defined as self-narrative, jointly created by the individual and the culture in which he or she lives. Three co-researchers (two women and one man) who were self-exiled from South Africa participated in this study. During individual in-depth interviews which were audiotaped, the co-researchers described their experience of self-exile from the time that they had made the decision to leave South Africa up until a point where they felt they had come to terms with living in Canada. A comparative analysis was conducted to uncover structural and thematic commonalities. The self-exile experience was seen to be structured as a story with a beginning, middle, and end, which structure resembled a rite of passage, with three sequential but overlapping phases: separation, transition, and incorporation (van Gennep, 1965). The beginning and middle (separation and transition) were marked by themes of exclusion and personal deficiency, the transition by a denial of (cultural) identity, while the end (incorporation) involved a reversal of these themes, narrative resolution being achieved through a sense of inclusion, increased self-worth and identity acceptance.
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Trout Lake, where many of the ideas for this thesis were born, and where I often sought escape and refreshment of spirit whenever this project overwhelmed me.
To my son, Eli,

who will grow up in a world free of apartheid
The incorrigible sorrow of all prisoners and exiles...is to live in company with a memory that serves no purpose....Hostile to the past, impatient of the present and cheated of the future.

Albert Camus, *The Plague*

The worst aspect of exile is that distance, in time and place, drains a place from our memory. That which remains in our thoughts no longer exists on firm ground: it grows, it changes without us. There is no escape from this, except to construct, like Robinson Crusoe, an icon of that place elsewhere.

Alberto Manguel, *Out of Place*

Home is not only the place from which we start, but that to which we must inevitably return.

William Barrett, *Irrational Man*
CHAPTER I
Introduction

Statement Of the Problem

Exile, banishment from one's homeland, is as old as humankind itself. Or as old, at least, as human mythology. The stories of Adam and Eve, Cain, Oedipus: these archetypal, proscriptive tales of expulsion form central narratives in Judaeo-Christian and Western culture. Yet it is not just in tales of antiquity that the displaced individual remains a potent symbol. Although the exile may no longer hold mythological status in a largely secular, materialist world, war and political repression, endemic in this century, has made of the exile a particularly appropriate motif for our own age, "indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration" (Said, 1984, p. 159).

For those who, for whatever reason, leave their homeland and move to another country, the process of "adjusting to a new cultural context, inevitably challenges, confuses, threatens, and invalidates, to varying degrees, [their] previously achieved sense of identity" (Ishiyama, 1989, p. 57). This is as true for those who voluntarily relocate, e.g. emigrants (Polyzoi, 1985; Taft, 1977), foreign students (Ishiyama, 1989), and other temporary sojourners (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Oberg, 1960), as it is for those forcibly dislocated, viz. refugees (Chan & Lam, 1987; Schonmeier, 1987; Weiss & Parish, 1989) and political exiles (Barudy, 1989; Rocha Lima, 1984).

For those who choose to move to another country, problems of identity change and maintenance may be experienced due to culture shock (Adler, 1985; Oberg, 1960), self-shock (Zaharna, 1989), or personal invalidation (Ishiyama, 1989, 1991). Involuntary relocatees will likely confront not only these difficulties, but may also suffer from further synergistically...
interrelated psychological, socio-cultural, and physiological stresses (Scudder & Colson, 1982), involving possible psychosomatic problems (Shisana & Celentano, 1987), psychotic episodes, depression, suicide and violence (Williams, Garcia-Peltoniemi, & Ben-Porath, 1988), prolonged grieving (Pollock, 1988), marital and family difficulties (Agger & Jensen, 1989; Gilad, 1990), and excessive guilt (Gonsalves, 1990). Any or all of these may pose a threat to the integrity of the self.

Some researchers (Adler, 1975; Ishiyama 1991) have also pointed out the potential for cultural transition to occasion positive change by providing "opportunities for personal growth and increasing awareness of self in a bicultural or multicultural context " (Ishiyama, p. 5).

Although there is growing awareness of the adjustment and adaptation difficulties (and potentialities) which exist for both those who choose, and those who are forced, to relocate, there is little or nothing in the psychological literature which explores the experiences of those who do not fall clearly into either of these categories: the self-exiled.

**Self-exile: a definition.** Historically the term "exile" was used to refer to expulsion as a result of a sin or crime committed (Cain) or even in anticipation of a wrong yet to be perpetrated (Oedipus). Exile functioned as both punishment for offenders and as a powerful threat to potential transgressors. Although, sometimes, the condition of exile spurred the individual to great achievements (May, 1991; Said, 1984), "exile generally destroyed the psychic life of the person exiled; he was broken literally [sic] by being without a country" (May, p. 52).

However, in a cynical age wary of political authority, the meaning of exile has been altered, partially inverted, in the process becoming more acceptable. Rather than being a
broken figure, justly punished, someone to be despised, feared, pitied, the exile has acquired romantic, even exemplary status (Gordimer, 1989; Said, 1984).

This romanticization of exile persists even though "exile as a mode of genius no longer exists" (Gordimer, 1989, p. 288) and "the achievements of exile...are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement" (Said, 1984, p. 159). Exile is as likely, perhaps more likely, to stunt and thwart a person's sense of self, as it is to deepen and enrich it, creating individuals with "amputated sensibilities" (Gordimer, p. 288). (It is, however, important to remember that cultural dislocation can foster as well as hamper personal growth.)

The various meanings of the term exile have been further complicated by the existence of a hybridized, hyphenated category of exile: "self-imposed exile" or, simply, "self-exiled". These terms are, to some extent, oxymorons, the voluntariness implied by the word "self" contradicted by the word "exile" which follows. These terms have, in the same romantic spirit noted above, been applied to artists (like James Joyce) not formally expelled from their home countries, nor even, necessarily, having fled in fear of persecution, but who chose to leave and to not return to their country of origin.¹

Such terminological confusion has led some researchers (e.g. Rocha Lima, 1984) to ignore the differences and lump the varieties of exile together. It is, however, precisely the distinctions that are important. The crux of the difference between the "true" exile and the self-exile lies in the degree and type of choice involved. Unlike the refugee or "true" exile, forced out by government decree and, equally, unlike like the emigrant who leaves primarily out of a desire for improvement or change, the self-exiled person is, in strictly legal terms,

¹ I have used the term "country of origin" throughout to denote the place which the self-exile has left regardless of whether or not she was born there.
free to stay but feels compelled to leave, in part by political or moral belief, in part by a
desire to escape. (Although I recognize that none of these definitions of the various
dislocated groups is "pure" and that there are areas of overlap, I believe that, in general, the
categories hold true.)

The self-exile thus occupies a uniquely ambiguous position. Legally and otherwise
able to stay in his country, in large part wanting to remain he, nonetheless, decides to leave,
both as a form of moral and political protest and as a flight from, what feels to him to be,
an intolerable social and/or political environment. The contradictions and anguish inherent
in this position were eloquently expressed by one of the participants in this study who
described his self-exile as a "a wound that was, in part, self inflicted but [one made] without
any choice".

Self exile is, then, by its very nature, an ambivalent act. Unable to "reconcile the
irreconcilable within himself" (Gordimer, 1982, p. 278), to fight (or continue to fight) for
change within his own country, the individual flees. But whereas the "true" exile is usually
expelled as the result of some political act, for the self-exiled person, exile may itself be an
act of protest. As a challenge to the status quo, however, it is, probably, largely ineffectual.
It may be perceived (both by the self-exile and by others) as, simultaneously, a gesture of
defiance and one of futility, a statement of solidarity with the downtrodden and an act of
abandonment and betrayal. This is the legacy of ambiguity which the self-exile takes with
her into her adoptive country.

The distinction between the various types of dislocated persons (immigrants, refugees,
exiles, self-exiles) is also one of temporality, of how time is experienced. While the
emigrant, on the journey to her adoptive home, is transformed into an immigrant—from
someone leaving into someone arriving—the exile continues to be defined in relation to what
he has left, even after arrival in a new country. And although people are not simply determined by their labels (the immigrant may remain locked in the past, the exile\(^2\) may develop a sense of the future) the terms by which we are identified often express some inherent truth about the conditions of our lives.

So, while the immigrant, with the occasional glance back, is more likely to look and move forward into the future, the refugee or exile often gazes longingly into the past while backing into the future (Westwood & Lawrance, 1990; Zwingmann, cited in Chan & Lam, 1987). Those, like some exiles, who live lives in which past and future are inverted can be considered to be among "the unhappiest" of people (Crites, 1986, p. 152, following Kierkegaard).

**Rationale for, and Approach to, the Study**

Because of the unique position occupied by the self-exile amongst dislocated groups, it seems likely that, while the self-exiled person will face some of the same threats to the self as those confronted by both the emigrant and the "true" exile, it is probably also true that she will have to deal with issues that are particular to her own situation. Given the unique ambiguities of self-exile, such issues as guilt, ambivalence (Westwood & Lawrance, 1990), and shame, for example, will likely be experienced differently than they are by either the immigrant or the refugee. This thesis examines the effects and processes of identity change in a particular self-exiled group: white, English-speaking South Africans living in Canada.

The focus on one particular racial group is not intended as a racist distinction, but

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\(^2\) Here, and hereafter, I have used the term exile in its broadest sense to refer to all dislocated people who are not strict immigrants. Where a distinction is intended between different types of exile I have used the terms "refugee", "true exile", or "self-exile".
rather reflects the racist reality within South Africa. Possibilities for people of colour to leave South Africa under their own volition were, and still are, severely limited financially and otherwise. Non-English speaking whites (i.e. Afrikaners) have in general chosen not to leave, having much closer ties to their country. For the most part it has been the white, English-speaking, middle-class who have chosen emigration or self-exile (Crapanzano, 1985). In addition, because of the divisions, structurally (and, until recently, legally), along racial and socio-linguistic lines within South African society, the lives of people in each of these various groups has been vastly different. Consequently, the experiences of cross-cultural dislocation would be very different for members of each of those groups.

Every culture is unique and the experience of cross-cultural dislocation differs depending on both the self-exile's culture of origin and his culture of adoption. A study the size of this one (relatively small), I believe can do more justice to its topic by examining the experience of a single cultural group than by a more generalized approach. The applicability of any findings to other groups (of self-exiles or of dislocated persons generally) might be tested through subsequent research.

Although much cross-cultural research recognizes that uprooting impacts upon identity, in most studies, what constitutes identity is often left undefined or simply implicit. This tends to limit fuller understanding of the ways in which, and processes by which, identity may be affected for the culturally displaced person. This thesis attempts to address this lack by incorporating a definition of identity as personal narrative or text, a definition taken from certain personological (Crites, 1986; McAdams, 1988a, 1988b, 1990; Sarbin, 1986), postmodernist (Gergen, 1988), and anthropological theories (Gagnon, 1992; Langness & Frank, 1981).

Implicit and, often, explicit in these approaches is the recognition that no narrative
is created in isolation. That is, each personal text exists in, and by virtue of, a larger context, the socio-cultural milieu which helps create and sustain a personal narrative. This interweaving or "interpenetration" (Bruner, 1983, p. 11) of text and context is recognized both in sociological research (Manis, 1971; Mead, 1934, 1970; Sampson, 1989; D’Andrade, 1990) and psychological literature (e.g. Erikson, 1959; Weinreich, 1988) as well as by some psychiatric approaches (e.g. Sullivan, 1947; Laing 1962).

Since a person's self-narrative is created and maintained within a socio-cultural context, uprooting, involving "context interruption" (Barudy, 1989, p. 724) will occasion a break in life story. If dislocation occasions self-narrative rupture, how is this experienced by the person? Can the person for whom such a break has occurred repair his sense of self? If so, how? That is, how can, and do, self-exiles pick up the severed threads of their life stories and weave them into new, coherent narratives following such a break? Or, put differently, how have self-exiled South Africans re-authored (White & Epston, 1990) their identities in a new, unfamiliar cultural milieu? These are the questions that follow from the research question which this thesis attempts to explore: "What is the experience and meaning of identity transformation for self-exiled, white South Africans?"

Just as cross-cultural research has tended to leave identity undefined, so the literature on identity as personal narrative has not examined identity change as a result of cultural dislocation. It is my hope that, by attempting to integrate these two areas of research, this study may contribute to both.

Although interviews for qualitative studies take place under the heading of research, I believe that the process of story-telling, regardless of its purpose, may also be therapeutic (Birren & Deutchman, 1991). (Where the researcher shares a common cultural history or life story with the co-researchers the therapeutic benefits may exist for both parties [Rocha-Lima,
1984].) This is due to the beneficial effects of "bearing witness" (Agger & Jensen, 1990) and of "making confession" as a means of expiating possible guilt and shame and achieving self-forgiveness. In the case of self-exiled South Africans, both the giving of testimony to their own personal struggles (as well as to the larger political struggle in South Africa), and relieving unresolved feelings about having "run away" from that struggle, may constitute important elements in the healing process.

**Personal Reflections**

Underlying any formal rationale for research are often significant personal reasons that the researcher has for pursuing his particular subject. This is certainly so in my case. Since leaving South Africa almost exactly 20 years ago I have struggled to come to terms with the effects of living away from the country where I was born and spent my formative years. When I left, as a young man, I had no inkling that I was leaving permanently; I was simply running away (or trying to), as much from my self as from the country.

For many years after leaving I denied or remained largely unaware of why or in what ways dislocation had impacted upon me. I saw my struggle to adjust to living in Canada as related mostly to personal issues and problems. Having grown up as a privileged person in a racially divided society with the attendant luxury of being able to leave, I tended to discount any difficulties or distress that I experienced at being away from my country and my community because, a) my problems were as nothing compared to the sufferings of South African blacks (both in South Africa and in exile) and, b) because as a white, person of European heritage (a cultural configuration which I shared with mainstream Canadian culture) I could not understand why, and therefore accept that, I would have difficulty adjusting to living here.
Nowhere, in my reading or elsewhere, did I come across anything that spoke to my experience. That is, until I entered the counselling program and began to read and hear about the effects of cultural dislocation. Even then, there was little that related directly to my experience. I encountered material on refugees, on immigrants, on student and work sojourners, but nothing on the peculiar twilight world of self-exile.

Yet despite my lack of understanding and my denial, certain feelings of alienation, guilt, longing, ambivalence, and shame persisted. Even when I started on this project I felt a tentativeness and ambivalence, a desire to hide or disguise my topic of research. I questioned the value and legitimacy of my focus, feeling that there were (and are) so many more serious problems in the world that needed dealing with, that the anguish of some uprooted but privileged white South Africans was insignificant. Like Lessing (1992) I saw that refusal, that inability to 'take in' [i.e. simply accept] my exclusion, as a symptom of innate babyishness: mine, and too, the inhabitants of privileged countries, safe countries, for there are more and more people in the world who have had to leave, been driven from, a country, the valley, the city they call home, because of war, plague earthquake, famine. (p. 13)

I felt embarrassed, a little ashamed at what seemed a self-indulgent project.

It is, of course, obvious that there are worse problems in the world than those experienced by me and other self-exiles. But as my research progressed I came to understand better the phenomenon of self-exile and the potential value, both personal and professional, of my researching in this area (and to also recognize the source of my reluctance to publicly acknowledge what I was doing). I realized that as an aspiring counsellor wanting to work in the area of cross-cultural counselling it is to the potential benefit of both my future clients and myself to have an understanding of my own experience of dislocation and of my cultural identity. The very fact that I felt some guilt and shame at undertaking this research perhaps spoke most eloquently to my need to explore it. If something is too uncomfortable to look
at perhaps it is that which most needs examining.

Serendipitously, this research neared completion at exactly the same time that South Africa was undergoing an historic change, the end of official apartheid and over 300 years of white domination, an end to the very conditions which I had fled. (Although I realize that one election does not undo all of history or its effects, this election did mean the end of the evil of legislatively sanctioned racial separation which was, in large part, what I was escaping.)

When I started on this thesis in 1993 (the actual research, that is, since the thinking had started some time before) South Africa was still under the yoke of apartheid although the winds of change were picking up. What had begun, some year earlier as a slight stirring had increased to a stiff breeze. As I approached the end of writing, a whirlwind was sweeping across South Africa, the country's first democratic, all-race election had just occurred and on the very morning on which I began writing the last segments of this study (May 10), Nelson Mandela, who had spent 27 years in prison for opposing apartheid, was inducted as the country’s first truly democratically elected president.

On that same day I opened the Manchester Guardian to see a review (Gevisser, 1994) of a book of interviews with South Africans in exile which seemed to give lie to the claim, which I had made in my literature review, that no such research existed. However, broadly speaking, my claim does still stand; while this book (Bernstein 1994) concerns the experiences of "true" exiles my subject is self-exiles.

The experience of being overtaken by history is a strange one and alters one's experience and evaluation of past events. In fact, the changes in South Africa serve to illustrate the point made by this research that narrative is ongoing, that the meaning of past experiences changes as events unfold. (As I was editing my literature review I found that,
in many instances, I had to change the tense from present to past in referring to exiles leaving South Africa, since the conditions to which I was referring had changed between the time of writing and that of editing.)

Watching these remarkable and wonderful events take place in what I still regard as my own country, has reconnected me both to my birthplace and joined me to others like myself, dislocated and in self-exile. Like the participants in this thesis my exile experience has been marked by isolation, shame, and denial of my cultural identity. Watching Mandela emerge from prison, watching blacks and whites (and shades in between) line up together to cast their votes, watching the old South African flag come down and the new go up, hearing the new national anthem sung, and Mandela being sworn in as the first black president were profound experiences, the reverberations of which will continue for me beyond the completion of this research. Although I observed these events from a great geographical distance and through the limiting media of radio, television, and newspaper I shared the sentiments expressed by Johnson (1994), an academic exiled in London who had returned to South Africa to observe the elections:

Those of us who grew up here have known all our lives that majority rule must come and in that sense all our lives have been converging on this point since birth. Now at last we are at the end of that beginning and about to start history anew. (p. 6)

Beyond any personal value to me, however, it is my hope that this research may prove of use to others by adding something to the understanding of the effects of cultural dislocation, its costs and potentialities, in general. I hope that those who read this thesis, South African, ex-South African (is there such a thing?), and others, will find some insight into the difficulties of being cut off from one’s roots and the possibility for renewed hope and healing for the dislocated person.
CHAPTER II
Review of the Literature

Recent figures (Employment & Immigration Canada, 1992; Statistics Canada, 1992) indicate that, while far from being the largest group of newcomers to Canada, South Africans, nonetheless, represent a significant number of the more recent arrivals in this country. In 1991 some 25,165 South Africans (i.e. born in South Africa) were residing in Canada, of whom almost one quarter (6,165) lived in B.C. In that same year the number of permanent residents destined for Vancouver who had last resided in South Africa (though not necessarily been born there) numbered 1,916. Although this last figure may not seem large it was the highest number, by more than a factor of two, of immigrants (including refugees and exiles) from any African country then living in Vancouver. (Kenya, with 859 permanent residents was next highest.) This flow of South Africans across the Atlantic and the Equator to Canada was (and may still be) the source of wry commentary by members of Johannesburg’s Jewish community, who called Toronto "Jo’burg [Johannesburg] on ice" an ironic reference to both the colder climate and the sense of being in limbo ("put on ice") experienced by the many Jewish Johannesburgers who have settled there.

Statistics and aphorisms, while useful in capturing the extent and some of the flavour of cultural relocation are, however, limited, ignoring crucial distinctions within the category "South African". White ex-South Africans who left that country while it was still under apartheid and who subsequently settled in Canada, while having in common both their place of departure and that of arrival, comprised three distinct groups (apart from their racial classifications): emigres, "true" exiles, and self-exiles. Each group had its own unique reasons for leaving, experiences of dislocation, and problems in resettling. As noted
previously, it is with the last of these groups that this research is concerned.

For the researcher attempting a review of the literature pertaining to white South Africans who chose and have remained in self-exile, a problem exists: research in this area is all but non-existent. Non-fictional autobiographical accounts have been written by white South Africans who were forced into permanent exile (e.g. Donald Woods, 1987), by others who were ordered out but returned illegally (e.g. Breytenbach, 1984, 1993), still others who were kicked out and returned legally (e.g. Kitson, 1987), and individuals who chose exile but then returned to live in South Africa (e.g. Malan, 1990). There are also a number of novels (Brink, 1991; Slovo, 1989) short stories (Moss, 1985; Shute, 1992), and plays (Hershler, 1993) which are concerned with or refer to the experience of exile. In addition, some South Africans who remained in that country but who contemplated the possibility of exile have speculated on and written, often disparagingly (e.g. Gordimer, 1983, 1989), about those who left their homeland.

Perhaps for reasons of shame, guilt, or a simple lack of belief in the worth of their own stories, especially when compared to the sufferings and tribulations of those left behind,4 writings by permanently self-exiled white South Africans or about their experiences, rather than books by such people about the country they have left (e.g. Adam

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3 It is not my intention to draw heavily upon such fictional narratives, but insofar as "cultural identities are formed and informed by a nation’s literature" (Morrison, 1992, p. 39), they are relevant to this discussion.

4 For example the fictional exile, Martha, in Slovo’s Ties of Blood (1989), hears "a reproving inner voice...scold[ing] her for being so self-indulgent. What [she] had suffered was as nothing when compared to the sufferings of black South Africans [italics added]" (p. 668).
and Moodley, 1993) have not been written. It is, therefore, to the related writings noted above, as well as to the extensive literature on cultural uprooting and relocation, that I have looked for clues as to the lives of self-exiled South Africans.

"Resolving the irresolvable": the white 'liberal' in South Africa

Surely one can be an exile only abroad, in some foreign land. Or is another kind of exile conceivable, inside the place you love?

Andre Brink, _An Act of Terror_

Although, from one perspective, the decision by a white South African to leave his homeland represented a beginning (the start of life in exile) in many ways it also constituted an ending (of life in South Africa), as well as a major turning-point in a psychological journey begun some time before. In effect, this journey began with the awareness of living in a racially divided country, with the asking of the question, "What does it mean to be a South African, [a question] only white people in South Africa ever feel the need to ask themselves or each other....Is there such a being as a white African? Who decides?"

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5 As this research was being completed one such book, _The Rift: The Exile Experience of South Africans_ (Bernstein, 1994) was published in England but was not yet available in Canada.

6 A note about tenses: as mentioned earlier, the very recent changes in political and social conditions in South Africa required me to change many verbs from the present to the past tense, as circumstances that were ongoing when I first wrote the review had altered by the final editing. Thus, in the discussion of growing up white in South Africa and in referring to writings on that subject I have used the past tense. Similarly, in discussing the exile experience of the white South African (in the literature review) I have maintained the use of the past tense since, even though some of the conditions, experiences, and effects upon exiles may have persisted into the present, they initially occurred during a period when legalised apartheid was still in place.
Until recently, this question was asked implicitly each day of a white South African’s life. It was encoded in the actions she took, or failed to take, from the moment of waking to the time of going to sleep. It encompassed both the moral and the practical, both altruism and self-interest: "Can one live in an apartheid society and not be contaminated? Can I alleviate black suffering? Will I survive as a white in South Africa?" (Frankental & Shain, 1986, p. 219). In an environment in which systemic discrimination pervaded every aspect of life, infected every interaction, there was no escape from the demands of such questions. Retreat into a private, non-political sphere was impossible because, "unlike depoliticized Western liberal democracies in which civil society exists independent of the state, hardly any sphere in [South Africa] escapes politicization. The public and the private merge [italics added]." (Adam & Moodley, 1993, p. 24).

The individual may have attempted to resist the politicizing of what he saw as his private life by means of denial, rationalization, or adherence to a justificatory ideology. Apartheid, however, was not a psychological construct that could be thought away, but an omnipresent social and psychological reality: "To be born a South African [is] to be presented with given facts of race on the same level of reality as the absolute facts of birth and death" (Gordimer, 1983, p. 119). Challenging, and overturning, such "facts", on which the individual’s world view and sense of self had been built, invariably created crises of conscience and of identity.

Not surprisingly, the white South African’s questioning of the absolutes of apartheid and of his place in the socio-political schema, was usually coincident with the period of adolescence (Frankental & Shain, 1986) which, in Western developmental theories, is the period of identity formation (Erikson, 1959). For Gordimer (1983), the resultant shift in
world view and formation of a new social identity constituted a "second consciousness" or "rebirth" (p. 119). The process, as the term "rebirth" implies, occurred not without pain and involved a fundamental questioning of the self, of one's place in the world, of one's right to that place. The question, "Is there such a being as a white African?" however answered, implied the possibility of non-belonging and, if answered in the negative, opened the door to the option of self-exile.

For white, English-speaking South Africans, the sense of non-belonging, of being only temporarily in, South Africa, may have been particularly acute, derived from cultural and historical experience. Modern South Africa is, like Canada, a relatively young nation, having first been visited by Europeans less than 400 years ago. While the Huguenots (forebears of the present-day Afrikaners) fleeing persecution in Europe, saw South Africa as a land of deliverance from suffering, a holy land somewhat akin to how Zionist Jews have viewed Israel (Akenson, 1992), the English came as colonizers. In contrast to the Afrikaners who severed their ties with their homeland, the English came mostly to explore and exploit the land while remaining culturally and politically loyal to Britain (Lessing, 1992).

Subsequent immigrants from Europe, including non-English speakers, identified with and were mostly absorbed into the English-speaking community. Even those fleeing persecution, such as Jews at the beginning of this century escaping the Russian pogroms or, some years later, fleeing Nazi Germany, maintained an attachment to their European roots, or saw Zionist Israel, not South Africa, as their natural motherland (Sichel, 1966). Thus, in the Jewish South African home, "talk of emigration" was not uncommon, "emigration

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7 This is not to suggest that adolescence for whites in South Africa was, necessarily, any more traumatic or difficult than for teenagers elsewhere, only that there were added unique problems arising from the particular socio-political configurations in South Africa that the white adolescent had to negotiate in addition to "normal" developmental issues.
[being] a possibility...not to be feared" (Frankental & Shain, 1986, p. 213).

Following World War II many Europeans (especially British and German) came to take skilled jobs reserved for whites under newly established apartheid laws. While some of these people settled in South Africa, many returned to their own countries taking their earnings with them. Even those who stayed tended to see themselves more as expatriates of a foreign homeland than as South Africans.

But regardless of whether white South Africans saw themselves as living in a "settler colony" or a "colony of exploitation" (Adam and Moodley, 1993, p. 19), whether they were temporary or permanent residents, whether they were of a first or subsequent generation of settlers, they often felt an ambivalence characteristic of those living at one remove from their cultural origins "suffering [a] sense of both cultural insecurity and cultural secondariness" (Wagner, 1991, p. 10). Thus,

English-speaking South Africans consider themselves to be part of an international English-speaking community. They are South Africans by residence, by citizenship, and by an ill-defined congeries of sentiments that perhaps can best be summed up as "attachment". They do not... identify as strongly, as quintessentially, with their country as do the Afrikaners. Although they are infuriated when the Afrikaner casts doubt on their feelings for South Africa, they do recognize--they often contemplate--the possibility of living elsewhere. They do not consider emigration a betrayal, although those who do emigrate...do at times consider their move an abandonment. (Crapanzano, 1986, p. 102)

Crapanzano's observations notwithstanding, doubts about belonging were not confined simply to English-speakers but were also felt by the Afrikaner who experienced a kind of "schizophrenia", living with one foot in Europe and the other in Africa [caught between] the yearning to arrive and the stubborn refusal to yield to it" (Brink, 1992, p. 159).

The attempt to resolve such "schizophrenia" led to some creative, but convoluted thinking. For example, Malan (1990) argued for his right to a place on the Southern tip of the African continent by invoking a mythico-anthropological linking of all peoples, white and
black, through their common origins in the earliest African hominids. His argument is less compelling for any anthropological accuracy it may contain than for its narrative inventiveness borne of its author's desperation to feel allowed to belong to the place of his birth.

Each of these different responses—denial of attachment to South Africa, leaving South Africa, defending, explaining or justifying one's place in South Africa—were linked to a sense of guilt, or at least of complicity in the "great South African lie" (Gordimer, 1983, p. 119) and the resultant attempts to expiate the guilt and evade complicity. If to be black in South Africa was to "break the law because I am alive" (a Black activist quoted by Gordimer, 1989, p. 271), then to be white was to be deemed guilty simply by virtue of one's whiteness whether or not one accepted this guilt. Guilt accrued to the white person as a member of that group on whose behalf blacks, by dint of their mere existence, were turned into lawbreakers. The privileges, economic, social, and other, into which the white South African was born, were secured by the oppression and exploitation of blacks, whether or not the white person ascribed to or actively supported such institutionalized racism.

In such an environment, "nothing is innocent; there can be no refuge from the ramifications of injustice and thus no escape for the morally responsible person [italics added] from the imperative to confront them" (Wagner, 1991, p. 20). But in a morally inverted society such as South Africa, where oppression and exploitation were not only widespread but, until very recently, legislatively sanctioned (and mandated) and judicially enforced, the impulse by a member of the "oppressor race" to confront injustice, was fraught with potential difficulties and contradictions.

The acknowledgement of guilt by a white person in apartheid South Africa, his acceptance that he shared in the collective culpability of whites, may have constituted the
beginnings of a moral consciousness (see Sue & Sue, 1991, p. 114 on the dissonance stage in white identity development, and discussion below, "Identity, morality, and culture"). Although guilt is normally taken to be a negative to the extent that it implies wrongdoing on the part of the guilty person, acceptance of one’s guilt, especially in a society largely devoid of self-remonse, may be considered an identity attribute (Barudy, 1989).

Although a person’s sense of self derives, in part, from a sense of commonality with others (e.g. white, South African), it is also created by differentiation (e.g. liberal not reactionary, guilty not guiltless). Sartre (1985) points this out in the distinction between the purely phenomenological being-in-itself and the more self-aware being-for-itself which imparts self-definition or identity, to some extent, by excluding or negating those aspects and attributes that do not fit with the individual’s beliefs about her self. That is, what a person is, or sees herself to be, is, in large part defined by what she sees herself as not (Sullivan, 1947).

In the South African context, part of the white liberal’s identity relied on his seeing himself as being different from those who overtly or tacitly supported apartheid and, to some extent, this may have derived from his willingness to accept and feel guilt at having benefitted from apartheid. By virtue of owning his guilt (or complicity), the white South African distinguished between himself as a morally aware individual, sensitive to the sufferings of others, and those whites who saw themselves as blameless.

Simple acknowledgement of one’s guilt, however, was usually considered an insufficient response in an environment of such overwhelming injustice “the whole concept of ‘guilt’ [being inadequate to contain what I felt, what had happened, what happens every day” (Brink, 1992, p. 364) in South Africa. Instead of just feeling guilty, what was required,
what was expected, was the taking of responsibility, action rather than simple sincerity of remorse, especially with "the rise of Black Consciousness as a political force [which] made the unsung heroism of simply bearing witness and 'opposing in the mind' even less of a viable alternative to flight than it had been before" (Wagner, 1990, p. 27).

But in a society divided figuratively as well as literally into black and white, where morality was often perceived in absolutes, all political action, even total commitment to the cause, may have been considered tainted, morally suspect, throwing into question both the motivations of the actor and the effectiveness of her actions. Thus, in the writings of Gordimer, one finds a "consistent dismissal of typical white South African 'liberals' as hypocritical, prone to posturing, and ineffectual" (Wagner, 1991, p. 17). Gordimer disparaged the beliefs and actions of all liberals,

> those who do little more than embrace alternative lifestyles and attitudes which incorporate a disapproval of apartheid….those who attempt to involve themselves in some sort of anti-apartheid activism [but who] betray a self-righteous and insensitive rigidity of response [and that] small group of white liberals...who eventually clumsily risk life itself for their beliefs" (Wagner, pp 13-17).

Such dismissal, however, may have belied feelings of personal insufficiency as well as fears about change. Thus, Gordimer's writings, even while criticizing liberal hypocrisy also eloquently, and perhaps unconsciously, "echo the fears, despair, and sense of impotence experienced by liberals" (Wagner, 1991, p. 12). Gordimer also rejected radical solutions involving mass armed resistance, for fear of endorsing violence which might have meant not only the end of a corrupt South Africa but the beginning of another society born out of, and built on, the corrupting influences of that violence.

Likewise, Malan (1990) was largely scornful of any political action undertaken by whites, even when involving considerable personal sacrifice, such as the years of enforced isolation endured by Helen Joseph, the first white South African to be put under house
arrest. To Malan, who felt such sentiments even more strongly than did Gordimer, white liberals were hypocrites, white radicals phoney, pretending to have "black souls" by adopting black names, appropriating black symbols (e.g. forms of dress and undress), and affecting black mannerisms. More damning, from Malan’s perspective, such radicals were almost laughably ineffectual, their political hijinks tolerated by an amused police force who pointed to their permitting of such activities as evidence that South Africa was a democracy. It was as if, for Malan, the stain of guilt and shame was so deeply rooted that almost any attempt by whites to remove it was, by definition, insufficient, self-serving, and doomed to failure.

Consequently, in My Traitor’s Heart (1990), Malan’s account of his return to South Africa from self-imposed exile, the only white individuals who, in any way, came close to compensating for the sins of the white people as a whole were a white couple, Neil and Creina Alcock who, by choosing to live and work with a group of impoverished blacks on a destitute piece of land, underwent a physical "descent" into black poverty and culture, into what, for most whites would have been a kind of hell.

Having foregone all luxury, all privilege, all vestige of their previous white existence, (other than their skins which they could not shed) the Alcocks, in Malan’s (1990) portrayal, became one with the blacks, Neil even suffering the eventual fate of many blacks when he was killed in a bloody internecine battle by some of the very people with whom he had tried to work. Through his life of suffering and subsequent death, however, he achieved, in Malan’s eyes, a form of spiritual ascension through physical suffering, a redemption not only for himself, but also for the white race into which he was born. Neil Alcock thus stood (and stands) as a Christ-like figure, symbolizing, for Malan (1990), a sacrificial lamb on the altar of apartheid.
My use of religious language and imagery here is intentional reflecting, I believe, Malan’s (1990) own cry for absolution from the "original sin" of being white in a land where whites, as Malan saw it, had forfeited any claim to, or hope for, moral redemption by virtue of their corrupt behaviour. Malan’s search was a secular response, opposed to but reflective of, the Calvinistic religious fundamentalism that undergirded the Afrikaners’ God-fearing, God-invoked claims to racial primacy (Akenson, 1992). Although Malan claimed to speak for no one other than himself, the cynicism, despair and self-loathing he expressed were not unique to him or atypical amongst white South Africans.

The writings of both Gordimer (1983, 1989) and Malan (1990) can best be understood as responses to "the irresolvable nature of the personal dilemmas" (Wagner, 1991, p. 9) in which the white person of conscience in South Africa had, until recently, found himself. Guilty as the result of an originally unchosen event, his birth as a white, he felt he must, nevertheless, choose whether or not to act against the consequences of that event. If he answered the call to activism in the affirmative, the struggle in which he engaged was often felt to be Sysiphean, with no promise of resolution or absolution either during or after his lifetime. (The fact that, for many, events have proved otherwise, does not alter how conditions were perceived at the time.)

Not all commentators shared such a negative view of white liberalism as did Gordimer (1983, 1989) or Malan (1990), but even those who saw a place for white liberals in the liberation struggle noted that they could only be "junior partners" (van Rensburg, 1962, p. 191) to an African (i.e. black) nationalist leadership. Although the African National Congress (ANC) the largest anti-apartheid group has always allowed for the inclusion of whites who share its aims, in general and until recently, the unambiguous and fulsome embracing of white participation by black activists belonged to an earlier time prior to the
rise of the Black Consciousness movement in the 1960's. The movement's ethnocentrism and its slogan "Africa for the Africans" influenced how the actions of sympathetic whites were viewed. What may formerly have been seen as supportive action by whites increasingly came to be regarded suspiciously by many blacks as, at best, paternalistic, a well-intentioned hindrance to their own attempts at liberation or, at worst as self-serving, as much an attempt by whites to assuage their guilt as to facilitate change (or, equally, to thwart change by means of tokenism and by co-opting the struggle).

In effect then, the struggle with which the politically active, or merely politically aware, white person wanted to identify may not have welcomed such participation or identification because "however much they [whites] want to identify with blacks, it is an existential fact...that they have not really been victims of this baneful oppression and exploitation" (Archbishop Desmond Tutu, cited in Gordimer, 1989, p. 267). Thus, the white person of conscience often found herself living in a form of internal exile (Wagner, 1991), having rejected her own culture of origin but not fully invited into that culture on whose behalf she wished to act, stuck in a position "where our skin colour labelled us as oppressors to the blacks and our views labelled us as traitors to the whites" (Gordimer, 1989, p. 32).

At the same time, the white person of conscience may have had difficulty feeling fully at home in the loosely liberal groupings which constituted his new, "natural" home. As Malan (1990), cynically wrote: "It was impossible to change race, you see, and almost completely pointless to be a liberal" (p. 168). Ambivalence about motives, doubts concerning political effectiveness, differences over political tactics, and suspicion of possible infiltrators and agents provocateurs, made for lack of support and cohesion amongst those engaged in fighting the status quo both within South Africa and in exile (see e.g. Adam & Moodley, 1993; Johnson, 1993; Kitson, 1987; Westwood & Lawrance, 1990).
In the face of conflicting messages both internally and externally generated, the white liberal may have had difficulty establishing and maintaining a sense of personal and moral integrity. To have had to wait and depend upon others (the white political masters, the black underclass) for eventual political and moral deliverance, was to live in a kind of limbo. Small wonder then that Crapanzano's, (1985) study of South African whites is titled Waiting, or that Gordimer (1989) described living on the southern tip of the African continent as "living in the interregnum" (p. 261). Although, Gordimer was referring, here, to South African society as a whole, blacks and whites included, her comments could have as easily applied to individual white South Africans:

The state of interregnum is a state of Hegel's disintegrated consciousness, of contradictions....The interregnum is not only between two social orders but also between two identities [italics added], one known and discarded, the other unknown and undetermined. (pp. 269-270)

Thus the internally exiled white South African may not only have been cut off from both a rejected and rejecting culture, but also from the self, from a former self now seen as having colluded (albeit unknowingly) with an unjust regime, from a present self identified more with a European than with a South African culture (and caught between the desire for, and fear of, political commitment), and from a future self whose realization was felt to be contingent on factors outside of the person's control.

Gordimer, her criticism of liberals notwithstanding, in many ways epitomized this liberal South African dilemma. She felt herself to be not only exiled from that spiritual and philosophical metropolis [Europe] whose values survive only in debased and corrupted forms in the colonial world she inhabits, but also to be in 'internal exile' [italics added] in the land of her birth: not only because she is opposed to the dominant apartheid ideology of her time but arguably also because...she resisted the felt imperative to 'join up'. [Her] fiction reflects this sense of multiple exile [italics added]...investigat[ing] the viability of various escape routes from both the physical context and from the pressure to 'be committed', presenting us with characters in flight not only from their backgrounds,
but from the ideological imperative itself. (Wagner, 1991, p. 12)

Many of those confronting the pressure to commit politically experienced a sense of futility and despair upon contemplating the possible value, the costs, and likely chances of success of such commitment. Many white liberals, motivated by humanist principles found themselves balking at the increasingly dominant view that "nothing short of violent revolution and guerilla warfare with outside support has realistic prospects of destroying Apartheid" (van den Berghe, 1979, p. 13). For a white activist to embrace and act on such a philosophy may have meant not only violating deeply held principles about the value of human life and non-violence, but also furthering the likelihood that her own family and community might fall victim to that violence.

The contradictions and limitations inherent in the choices available to the white liberal often rendered the option of self-exile attractive even though thinking about such an option may have evoked feelings of betrayal, disloyalty, and deep ambivalence. Even some who were critical of those who "ran away" acknowledged the lure of escape:

I myself fluctuate between the desire to be gone--to find a society where my white skin will have no bearing on my place in the community--and a terrible, obstinate and fearful desire to stay, I feel the one desire with my head and the other with my guts....If one will always have to feel white first and African second, it would be better not to stay on in Africa. It would not be worth it for this. (Gordimer, 1989, p. 34)

For those who, unlike Gordimer, did eventually leave, partial justification was sometimes sought and even found, after the fact, in the, perhaps convenient, belief that one's real culture, one's real roots were in Europe, or Israel or any place other than in South Africa, thus limiting the debt that one owed to one's birthplace. It is easier for the person who portrays himself, and his forebears, as mere interlopers in a society, to exonerate himself from responsibility for resolving the ills of this temporary resting place. Such
rationalizations, while lessening the flow of guilt, rarely succeed in staunching the feelings of loss that the wound of self-exile creates.

Exile

Exile can exacerbate identity problems because, in exile, you're always asking: 'Who am I?'
Frances McQueen of V.A.S.T. (Vancouver Association for the Survivors of Torture)

If remaining in an oppressive situation creates ethical, social, and identity-related problems, then leaving the country, far from resolving these issues, may bring with it a new set of dilemmas. Not only may the dislocated person discover that geographical distance does not, necessarily, equal escape, but she may well find that earlier difficulties are compounded by, amongst other things, feelings of ambivalence, guilt, shame, loss, and grief as well as by culture shock (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Oberg, 1960), self-shock (Zaharna, 1989) and self-invalidation (Ishiyama, 1989, 1991), all or any of which may threaten her sense of self.

As noted earlier, the life and identity of the liberal, white person in apartheid South Africa was typically characterized by ambivalence, questioning, and doubt: whether or not to commit politically (and, if so, how), whether or not he had the right to a place in that country, whether or not he should stay or leave. If he did indeed leave, these feelings of ambivalence may have increased (Westwood & Lawrance, 1990). Possible bewilderment upon encountering new culture, hope that life would be different in the new country coupled with the fear that it might not, and self-doubt (about his ability to cope, about whether to stay or return), may have created feelings of insecurity and ambiguity.

The ambivalence felt by the individual who has fled a strife-torn or merely difficult situation frequently surfaces in feelings of guilt. Relief at escaping politically and socially
repressive circumstances can give rise to, and conflict with, guilt at having abandoned and betrayed family, friends, political activists, and the oppressed left behind, and at being in a situation of relative safety. That such feelings were, and are, not restricted to the white South African self-exile but may be felt by anyone who has escaped a dangerous situation in which others have had to remain is evident in the comments of a black South African, living in exile in Toronto: "At times I feel the survivor’s guilt" (O’Connell, 1994).

As much as the self-exiled, white South African may have wished to rid himself of these painful feelings of guilt, which locked him in a time and place abandoned, he may equally have felt reluctant or simply unable to let go of them. In this he would have been like the character in Slovo’s (1989) book who, because of "her guilt at the comfort of her own lifestyle, of the way she had turned her back on the struggle....talked as if she were compelled to dwell in the past while her words did nothing to heal her terrible hurt" (p. 590).

Letting go of the past may have been difficult for a number of reasons. Just as it did in South Africa, so in exile, guilt may have functioned as an identity attribute for the white liberal. No longer able to participate directly in social change, the private and public acknowledgement of his culpability in and, by extension, opposition to, an unjust system may have become an even more important marker of identity than when he lived in South Africa. In the absence of action, belief and attitude can take on greater personal and social significance.

In leaving South Africa, the exile departed the discomfiting familiarity (and, in some respects, ethical clarity) of a place that forced whites to make choices (Slovo, 1989) and, as a consequence, she may have found it less easy, in exile, to distinguish the "good guys" from the "bad". In the process, internalized boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable
aspects of her self (Sullivan, 1947) may have become less clear, more permeable, posing a threat to the self-exile's integrity, her sense of self.

Thus, for all its value in potentially helping the exile sustain an integrated, continuous sense of self, unresolved guilt or feelings about complicity, can exact a price. In order to cope with these feelings, the self-exile, like the refugee, or even the immigrant may develop a "defensive resentment" (Westwood & Lawrance, 1990, p. 148) towards those who have remained behind. But far from effectively resolving anything such resentment and defensiveness may simply act as a cover for deep feelings of guilt, shame, and loss.

Although feelings of loss are common amongst the culturally dislocated, they may be particularly acute for the individual who, in his home country, was politically committed, was "active within human groups, which are closely bounded by a common struggle for a just society. His engagement in this struggle gave sense to his existence, the sense of dedicating it to the cause of freedom". (Barudy, 1989, p. 178). Particularly difficult for these people is the fact that,

political exile [involves] the decisive and crucial rupture with militancy. This happens in a context of political defeat that is perceived as personal defeat....Believing in their historical role, dedicating their best energies to what they see as a noble end, they view their cause as the main purpose in life--indeed, sometimes as the justification of their existence, of life itself. In exile the cause becomes an abstraction. (Rocha Lima, 1984, p. 94)

Exile, then becomes little more than an "invitation to limbo [since] the exile, unlike the

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8 Guilt, and its effects, may be multifaceted and labyrinthine. While feeling guilty may cause a person to feel bad about himself, it may allow him to feel good about himself for at least feeling guilty, while at the same time causing him to feel even more guilty about simply feeling guilty and/or about feeling good about it. If this seems neurotic, self-indulgent and, ultimately, self-defeating, it may well be. The person who adopts guilt as a primary way of being in the world, may be indulging in a form of inversion in which, by portraying himself as the victim (of guilty feelings), he hopes to escape the moral imperative to act, since victims should be compensated for their victimhood, not morally required to act.
immigrant, looks back to what he has left, not forward to a new life in Canada" (Wright, cited in Westwood & Lawrance, 1990).

Cultural dislocation almost invariably precipitates a crisis of identity. It is important, however, to recognize that, for the political activist, exile proper may represent only one factor in a litany of threats to identity cohesion and integrity already experienced in the form of persecution, incarceration, and/or torture in the home country, since "political violence traumatizes the self-image at the same time that it destroys social bonds" (Barudy, 1989, p. 715).

In a repressive regime, the politically active person lives in a climate of fear and persecution. Her "daily existence is characterized by fear, insecurity and a sense of impotence" (Barudy, 1989, p. 719). Loss of civil rights guarantees, decreased sense of control over her life, and difficulty in contacting others in the struggle, all contribute to feelings of powerlessness and isolation and begin to disrupt the person's sense of self.

If, as frequently happens, the person is arrested, the process of identity disintegration escalates, arrest being "an experience of brutal rupture with the social environment: it is an 'uprooted state'...caused by the forced abandonment of family life, culture and daily habits" (Barudy, 1989, p. 719). Others (Bettleheim, Garbedian, Goffman, all cited in Taft, 1977) have also identified forcible confinement as likely to precipitate severe identity disruption. Under arrest, the prisoner may undergo prolonged isolation, simulated enactments of death sentences, and verbal humiliation and physical degradation at the hands of the guards, all designed to induce feelings of disorientation, powerlessness, hopelessness, and depersonalization.

Coming after such experiences, exile may precipitate yet further disintegration. As mentioned above, feelings of relief at being out of harm's way can serve to heighten the
exile's guilt at betraying and abandoning the struggle. This may be the case even if the individual did not actively collaborate with the oppressors but feels complicit because of being helpless to intervene in the torture and suffering of her compatriots.

According to Barudy (1989), symptoms of psychological disorders experienced by formerly persecuted, incarcerated, and/or tortured exiles can be seen as resulting from one or all of the following processes: traumatization of identity, disorganization of identity, and disintegration (pp. 722-723).

Traumatization of identity refers to the incongruence that results from the person's "desperate attempt to maintain the structure of his/her self by defensive reactions and conduct" (Barudy, 1989, p. 722), such as repression and denial, in the face of threats to the self. Incongruence tends to increase psychological vulnerability in the exiled ex-political prisoner, such that seemingly unimportant, unrelated incidents (such as a minor social misunderstanding) may trigger a crisis (Weiss & Parish, 1989) eliciting severe anguish, depression, traumatic nightmares, and possible aggression and violence towards self and others.

Disorganization of identity represents the irrational and acute psychotic behaviour evidenced by some former victims of torture as a result of the inability of the defense mechanisms to cope with the extreme nature of the threats to the self. According to Rogers (cited in Barudy, 1989):

When the defense process becomes inefficient, the experience is adequately symbolized in conscience and the gestalt of the I structure breaks by [sic] the incongruence in conscience. The result is a state of disorganization [in which] the tension between the self concept and the experiences which are not symbolized or included in the I concept expresses itself in confused behaviour. (p. 722)

Lastly, disintegration refers to the destruction of "a person as an autonomous subject with norms, convictions and values which inspired his/her political and social engagement"
(Barudy, 1989, p. 722) arising from the complete submissiveness of the prisoner, and his or her perceived complicity with the enemy.

Coming after such traumatic experiences, exile itself represents a new crisis. Within his or her own country, the struggle and suffering had purpose and meaning. As noted above, once dislocated, deprived of involvement in the political fight, the exile undergoes "context interruption" often resulting in a loss of meaning\(^9\) and a concomitant inability to commit to the future. Any or all of these factors combined, may create severe problems in living for the exile.

But even those exiles (either "true" exiles or self-exiles) who have not been politically active may struggle with strong feelings of attachment and responsibility to their country of origin. Both former political activists and politically identified individuals in exile may expend much time and energy thinking about the past or fantasizing about a return to their homeland, to the extent that their "excessive mental and socio-psychological preoccupation with the past [becomes] an obstacle to full adaptation to their immediate situation" (Chan & Lam, 1987, pp. 34-35). This inability to commit to life in the adoptive culture can result in an unsettling experience similar to that of "identity diffusion" or "moratorium" (Marcia, cited in Baumeister, 1986, p. 203).

In part, the ability to look ahead and to live in the present may be blocked by deep feelings of grief (Hertz, 1981; Pollock, 1988; Taft, 1977; Westwood & Lawrance, 1990).

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\(^9\) That a person’s sense of meaning, developed and sustained within a socio-cultural context, has importance to his identity and behaviour is noted by DeVos, Marsella, and Hsu (1985):

It is not simply a matter of how the environment...structures behavior in the light of underlying functioning mental mechanisms. We have to look further into how the "meaning" that the human being has conceived in his subjective experience is a direct determinant of all intentional behavior. (p. 9)
Abrupt separation from social, political and familial networks and activities, possibly compounded by the uprooted person’s knowledge or belief that he may never again see these places or people, can lead to bereavement similar to that experienced upon losing a spouse or close family member (Chan & Lam, 1987).

Although "healthy" grieving, in such cases, may have psychological and emotional utility as part of the "mourning-liberation process--a normal, necessary, universal, transformational process that permits us to adapt to change (which is loss), loss of meaningful figures, loss of home, loss of resources" (Pollock, 1988, p. 146), for some in exile an arrest or fixation of grieving may occur.

The distinction between an adaptive and maladaptive focus on the past is the difference between nostalgic illusion and nostalgic fixation (Zwingmann, cited in Chan & Lam, 1987). In the former "the past is systematically and, sometimes, unconsciously idealized, humanized and glorified, while the present is overlooked, and the future devaluated [sic]" (Chan & Lam, p. 28). If the illusion is short-term it can serve a protective function of maintaining psychological and affective continuity as well as equilibrium during uprooting. However, in nostalgic fixation, where the exile’s longing for the past is obsessive and persistent, identity change and adaptation may be blocked, resulting in a series of difficulties including, but not limited to, withdrawal, isolation, loneliness, marginality, and possible aggressive and anti-social behaviour.

As Breytenbach (1993) writes, "There is such a thing as incurable nostalgia" (p. 1). Whatever the cost, the desire to look back to, to hold onto the past, can seem overpowering: "Exiles...are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of turning into pillars of salt" (Rushdie, 1991, p. 10).

Grieving, however, may be experienced not simply over the loss of the past, but also
at the perceived loss of an anticipated, and presumed future, the loss of dreams, hope(s), of identity, of an unrealized possible self (Deaux, 1991). As Rushdie (1991) writes of having left India, "[I] am no longer what I was, and...by quitting Bombay never became what perhaps I was meant to be" (p. 10). Or Hoffman (1989), reflecting on her life in exile in Canada:

I have lost the sense of what, driven as I am, I am driving toward....I begin to see that my "destiny" is no longer going to pull me toward itself as if I were sitting in a chariot driven by the gods....The unity, the seemingly organic growth of my desires is becoming fragmented, torn....now I don’t know what to want, or how to want, any longer. (p. 158)

This sense of a truncated future has been characterized as non-event "the failure of an expected pivotal life event or change to occur" (Barkan-Ascher, 1992, p. ii). Cultural dislocation, loss of a sustaining cultural context, increases the likelihood that certain anticipated critical life, and developmental events, may be missed. The exile by stepping out of time and place, loses his place not only in the historical unfolding of his culture and country, but in the articulation of his own personal narrative: "To go into exile is to lose your place in the world" (Sartre). The effect of losing one’s place in this way may be a persistent, unrealized, longing for a return to the site where the life interruption occurred. The fact that both the individual and the earlier context have been irreversibly altered makes such a return impossible, though it does little to lessen the longing and, indeed, may even enhance it.

The person who continuously longs to re-enact the past, lives a life in which past and future are inverted:

This happens...not because the goal of his hope is postponed, but because it is already past and gone, has already been experienced and thus passed over into recollection. On the other hand, he constantly recollects what he ought to hope for; for he has already anticipated the future in thought, in thought he has experienced it, and this experience he now recollects, instead of hoping for it. (Kierkegaard, cited
Such an individual is, frequently, a "prodigy of misery" (Crites, p. 153).

With his eyes focused back towards a familiar, but increasingly distant homeland, while his feet are moving forward, however tentatively, into an alien society, the uprooted person feels disoriented, falling into a culture gap (Hall, 1976) between the old and the new. As dislocated people, "sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times that we fall between two stools" (Rushdie, 1991, p. 15).

Adjustment difficulties may, thus, occur due to cultural distance between the immigrants old and new cultures, with difficulty increasing with the degree of difference between the two (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Not only will differences in language, race, and social norms and customs determine the nature and size of the culture gap, but so will distinctions in whether the cultures are high context or low context (Hall, 1976). All of these factors determine whether the exile, having leapt the cultural divide, will have a "soft" or "hard" landing (Ishiyama, 1991).

In part, problems of adjustment are either exacerbated or ameliorated by the exile's preparedness for change (or lack of same). White, English-speaking liberal South Africans who were raised in, and thus assumed an affinity with a generic, Western culture, (Malan, 1990) and who then went into self-exile, may have been unprepared for the dissimilarity between their chosen country and their country of origin. By far the majority of white South Africans emigrated (and, most likely, continue to emigrate) to England, Australia, New Zealand, the U.S.A., and Canada, countries with which they shared (and share) a common linguistic and cultural heritage (Crapanzano, 1985). Upon settling in these countries, however, South Africans often discovered that the presumed commonality did not always run very deep. In confronting these dissimilarities, as well as prejudice and stereotyping by
locals, the white South African may have felt not only "out of place" (Begamudre, 1991) but abandoned and betrayed by his "mother" culture.

Perhaps nowhere is the experience of cultural similarity and difference more clearly experienced than in the dislocated individual’s relationship to language. Hoffman, (1989) uses the term triangulation, a metaphor borrowed from the field of geography, to reflect her attempts to map and make her way in Polish, English-Canadian, and American society. The term, "triangulation", captures the sense that Hoffman had of experiencing the new culture (and herself in that culture) at one remove, rather than directly as she did when living in her own society. Self and culture were no longer one seamless continuity, but rather opposing geometric points by which she had to locate herself through a process of referring, checking, and translating new experiences, words, phrases, against and through the old.

The sea-change occasioned by cultural dislocation is particularly keenly felt by those for whom the culture and language gap is the widest. The Vietnamese, Pole, or Iranian, newly arrived in Canada would no doubt experience greater linguistic and culture shock than the white, English-speaking South African who shares a common language with the Canadian mainstream. But although the South African self-exile may not have anticipated significant problems in understanding, or making herself understood by, others, this very assumption may have made her less prepared to encounter the differences that did exist.

Structuralist and post-structuralist linguistic analyses have demonstrated that "meaning depends on context" (Cochran, p. 188), disabusing us of the notion that there is a simple, unchangeable, context-free, one-to-one relationship between sign and signifier, between the word and its referent (Sarup, 1989). Words and phrases spoken or written in Canada may mean something very different than the same utterings articulated in South Africa. As an example, the term "native" in Canada, a respectful, even preferred term for referring to the
original North American peoples, is considered derogatory in South Africa when used in reference to black people there.

It is not, however, just that specific words, individual terms, carry different meanings, but that language, words, accent, phrasing, intonation, evoke an entire (and entirely different) world. The absence of this evoked context creates in the dislocated person a sense of unease, of having to explain himself, to translate events both to others and to oneself before they can be understood and assimilated. This, amongst other things, can create culture fatigue (Boekestijn, 1988) in the emigre who, being in unfamiliar surrounds, "cannot resort to automatic performance and consequently suffers from cognitive overload" (Taft, 1977, p. 140). Such strain may result in feelings of physical tiredness and stiffness, and increased risk of physiological malfunction.

The different language, accents, customs, mannerisms, beliefs, and other characteristics of the immigrant or exile, in short those things which emphasize his difference from the host culture, open him to the possibility of being stigmatized within that culture. As noted above, this is most likely to occur for those who are deemed to be significantly different from the dominant group in the host culture. (In Canada those regarded as most different are usually non-English speaking people of colour from non-Western societies such as Vietnam or Somalia). Such people may be discredited (Goffman, 1963) by virtue of "tribal stigma of race, nation and[/or] religion" (p. 4).

Insofar as stigma "refer[s] to an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (Goffman, 1963, p. 3) being a white South African could, in and of itself prove, stigmatizing, especially in some leftist, radical circles. And although self-exiled South Africans, being predominantly white, English-speaking, liberal, well-educated, and middle-class were much less likely to have been discredited, they may nevertheless have felt discreditable (Goffman). The white
South African who may already have felt shame at being identified with an oppressive group, guilty about her presumed (or actual) complicity in the oppression of apartheid, and that she had abandoned her country, may have been particularly sensitive to even minor, unintended, or perhaps merely presumed or anticipated slights and negative comments.

That there was (and perhaps still is) some legitimacy to white South Africans' sensitivity is apparent in this exchange between CBC interviewer Vicki Gabereau (1993) and Sadia Zamin, host of Vision T.V. 's *It's About Time*, discussing a film made by Zamin about South Africans living in Canada who had decided to return to their native land.

Sadia Zamin: I think there is a lot of resentment here, in North America [towards white South Africans], especially since the anti-apartheid movement has come about....Especially in the early '70's people here had very strong feelings about whites in South Africa and she [one of the show's interviewees] got mistaken for...she calls herself coloured--or that's the way she's been classified in South Africa--and she got mistaken here [in Canada] for either being a native person or else she was a white South African and all white South Africans were the same. And I think that her experiences stemmed from the fact that they were all oppressive, you know, perceptions that we have of white South Africans.

Vicki Gabereau: I think it's been very [easy]--in a strange sort of way--for the West to be comforted by their hatred of South African whites. It's been a target that's been an acceptable target, that you didn't have to feel guilty about loathing them, that you had a *legitimate* cause for disliking them.

For the person who feels himself to be discreditable rather than discredited,

the issue is not that of managing tension generated during social contacts, but rather that of managing information....it is not that he must face prejudice against himself, but rather that he must face unwitting acceptance of himself by individuals who are prejudiced against persons of the kind he can be revealed to be. (Goffman, 1963, p. 42)

Feeling compelled to limit or manipulate information regarding who one is constitutes a form of denial of self and may create problems in maintaining a positive sense of self by
reinforcing negative feelings such as shame. This can also create feelings of isolation, leading the self-exile to reject, and feel rejected by, the host culture.

Stigmatization, whether perceived or real can, therefore, lead to loss of social support. According to Barudy (1989):

To assure an individual’s [cross-cultural] adjustment, a network of interpersonal relationships of a certain quality is necessary. The interactional ingredients permitting a dialectic adaptation to circumstances are the respect and positive communication of the self representation, as well as a source of the [sic] unconditional affection. (p. 717)

Put simply, social support is necessary to maintaining a positive sense of self. Continued instances of rejection translate into a lack of social support, one of the primary sources of stress in relocation (Fontaine, 1986; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Ishiyama, 1989; Shisana & Celentano, 1987). Rejection by, and of, the adoptive culture mean that exiles must find validation and a sense of identity within their own communities. But, in order to avoid being identified with a stigmatized group the South African self-exile may have wanted (and continue to want) to avoid contact with other South Africans. For the former political activist seeking affiliation with political groups in exile, fear of informers, as well as social, religious, ethnic, political, and gender splits within such groups, may make may make her reluctant to look to fellow exiles for nurturance (Westwood & Lawrance, 1990).

Thus, identifying oneself, and being identified by others, with South Africa and its politics (whether for or against), could prove problematic. The self-exile who acknowledged

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10 Thus, for example, my parents, for some time after arriving in Canada, in wanting to avoid both potential prejudice and unwanted questioning of their politics, identified themselves as being simply from Africa rather than from South Africa. For my parents who had been twice dislocated, once as German-Jewish war refugees in South Africa and then as voluntary immigrants to Canada, the desire to assimilate and hide their racial, cultural, and national heritages was intensely felt. One of my late father’s favourite sayings was that, "in Germany I was a fucking Jew, in South Africa a fucking German, and in Canada, a fucking white South African".
his guilt as a white South African was likely to be applauded by (some, most) Canadian leftists and liberals. The self-exile may, however, have felt resentful at having to wear ashes before, ask for forgiveness from, Canadians who, untested by having to make such difficult moral and political choices, nevertheless espoused noble sentiments. He may also have felt antagonistic towards what he perceived as the

opportunism of those [who wish to] soothe their guilty consciences at a safe distance, or to squeeze some local political mileage out of it [being seen to be against apartheid], or simply because emotion, especially that elicited by apartheid, has become cheap, a consumer article, kitsch. (Brink, 1991, p. 432)

The sense, whether perceived or real, of having been taken advantage of, of having been the object of political tokenism, may have caused the exile to want to withdraw from contact with potential supporters and allies, creating or adding to feelings of social rejection.

If social interaction with the apparently like-minded could be problematic for liberal South Africans outside of their country, so too could contact with those with whom they did not share a common political perspective. Frequently the ex-South African white, upon identifying herself as such would, until recently, find herself the unwilling recipient of exclamations of sympathy over the difficulties of being white in "that country" and expressions of support for the fight against "black terrorism and subversion". To be presumed to be racist simply by virtue of her national origin (just as, in South Africa, she was an oppressor because of the colour of her skin) could prove to be an unsettling experience (even if discomfortingly familiar), a threat to the self-exile's sense of self.

For the dislocated person, the accumulation of negative experiences--ambivalence towards the adoptive country, possible hostility from segments of the host society, problems of language, communication and cultural differences (Westwood & Borgen, 1988), and economic and employment difficulties--may result in self-invalidation (Ishiyama, 1989),
"characterized by the feelings of insecurity, discomfort, abandonment" resulting from the "painful loss of many validational points, such as supportive relationships, self-validating activities, and familiar landmarks and psychological cues" (p. 42). The absence of familiar social reinforcers may negatively impact upon the uprooted individual’s sense of self in a number of different, but related areas of his life: his sense of security, self-worth, competence, meaning in life, and identity and belonging.

Although, in Ishiyama’s (1989, 1991) self-validation schema, identity forms only one facet of possible invalidation, lack of validation in any of the other four areas—security, competence, self-worth, and meaning—may equally affect the person’s sense of self. That is, it is not only through a sense of belonging that one derives or sustains an identity. Feelings of incompetence, insecurity, worthlessness, and meaninglessness will also negatively affect an individual’s sense of self.

Furthermore, invalidation in any one or a combination of the above areas may impact differentially upon any one of the person’s many "selves": the physical self, the familial self, the socio-cultural self, the trans-cultural self, and the transpersonal self (Ishiyama, 1989). For example unavailability of familiar foods may create feelings of loss and insecurity in the physical self, while absence of political involvement may cause a diminishing of self-worth and loss of meaning in the socio-cultural self.¹¹

To some extent, all the above acculturation and adaptation difficulties, represent various aspects of culture shock (Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Oberg 1960; Taft, 1977) "a

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¹¹ I recognize that these distinctions—between selves and between areas of validation—are somewhat arbitrary and not truly reflective of how identity is experienced phenomenologically, as a continuous whole. Nonetheless, these distinctions do have theoretical utility in conceptualizing self-invalidation and potential practical value in counselling.
set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one's own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences" (Adler, 1975, p. 13). This is something that almost invariably affects those who move across cultures whether temporarily as workers, students, and travellers, or permanently as immigrants, exiles, and refugees, and that may range in the severity of its effects from mild feelings of disorientation to intense, longstanding symptoms including (but not restricted to) depression, alienation, and even sociopathic behaviour.

More accurately, perhaps, in the context of the present discussion is Zaharna's (1989) recharacterizing of the difficulties occasioned by cultural dislocation as self-shock, "an extended reaction to the differences with and within the self [italics added] [which is] the central axiom for the individual's whole life theory" (p. 511). That is, uprooting can be problematic not simply because of a lack of familiarity with a new social environment, but as a result of a disjunction within one's self in a foreign culture. (For further discussion of the distinction, and overlaps, between self and culture, see below, "The self in context")

According to Zaharna (1989), the dislocated individual's attempts to maintain consistency and continuity in his sense of self, conflict with his need to adapt to the new culture, creating a Catch 22 situation. The combined effects of loss of communication competencies vis-a-vis the self (resulting from unfamiliarity with new socio-cultural demands), distorted self-reflections acquired from how members of the new culture view one (including stereotyping), and the difficulties of changing culturally determined roles and identity-bound behaviours, create "a double-bind of increased need to confirm self-identities, with diminished ability to do [so]" (p. 516). This may create deep feelings of ambivalence in the exile both towards himself and towards the host culture, leading to a crisis of identity.
Because of the potential difficulties of accommodating to life in a new culture and the
difficulty of letting go of one's country of origin, the exile often feels a strong pull to return
home. For, although exile may provide escape, a sense of relief and release,

exile is a sweet thing to end, even if you come from a troubled country like South
Africa, or maybe especially if you come from South Africa. There is something in
the air there that the Boer poet Breytenbach called 'heartspace and the danger of
beauty'. In some way that I can't really capture, it is a function of all the hatred and
horror, all the broken hearts and blinding hope of a healing, sometime, someday.
They say that junkies sometimes put themselves through the cold sweats and sickness
of withdrawal just so they can start anew, and experience that wild rush of
intoxication to the brain as if for the first time. Coming home was like that. (Malan,
1990, p. 109)

But what of those who, unlike Malan, cannot or choose not to return to taste the
sweetness of homecoming? Does the craving persist unabated? Or if the permanent self-exile
succeeds in overcoming her "addiction" does she forever remain a "recovering South
African", even after the sharp pain of withdrawal is over? Is it indeed true that, however
much the exile may try to compensate for the sense of separation, the longing for home, "the
essential sadness [of exile] can never be transcended" (Said, 1984, p. 159).

The research on cultural dislocation would indicate that, for many in exile, Said
(1989) is essentially correct, that adjustment to a new culture is an ongoing, never fully
completed process, and attachment to the past, while it may wane or become altered over
time, remains with the dislocated person.

**Dislocation as opportunity.** Thus far, cultural dislocation has been portrayed as
being almost entirely problematic to the individual in her attempts to maintain an integrated,
coherent sense of identity. But uprooting may, equally, represent opportunity. Adler (1975),
for example, proposes an alternative view of culture shock as potentially occasioning
heightened self-awareness and an enhanced sense of self. Iyer (1993), commenting on his
own state of rootlessness observes that, "unfamiliarity can, in any context, breed content". Rushdie (1991), perhaps the world's most famous (or notorious, depending on your perspective) example of biculturalism, while acknowledging the difficulties in cultural displacement, defiantly asserts its potentialities:

The word 'translation' comes, etymologically, from the Latin for 'bearing across'. Having been borne across the world, we [exiles, refugees, emigrants] are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation. I cling obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained. (p. 17)

What can be gained is a "stereoscopic vision" of the world (Rushdie, p. 19), an increased awareness of one's self in a bicultural or multicultural context, as well as enhanced flexibility in thinking, attitude and action, an expanded range of coping competencies, and the strength to maintain one's own culture in the face of change (Ishiyama, 1991).

The potential of self-exile to act as catalyst for self-growth may exist even for those who were politically active in their country of origin for whom exile initially posed an acute threat to their sense of meaning, purpose, and identity. Evidence of this is provided by Rocha Lima's (1984) study of exiled politically active and/or identified Brazilian women which showed that as these women's "defenses [sic] fell apart during this period [in exile, they] started to dare" (p. 89) in ways they had not before. As girls and women in Brazil they had experienced many instances of sexism and discrimination which circumscribed their sense of themselves. Dislocation brought with it freedom from inhibiting "traditional protections and repressions" (p. 88) of family and social life in Brazil.

Also, because many of these women had come from middle-class backgrounds, exile forced them to take on roles and tasks in their families that had previously been performed either by their husbands or paid domestic workers. While this created strains and tensions within families, the women's ability to cope with the practicalities of change enhanced their
perceptions of their own, previously unrecognized, strengths. (Chan and Lam [1987] discovered similar beneficial outcomes—and familial stresses—for Indochinese women refugees in Quebec as a result of role change caused by cultural dislocation.)

Moreover, exile was the first experience for the women in Rocha Lima’s (1984) study of being in the minority. This led to "a re-evaluation and redefinition of their social position [that] was simultaneously the cause and the result of their discovery of other minority situations" (pp. 90-91) and subsequent feelings of solidarity with other minority groups. Such identification with other minorities is a feature of the integrative awareness stage of racial/cultural identity development (Sue & Sue, 1990, pp. 106-107), and a positive indication that the minority individual has begun to establish a strong, integrated sense of self within a dominant culture.

In addition, many of the Chilean women in the study joined women’s groups in the countries of exile. This not only provided them with identity continuity as they incorporated their sense of selves as political activists into the struggle for women’s rights, but also created a new social support network, and helped them "fight against the tendency so common among exiles to alienate themselves in time, looking either to the past or the future and disregard the concreteness of the here and now " (Rocha Lima, 1984, p. 92).

Developmental factors in dislocation. How the exile responds to his situation, therefore, will be influenced by numerous factors both personal and environmental. The process of adaptation and acculturation, however, is not static, and these factors will vary across and through time. That is, the exile is affected by developmental factors, both within his own life and within the process of acculturation and adaptation. Thus far, the picture painted of self-exile has been synchronic, episodic. It can also be looked at diachronically.
Although "alienation...is the condition of our time, this being the century of exiles and refugees, of boat people and statelessness and estrangement" (Iyer, 1993, p. 14), cultural dislocation is considered an idiosyncratic rather than a normative event, a unique experience not determined by age norms or social expectations (Kimmel, 1990) (although certain cultural groupings e.g. Jews, may have internalized the experience of exile and even anticipate the possibility of uprooting). Becoming a refugee may, however, precipitate crises of normative non-events (Neugarten, cited in Kimmel, 1990) as the refugee experiences "truncated career plans [and] interrupted life in general" (Westwood & Lawrance, 1990, p. 148).

Also, because dislocation can occur at any point in a person’s life, it will have a different impact depending on which developmental issues the individual is facing. There is, however, conflicting evidence as to which age group is most vulnerable to the stressors associated with uprooting. According to Taft (1977), those with a strong sense of self will be most successful in adapting to a new culture. This would imply that, in general, middle-aged and older individuals who have successfully resolved crises of identity that occur in late adolescence and young adulthood should be more successful in negotiating the transition to a new culture than would younger adults. Ishiyama (1989) notes that the search for identity presents special difficulties for foreign adolescents adjusting to a new culture.

Chan and Lam (1987), however, found that among Vietnamese refugees in Quebec, those between the ages 20 and 35, fared much better than did those 35 and older. Those in the younger group "seemed to have felt a considerably less acute sense of loss or deprivation" than did the older persons for whom "the sense of loss was multi-faceted, and was sometimes all-encompassing" (p. 36). While the former "(especially the males) viewed Canada as a land of promise and opportunities" (p. 37) and responded with entrepreneurial
spirit, the latter experienced greater feelings of helplessness and powerlessness.

In this case it seems that, although the older individuals may have had a stronger sense of identity than those younger than them, this identity was deeply rooted in the culture they had left behind and they, therefore, experienced "a severe loss of personal coherence when [their] social context [was] fractured and destroyed" (Chan & Lam, 1987, p. 36). The younger Vietnamese, with a more flexible sense of self, less attachment to the past, and a brighter vision of their future, were better able to cope with their new situation.

**Models of transition and adaptation to a new culture.** Although each person's experience of cultural dissociation is unique, certain themes and processes have been identified as common to most exiles. Williams, *et al.* (1988) have proposed a four-stage psychosocial adjustment process for refugees, consisting of: (1) *pre-flight chaos*; (2) *period of flight*; (3) *refugee camps*, and; (4) *final resettlement*. Huy (cited in Dorais, 1987, pp. 61-62) has constructed a model of sociolinguistic adaptation from the experience of Vietnamese refugees in Quebec in which adaptation occurs in three consecutive phases: *installation*, *integration*, and *identification*.

Research on voluntary relocating groups (Lysgaard, 1955) has claimed that there is a common *U-curve* pattern to relocation experiences, with the individual going from an initial state of euphoria on encountering the new culture through a period of adjustment difficulties, to a final stage of successful adaptation. Others have built on this model suggesting a *W-curve* of adaptation (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963).

Such models have, however, been criticised for being over-simplistic, reductive, culture specific, lacking clarity (e.g. as to whether the stages are invariant), inconclusive,
and overgeneralized (Church, 1982). Furthermore, they tend to be linear and normative. But as Ishiyama (1989) has noted, "the phenomenon and experience of cross-cultural adjustment difficulties are complex and multilateral, beyond a linear theoretical conceptualization" (p. 54).

Identity

To avoid the oversimplification inherent in many cultural adaptation models requires closer attention to individual experience. In the context of this study, this means understanding the nature of self and what is meant by the terms self and identity (which I have used coterminously).

The self in context. Historically, western concepts of identity have tended to fall into one of two distinctive camps: the traditional psychological approach that sees identity as "something that exists within the individual as part of personality or a set of cognitions", or the sociological perspective which posits identity as "a set of roles and statuses arranged according to how they are defined by society" (Baumeister, 1986, p. 247). Such a distinction has, however, been increasingly viewed as "a false dichotomy" (D’Andrade, 1990, p. 160) spurring the development and acceptance of theories which view identity as involving both "outer context and inner self" (Baumeister, p. 246).

The major challenges to psychological theories which locate identity within the individual, originally came from the fields of anthropology and sociology. For example Mead’s (1934, 1970) social interactionism and Goffman’s (cited in Barudy, 1989) social ecology of the self see identity as being comprised of both social and individual elements. For Mead, "society [is] the context in which selves arise" (Manis, 1971, p. 10). The self is
an interactive process involving the "I"--the phenomenological self--and the "Me", predominantly the generalized other, an internalization of societal attitudes, definitions, understandings, and expectations through which the individual views her self and which provides stability and continuity to the self through time and across situations. Between identity and culture there exists a reciprocal causal relationship, a considerable degree of "overlap " and "fit" (Spiro, cited in D'Andrade, 1990, p. 153).

It would be setting the discipline of psychology up as the straw-man in this debate to portray it as advocating an exclusively individual-bound notion of identity. Various psychological theories, such as Erikson’s (1959) psychosocial developmental perspective, Kelly’s (cited in Weinreich, 1987) personal-construct theory of personality, and Weinreich’s (1987) identity structure analysis, have recognized that both internal factors and the outer world interact to make up a person’s identity. Similarly, the field of psychiatry has produced some advocates of an interactional model of self (see e.g. Sullivan, 1947).

However, while acknowledging the influence of social factors in the development of identity, psychological theories have still predominantly focused on processes supposedly occurring within the individual. And in the field of psychology generally, interactional approaches have been the exception, psychology being a "modernist" enterprise (Gergen, 1990, p. 23) which, historically, has emphasized so called "inner processes" over relational aspects (Laing, 1962).

The notion of a fully constituted, autonomous, unmediated subject (the self) as the legitimate focus of psychological inquiry has, however, been challenged on numerous fronts. Feminist theory has brought into question traditional (patriarchal) constructions of personhood, social constructionism has recast individual psychological traits as social and
historical constructions, *systems theory* has emphasized relations over individual entities, *critical theorists* have argued for the essential interpenetration of society and the individual and exposed some of the ideological functions of traditional psychology, and *deconstructionism* has argued that "persons as subjects are constructed in and through a symbolic system that fixes the subject in place while remaining beyond the subject's full mastery" (Sampson, 1989, p. 14). Also, and in this context most importantly, cross-cultural investigation has highlighted the cultural specificity of North America and European notions of the self.\(^\text{12}\)

What this means is that, although there may have been conceptual and practical (as well as ideological) utility in making a distinction between the phenomenological and socio-cultural aspects of self, no such simple separation exists, especially within the person, i.e. from his or her subjective perspective (Barudy, 1989; DeVos, Marsella, & Hsu, 1985; Price-Williams, 1979). As Rocha Lima (1984) writes, "We are our own historical, social, and cultural background, as well as the language in which our personalities are structured. In one's native country, there are reference points that help define one's being" (p. 94). The implications of this for the self-exiled person are clear; removal of the person from the social context in which the self has been created, from the social fabric into which and from which one's self is woven, inevitably means a rending in that cloth which constitutes identity.

**Self as narrative.** A further shortcoming of most psychological approaches to the study of identity has been that, although

\(^{12}\) Not only do theories about identity tend to be fixed in place, but also in time. Gagnon (1992), for one, argues that our contemporary understandings of self are a nineteenth century, western social construct, not a timeless, universal concept.
psychologists have developed measures of the identity-formation process...they have generally avoided the question of what identity looks like once formed, [of] what is the content and structure of the identity configuration which binds together a particular person's past, present, and future and provides his or her life with unity and purpose. (McAdams, 1988, p. 17)

Thus Erikson's (1959) psychosocial formulation which locates identity within a developmental framework, or Marcia's (1993) work which, following Erikson's, expands on the various processes by which identity develops or fails to develop, while describing the processes of identity development, provide only a partial picture of what identity is.

Similarly, statements from sociological theorists like those which tell us that "the self is composed of voices in conversation" (Gagnon, 1992, p. 231), while evocative and, perhaps, somewhat informative, do little to explain what this composition sounds like when listened to. Is it a babble, a cacophony of discordant voices or a cohesive symphony, brought together in a unified theme?

While there is no simple answer to what identity is, there is widespread support, from a variety of disciplines, for the idea that "identity is a life story, [one that] is a joint product of person and environment" (McAdams, 1988a, p. 18) and that story is a primary means by which people make meaning in, and from, their lives (Cochran, 1990). In the field of anthropology, for example, Rayfield (cited in Mishler, 1986) writes that the "story is...a natural psychological unit" (p. 67) providing support for the contention by the psychological theorist Sarbin (1986) that narrative may be considered as a root metaphor for psychology. Likewise, the work of the socio-linguist, Burgos (cited in Bertaux & Kohli, 1984) demonstrates how people live their lives according to either "epic" or "romanesque" narrative forms in which they discover meaning and identity. Others have posited the idea of identity as text (Harre, 1989; Sampson, 1989) jointly "written" by the individual and
Narration and the self in the twentieth century have become as inseparable as the epos and its singer in oral times: The writer spins the story as part of his self. The twentieth-century citizen sees himself through the eyes of various sciences as a layer cake of texts. (pp. 71-72)

As with any story, self-narrative develops over time. Although the life of the individual as a unique entity begins with his birth, the conscious construction and understanding of life story begins only in late adolescence (Erikson, 1959; McAdams, 1988a). According to McAdams, it is only with the "advent of formal operational thinking [that] the person becomes a biographer of the self" (p. 60). The notion of biographer, however, obscures the fact that the person is not only a recorder, but an actual participant in the creation of his identity, both the "I" and the "me" where "I is the narrator, me is the narrative figure in the life story" (Crites, 1986, p. 162).

The creation of identity, however, is not a solitary activity, life story being "co-authored" by the individual and his culture. A change in culture occasioned by self-exile,

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13 The textual analogy is not without its critics, even among post-modern theorists who have been some of its main proponents. Gergen (1988), for example, maintains that the textual metaphor of identity isolates and fixes meaning in the individual as subject, a notion that is anathema to postmodernism. Instead, he prefers the "metaphor of the dance or the game" (p. 50) as more accurately reflective of the unfixed, fluid, and relational nature of the self. In arguing for identity as text, however, one need not jettison the idea that such text may be ongoingly and jointly written and rewritten by the individual and society. Furthermore, even a dance or series of dances, if always participated in by the same individual may, over time, develop a certain thematic unity reflective of that person’s individual "style" and, thus, constitutive of his "identity".

14 But while active, conscious participation by the individual in the construction of her own life-story may begin in adolescence, the story includes episodes and themes from birth onwards (both those directly experienced and others simply told to the person). In fact, self-story incorporates familial and cultural themes that antedate the individual’s own life.
therefore, represents a potential crisis of identity, the nature and extent of which may vary:

Identity transformation—identity crisis, identity change—is story revision. Story revision may range from minor editing of an obscure chapter to a complete rewriting of the text, embodying an altered plot, a different cast of characters, a transformed setting, new scenes, and new themes. (McAdams, 1988a, p. 18)

In part the identity crisis for the culturally dislocated person occurs due to a rupture in the personal narrative arising out of context interruption (Barudy, 1989) a break in the exile’s existential projection. As Adler asserted, in contrast to Freud, we live our lives, in large part teleologically, pulled along or moving forward towards some future goal, not merely pushed and predetermined by childhood events. Personal narratives are not simply life histories but also life projections in that they contain both experiences from the past as well as events hoped for in the future. Dislocation not only rips out and severs one’s roots but also thwarts or alters the growth and development of new roots and limbs.

What this means for the dislocated person is that until and unless the old narrative is woven into a new one, it may persist with a life of its own, carrying on a parallel or shadow existence which interferes with the authoring of a new story. Thus, the culturally displaced person may inhabit, or be inhabited by, not just a single text, but by co-existing texts, a fact vividly illustrated by Hoffman (1989) in her recollection of her two almost simultaneous but opposing, and mutually exclusive, responses to the proposal of marriage by an American. In trying to determine her answer, she felt split, her Polish self saying "no", her American self answering "yes"; the American suitor did not fit into her Polish narrative. Being out of place in that story he did not fulfil her dreams, desires, or expectations.

In explaining her mixed reaction Hoffman writes that, "the structure of personality is shaped at least as deeply by culture as it is by gender" (p. 189) and that "perhaps you
cannot love [a] person when you don't love the world surrounding him" (p. 245).

Ambivalent in her feelings towards her adoptive country, she was equally ambivalent in her feelings towards her American suitor. (Quite possibly, a similar proposal from a Polish lover would, equally, have fallen short of her American expectations and been swallowed up by the cultural divide.) Even though she was living in America Hoffman’s Polish identity still had power to dictate her responses, in some ways more power than did her American identity, because events from her early life, being more deeply embedded in her sense of self, were possessed of an intensity and purity missing from later experiences.

Such ambiguities or decisional irreconcilables as those experienced by Hoffman (1989) need not be limited only to those crossing national cultures, but may be experienced by anyone simply in the act of growing up, in the move from the "culture" of childhood to that of adulthood. Moving to a new country may, however, give childhood fantasies greater force. The interruption of self-narrative, the freezing, as it were, of that narrative in a different time and place, may imbue it with a life-in-death glow by embalming and preserving it in all its luminous qualities. It may enhance the nostalgic and romantic qualities of the past since the validity, the realizability of youthful dreams cannot be checked against the reality of what might have occurred if the individual had stayed in his original context, if the story had been played out as initially conceived. Exile, therefore, means that at least some anticipated self-narrative(s) will likely be left hanging, incomplete, creating a dis-integrated sense of self since "the more complete the story the more integrated the self" (Crites, 1986, p. 162).

**The embodied self.** For all that it may be conceptually accurate and useful to describe identity as a text, this idea is not without its limitations, one of which is an
overemphasis of the cognitive aspects of the self and a concomitant ignoring, or at least de-emphasis of the corporeal (Gilligan, 1994). Similar criticism has been levelled against constructionist theories of the self. For Olesen (1992), the almost exclusively cognitive focus of Mead’s symbolic interactionism overlooks the fact that the self is rooted in the body such that "body is at once part of the environment and constitutes a lived environment for the self" (p. 214). Consequently, the person who undergoes a traumatic event may develop an embodied "biography of vulnerability" (p. 215).

Therefore, that self-narrative is lived in and through physical experience is not just important theoretically, but has implications--emotional, psychological, physiological--for the individual living her story. It has particular significance for the person whose story is in the process of changing, such as the culturally displaced individual who is under pressure to assimilate to a new culture, to discard her cultural heritage:

If you’re asking people to forget what their history is, it’s like asking a tree to become disassociated from its roots. That’s not just a metaphor. I think that the human psyche works very much like an echo system and there’s an echo system of the psyche. (Griffin, interviewed in O’Connell, 1994)

As an emigrant from India living in Canada remarked on his visceral response to hearing negative and stereotyping comments about his homeland:

Sometimes I react so violently and so angrily to things that are said about India, and then I say, 'Why the hell do I do it? I’m not living there any more.' But it’s this atavistic thing, you see. It’s not in the brain any more, it’s very deep in the spinal cord and it’s a reflex that comes out. (O’Connell, 1994)

Or Breytenbach (1984), expressing the deep almost physical pain of separation: "I have Cape Town in my bones. Long street runs down my spine" (p. 97).

The physical dimension to psychological trauma may be especially acutely felt by those who suffer (or have suffered) under oppressive regimes. For these people the embodiment of lived experience cannot be theoretical, for "it is politics--torture, suffering,
deprivation—which reminds us that our signifier-shaped existence is more corporeal than textual" (Eagleton, 1994, p. 12).

**Self as moral construct.** The self, then, is more than just an isolated and/or disembodied narrative. It is an *embodied, enacted* tale. That is, life-story is rooted in physical being and lived in relation to others. Because identity is created in, and out of, relationship with others, integrity of self requires more than just a coherent or well told story, it also necessitates "good" moral form, moral integrity (in the sense of an articulated, integrated set of values, believed in by the individual who holds them).

For McAdams (1988a, following Erikson) the development of identity and the development of personal morality are interdependent, integral to each other, such that "identity and ideology are two sides of the same coin" (p. 64). (Ideology, is here taken to be synonymous with morality, i.e. a coherent set of beliefs regarding action in the world and relationship to others.)

For Harre (1989), too, self is fundamentally a moral construct, "'I' being a form of life, a moral community that has been presupposed by the uses of the first person, not a kind of hidden inner cognitive engine," and that, therefore, "the human individual is, above all, in those societies that recognize autonomy, a moral phenomenon" (p. 26). Similarly for Althusser (cited in Wagner, 1990), "ideology slides into all human activity...it is identical with the 'lived experience' of human existence itself" (p. 28).

However one formulates causal direction between self and morality (does ideology underlie identity, or vice versa?) it seems evident that the period of identity formation includes a questioning of self in society that involves personal morality. The development of identity means working one's way through questions of fundamental justice, of what
constitutes right and wrong, and of how to respond to injustice. Thus, Gordimer (1983), writing of growing up white in South Africa:

I date the development of my consciousness of being South African rather than having any other social identity from...the discovery of the lie. The great South African lie....From [that] time...I had the opportunity to become what I think of as a South African. I had the responsibility to accept what I now knew. Which is to say that I believe that is where the identity is to be formed [italics added]: working one's way through the central definitive experience of black and white as people, with undifferentiated claims on life, whatever these--skin, language, culture--makes them differ from one other. (pp. 119-120)

Such a working through required of the young white South African that she confront fundamental questions of morality and identity: "Who am I? What is my responsibility to others?" It was the difficulty of answering such questions that drove Gordimer to contemplate self-exile and many other white South Africans to take such a step.

**Identity, morality, and culture.** Underlying many of the identity development models postulated in western cultures has been an assumption of universality of experience. But just as "ideas, values, conceptions of time, the notion of cause and effect [are all] culturally learned" (Torrey, 1986, p. 23), identity is largely a cultural construct.

In response to the western bias of many identity development models some cross-cultural theorists have generated models which attempt to take into account the context in which identity is formed. One such model, the *Racial/Cultural Identity Development* model (RCID) (Sue & Sue, 1990) may serve as a useful beginning for the study of identity development in culturally mixed settings.

Sue & Sue's (1990) White Identity Development model (a variation on the R/CID), although created in an American context accurately reflects, in its general outline, possible stages undergone by whites who grew up in apartheid South Africa since some of the
assumptions underlying this model were (and likely still are) as applicable to South Africa as to the U.S.A.: for example, the claim that "racism is a basic and integral part of U.S. life and permeates all aspects of [its] culture and institutions" and "that whites are socialized into U.S. society and, therefore inherit biases, stereotypes, and racist attitudes beliefs, and behaviors of the society" (p. 113).

According to Sue & Sue (1990) the developmental sequence undergone by (liberal) whites is, briefly, as follows: (1) in the conformity stage the chief attitudes and beliefs are "ethnocentric [with] minimal awareness of the self as a racial being...and a belief in the universality of values and norms governing behavior"; (2) in the dissonance stage the white person "is forced to deal with the inconsistencies that have been compartmentalized or encounters information/experiences at odds with his/her denial"; (3) following dissonance the white person moves to resistance and immersion in which he sees and becomes aware of racism which seems all-pervasive, as a result of which he feels guilt, possible racial self-hatred and to which he may respond by either becoming a "paternalistic protector" or by "overidentification with another minority group"; (4) in entering the subsequent introspective stage the white person recognizes the dysfunctional nature of guilt and understands the need to go beyond a simple rejection of whiteness; (5) in the final stage of integrative awareness "a non-racist white identity begins to emerge [in which] the person no longer denies personal responsibility for perpetuating racism, but tends not to be immobilized by guilt" (all quotes pp. 114-116).

Allowing for the differences in culture between the U.S.A. and South Africa and for the normative nature of any linear model, these stages and descriptions are, I think, an accurate reflection of the white South African liberal’s progress in apartheid South Africa.
The white person living in apartheid South Africa would, I believe, have been most likely to leave his country in the dissonance or resistance stages when the attempt to resolve the contradictions, both internal and external, might have proved most difficult. Achievement of the last two stages, integration and introspection, would then have been facilitated by being in exile. (Although, with events currently taking place in South Africa, achievement of the last two stages may now be more feasible for whites remaining in that country.)

Identity development, then, involves moral or ideological crises the resolution of which allow for either identity formation or identity diffusion (Marcia, 1993), either narrative integrity and cohesiveness or narrative dis-integration and lack of cohesion. Indeed, "the most tumultuous identity crises are ideological in that the entire background or setting of the story previously assumed to be given, is transformed" (McAdams, 1988a, p. 250). Self-exile, in which one setting is exchanged for another, constitutes just such a "tumultuous" identity crisis. For those, like the white, self-exiled South African who felt that, in "running away", she had betrayed her own principles, such a crisis may have been particularly difficult to resolve since "few things are harder to restore than lost honour, an impaired morality" (Klima, 1993, p. 202).

**Approach of the Present Investigation**

Qualitative research aims at an understanding of phenomena from the perspective of the individual in context. The value of a qualitative approach in psychological research has been persuasively argued (see e.g. Cochran, 1990; Colaizi, 1978; Osborne, 1990; Polyzoi, 1985). The traditional method of qualitative research is the case study design (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989), the legitimacy and usefulness of which has been established through its extensive use throughout the human sciences including the fields of psychology (Mishler,

**Case study method.** According to Yin (1984), "case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 13). A related, but slightly different definition is that a case is "a particular situation selected by the researcher in which some phenomenon will be described by participants' meanings of events and processes" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p. 93). The present research fulfils the criteria of both definitions: the question asked is, "What is the experience of identity rupture and repair for self-exiled, white South Africans?", the phenomenon being studied is not under the researcher's control and exists within a naturally occurring context, and the phenomenon is described through co-researchers' words and understandings of events.

Case studies allow the researcher to apply the findings gained through study of a particular case to an understanding of a broader phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989) while retaining the integrity and meaning of events as they are experienced by the individual in real life (Yin, 1984).

However, to qualify as legitimate research a case study must fulfil the requirements of credibility by addressing issues of validity and reliability (McMillan & Schumacher). In cases of exploratory or descriptive research such as in the present study, construct validity and reliability are of primary concern. These can be ensured through principles of evidence collection, viz: using multiple sources of evidence, creating a case study data base, and maintaining a chain of evidence (Yin, 1984).
Construct validity is enhanced by multiple sources of evidence. Although the present research does not employ such multiple sources it does involve multiple cases "the evidence from [which] is often considered more compelling [than single case studies], and the overall study...therefore regarded as being more robust" (Yin, 1984, p. 52). Construct validity also "relates to the degree to which the generalizations and conceptual categories have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher" (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 1989, p. 192). This may be achieved through validation by each of the co-researchers of his or her case study account, a process which also addresses the issue of internal reliability (McMillan & Schumacher).

External reliability refers to "the extent to which independent researchers could discover the same phenomena in the same or similar situation" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p. 189). Because the qualitative process is personalistic (and, therefore, not completely replicable) external reliability is provided for by making explicit all aspects of the design: the researcher role, informant selection, social context, data collection and analysis strategies, and analytical premises (McMillan & Schumacher, pp. 188-189). In addition reliability is achieved through the creation of a case study data base which is retrievable "so that in principle, other investigators can review the evidence directly" (Yin, 1984, pp. 98-99). The data base for this study consists of the transcripts of interviews which are separate and distinct from the case study accounts.

Reliability is also enhanced through the maintenance of a chain of evidence by which "an external observer [can] follow the derivation of any evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions" and be able to do this in either direction. (Yin, 1984, p. 102). The chain of evidence in the present study moves from the research question through the data base (the narrative interviews), through the case study accounts, to a
comparative analysis. At all points the links are explicit and, thus, available for examination by the reader.

As with all research, a case study design must also address issues of external validity (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989; Yin, 1984). External validity relates to the generalizability of results. In a multiple case study design each case is equivalent to a single experiment, but generalizability is based on the logic of replication not inference to a population. Thus, "case studies...are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes" (Yin, p. 21). Emphasis is placed on exploration and examination of accounts for a pattern of meaning, on "analytic generalization" rather than on "statistical generalization" (Yin, p. 38). Unique events and experiences are discounted and what remains is what is common among the cases studied.

In the present study three individuals cases are examined both individually and jointly. The individual examination occurs through the case study account and interpretive comments. The joint analysis occurs through a comparative analysis, a search for common structure, meaning, and themes. Each case is considered a replication. From these replications, common narrative structures, themes and meanings are derived.

**Narrative interviewing.** "Life stories are shown to be rich ground for the formulation of substantive theories, which are conceived of as interpretation rather than scientific explanations" (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984, p. 215). The eliciting, recounting, and interpretation of personal narrative (or life-story) through interview constitutes an attempt to render accurately and to understand a phenomenon (in this case, self-exile) as experienced and made sense of by the individual herself. This represents a phenomenological approach, a "method that remains with human experience as it is experienced, one which tries to sustain contact
with experience as it is given" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 53). Because of its "fidelity to phenomena" (Colaizzi, p. 52) it can be argued that such an approach is more objective than other (particularly quantitative) data gathering methods.

While objectivity (i.e. accuracy) is always a concern in research, the narrative interview is not, as the tradition of scientific positivism has asserted, simply an impartial recording of objective reality by a neutral observer, but a "form of discourse" (Mishler, 1986, p. ix), a jointly constructed dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewed. The perspective and input of the interviewer is material to this joint project.

Narrative interviews are, thus, not context-free, quantitatively measurable, stimulus-response interchanges, but "speech events" (Mishler, 1986, p. ix), meaningful interactions involving and "directly governed by rules for the use of speech" (Hymes, cited in Mishler, p. 35). Their analysis and interpretation do not derive from theoretically neutral, empirically verifiable facts, but "are based on a theory of discourse and meaning" (Mishler, p. ix).

A primary underlying theoretical assumption of narrative interviewing is that "interviewee responses [are] narrative accounts or stories [and] telling stories is one of the significant ways individuals construct and express meaning" (Mishler, 1986, p. 67) and create personal identity (McAdams, 1988a, 1988b). Stories "represent a 'unity of consciousness' which joins together the raw data of human perception and casts it into an interpretive framework, one that literally and figuratively lends meaning to it and derives sense from it" (Morisette, 1993, p. 1). This is as true of personal stories as it is of stories in general.

**Interpretation and analysis.** Simple reiteration of personal narratives while valuable is, however, insufficient. Understanding comes from hermeneutical analysis which "looks
through language to that which language signifies" (Jordan, p. 5). But structuralist and post-structuralist discourse has shown that there is no simple one to one relationship between a sign and that which it signifies (Sarup, 1989). So while, traditionally, the "goal of the hermeneutic effort [has been] defined as 'meaning' or 'truth' or 'reality'" (Jordan, p. 5), contemporary hermeneutics makes no claims to absolute veracity or meaning (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984). Instead what is searched for is credible meaning, rather than "the truth". Although this creates the potential for a shallow relativism and subjectivism, the use of more than one life story counters such tendencies in that meaning is derived not from a single case but from multiple cases.

To avoid unverifiable or dogmatic claims to "the truth" contemporary hermeneutics focuses on both "the life history as a text or discourse to be interpreted....and the interpreter of the text" (Watson & Watson-Franke, 1985, p. 59) and attempts to take into account and make explicit the socio-cultural context in which the participant lived and lives, the individual context (both the larger cultural context and the particular context that gives rise to a personal narrative), the immediate context of life history construction (the context in which the life history is elicited), the pre-understandings (Gadamer; Heidegger, both cited in Watson & Watson-Franke) of the researcher, and the dialectical relationship (the synthesis at which the researcher arrives as a result of the interview process).

However, despite the researcher's best efforts, attempts to fully and accurately represent and interpret the reality of another will, in a sense, always fall short, "ethnographic truths [being] inherently partial" more "true fiction" (Clifford, 1986, p. 7) or fictive truth than the whole truth (if such a thing exists). In part this is due to inevitable acts of exclusion, alteration, and narrative smoothing (Spence, 1986) in life-history telling, recording and interpretation, in part because there is no necessary "correspondence between a life as lived,
a life as experienced, and a life as told" (Bruner, 1984, p. 7) and that same life as subsequently retold by a researcher. The experiencing, the telling, and the retelling are each a construction, an improvisation upon the preceding "stage", the last being a joint construction by interviewee and interviewer.

But, because identity as self-narrative is itself, "true fiction", a story created out of "actual" personal experiences, the life stories gathered in research interviewing may be thought of as "truthful" reflections of the co-researchers' lives at the points at which they have been collected. As Wiersma (1988) has pointed out, even very unrevealing (read "untrue") personal narratives can be seen to be symbolically true if examined and understood within their larger contexts.
CHAPTER III  
Methodology  

**Research Design**

The intent of this research is to gain an understanding of the effects of cultural dislocation on identity by examining narrative accounts of self-exile. That is, this study attempts to understand "the things themselves" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 53, following Heidegger), the phenomena of (and relationship between) self-exile and identity. Since identity is, here, considered to be life-story (McAdams, 1990) as lived, experienced, and told by persons themselves, the focus is on personal accounts and meaning.

Phenomenological research is akin to the therapeutic relationship; in fact, it "is a mode of existential therapy" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 69). It is (or should be) dialogic and should occur in a situation of trust. Attention to trust and mutuality is not simply an ethical consideration but also a practical one, since "interviewing practices that empower respondents also produce narrative accounts" (Mishler, 1986, p. 119). In order to evoke personal narratives that are "rich", "thick", and accurately reflect "participant meanings" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p. 94) requires that the researcher address the power asymmetry that marks the standard research interview which,

through both its form and the hierarchic structure of the interviewer-interviewee relationship tends to obscure relations between events and experiences and to disrupt individuals' attempts to make coherent sense of what is happening to them and around them. (Mishler, 1986, p. 120)

Empowerment of the interviewee is, thus, central to the gathering of "truthful" narrative accounts. The chief means of empowering interviewees is to actively involve them, as much as possible, as partners in the research process.
In this study co-researcher empowerment is addressed through collaboration and transparency (Gergen, 1988): full, and ongoing, disclosure of the intent and process of the research as well as the presuppositions, relevant background, and experiences of the researcher, the accepting of the co-researchers' words and meanings as valid and legitimate in their own right, the "yielding [of] control to the co-researchers of the flow and content of the interviews" (Laub, 1991, p. 104), and the co-researchers' participation in the interpretation of their own meanings. The narrative accounts collected here (which are not simply transcriptions but a rendering of the participants' stories) were read and validated by the co-researchers themselves.

Although the emphasis in this study is on personal meaning (of self-exile and of identity) and that, therefore, personal narratives (even their inaccuracies) are inherently truthful (Wiersma, 1988), distortions and misrepresentations can occur. The vicissitudes of memory, participant desire to represent the self in a certain light, the (hidden) demands of the interview process, ideological bromides that obscure the "truth" (Wiersma), can all hinder accurate recounting and interpretation.

Meaning is contextually grounded (Cochran, 1990; Mishler, 1986). Since "one cannot 'control for' cultural context" (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984, p. 217), awareness of context must be an integral part of interviewing and interpretation. Researcher knowledge of the various contexts (the plural is intentional) in which the life story has been lived, constructed, and subsequently told can help counter the effects of distortion.

In the present study the researcher, like the co-researchers, has experienced self-exile from South Africa. While similarity of experience might be seen as a liability in terms of observer bias, in narrative interviewing such familiarity may be an asset (Mishler, 1986; Rocha Lima, 1984) allowing the researcher to understand, appreciate, and interpret otherwise
hidden contextual issues (as well as cultural and linguistic nuances and subtleties), thus potentially enhancing both the eliciting of stories and their subsequent analysis.

Problems of researcher bias can also be addressed through cross-validation of findings and interpretation. In this study the co-researchers read, made alterations, and provided their personal responses to the initial case study accounts, which information was incorporated into the final rendering of the personal stories or elsewhere in the study. In addition the researcher engaged in ongoing discussion with his supervisor to check the accuracy of the accounts and validity of the interpretations.

In this study, then, narrative veracity was accounted for through co-researcher empowerment, researcher contextual awareness, and cross-validation. Given the presumed trustworthiness of the narrative accounts, the findings (both the interpretive comments and comparative analysis) lay claim to validity on the basis that the evidence on which the findings are based is explicit in the case study accounts.

**Procedures**

In brief, the procedures followed in this study were:

1. Identification of co-researchers.

2. Co-researcher screening interviews.

3. Narrative interviews (including self-exile change-line) to identify significant events and to elicit in-depth accounts of the self-exile experience as perceived by each of the co-researchers.

4. Transcription of interview audiotapes and rendering of personal stories of self-exile into case study accounts.

5. Validation interviews to check for errors of omission and commission and to gather co-
researcher responses to reading their case study accounts.

6. Interpretive commentary for each of the individual accounts and comparative analysis of all three.

Co-researchers

Through a network of contacts, a list of ten potential co-researchers was drawn up. From these, three were chosen for participation in the study. The participants selected were two women (aged 46 and 54) and one man (aged 47).

Criteria for selection. Participants were selected according to criteria outlined by Cochran and Claspell (1987) for phenomenological research. This means that they fulfilled three requirements: they had undergone the targeted experience (self-exile from South Africa to Canada), they could articulate their experience (were able to recall actual events and experiences as well as express their thoughts and feelings about them), and they met the screening criteria; that is, they had left South Africa under their own volition but had felt compelled to do so primarily (or to a significant degree) for reasons of conscience. In Canada they had come to the decision (however ambivalently held) not to return to live permanently in South Africa. In other words they had come to terms, with whatever degree of success, with living in Canada. For the purposes of this study it was presumed that a self-exile must have been here for a minimum of five years to allow for adjustment to a new culture. The co-researchers had, in fact, been here for a period ranging from 14 to 20 years.

Since this is an exploratory study co-researchers were chosen to represent a range of experiences (within the limitations created by having a small number of participants). Differences in gender, marital status, cultural (and/or denominational background), and
degree of political involvement and identification were considered to be factors that might influence identity change in self-exile and hence were included as criteria for choosing participants.

The study, thus, includes members of both genders (two women and one man) of which two (one man, and one woman) were married, and the other (the remaining woman) was single. Because many white South African self-exiles are also Jewish it was deemed important to include at least one representative from this group. (Jewish, here means primarily a cultural, rather than a denominational affiliation.)

Because, in South Africa, the personal and the political are inextricably entwined (Adam & Moodley, 1993) and the reasons for leaving would, therefore, involve both of these aspects, the co-researchers were also chosen to cover a range of political activity from low participation and identification (Paul, who wanted to do some good but did not participate in what is traditionally called "politics"), through mid-level involvement (Claire, who was targeted by the police despite her limited political activism), to high involvement (Jane, a former member of the Communist Party imprisoned for her political work).

A primary consideration in the choice of participants was their age at the time of going into self-exile. Since it is in the definition of self-exile that the person leave her country through some degree of personal choice, it was a requirement that the participants be adults at the time of departure (i.e. in a position to make their own decision to leave).

In addition, because the purpose of this research is to examine the impact of dislocation on identity it was important that the co-researchers not be in a pre-identity development phase (according to Erikson's, 1959, *psychosocial identity development model*) at the time of leaving. Although identity development does not halt at any given time and chronological age alone is no guarantee of being *identity achieved* (Marcia, 1993) having
participants who, at the time of leaving South Africa, were not in their adolescence or childhood, removed pre-adult identity development as a complicating factor. At the time of leaving South Africa the three participants ranged in age from 26 to 31.

Although all of the above factors were considerations in participant selection, actual selection was opportunistic, since the co-researchers were not drawn from a large random sample.

**Research Interview**

The interviewing process consisted of three parts; the screening interview, the narrative interview, and the validation interview.

**Screening interview.** The function of the screening interview was to check that the potential participants qualified for inclusion in the study by virtue of having undergone the targeted experience. Since potential participants had received a letter of initial contact which outlined the nature of the study and explained what participation in the study would involve, some self-screening presumably occurred.

The screening interview took place either in person or over the telephone. The qualifying criteria were further delineated and it verified that the individual conformed to these criteria (as outlined above). The person was not asked whether self-exile had affected their sense of self since it is the purpose of this study to see whether, and in what ways, self exile impacts upon identity. Having verified that the potential co-researchers fit the requirements of the study, a time and place for the narrative interview was set up with each person.
Narrative interview. The function of the narrative interview was to elicit a personal story of the experience of self-exile. This involved a two-step procedure: the construction by the co-researcher of a self-exile change-line on which she marked the significant events of the experience, followed by the telling of her story of self-exile. The life-lines took approximately ten minutes to construct. The three interviews took 1.25, 1.5, and 2.25 hours, respectively, to complete. The interviews were audiotaped to allow for later transcription and analysis.

Each of the interviews began informally as a means of establishing contact and putting both co-researcher and researcher at ease. The researcher then explained the purpose of the study as well as his personal reasons for undertaking this research. He also disclosed pertinent information about his background, both academic and personal, regarding his own experience as a self-exile and interest in the subject. (Such disclosure was brief so as not to colour the participants' telling of their story). The purpose of this initial contact was to establish rapport, establish the dialogic relationship, and empower the participant.

The participant was then asked to construct a change-line covering the period of self-exile. This period was defined as being from the time that the person made the decision to leave South Africa up until the time that he felt that he had "come to terms with" living in Canada. The change-line was intended as a linear, chronological representation of the significant events of self-exile, its purpose being to help the co-researcher recall and order the story as well as to focus the interview.

The change-line consisted of a line drawn by the participant on paper the end-points of which represented the beginning and end of the self-exile experience. It was suggested that the co-researcher divide the line into chapters, each chapter marking a significant event (or period) in the self-exile process. The co-researchers were given as much time as they
required to complete the line.

Although the construction of the change-line occurred in the presence of the researcher, the researcher did not in any way participate in this process apart from explaining its structure and function and answering any related questions. This was done to allow the participants full control over the creation of the change-line within the parameters given.

One participant declined to do the change-line saying she felt that she did not need to. The other two completed theirs, one participant including unsolicited information (from family and early childhood), that helped contextualize the self-exile narrative. The two who did do the change-line ended the line in the present. That is, at the time of the interviews, they felt that they were still undergoing changes as a result of self-exile. The change-lines were kept by the participants during the course of the interview and referred to as she or he chose. Subsequently the change-lines became part of the data base for analysis.

The self-exile interview proper took the form of a dialogue. The interview was informal, open-ended, and semi-structured with the participant controlling the flow and content of the narrative within the broadly defined parameters of the interview. (As noted, one participant, Paul, provided fairly extensive genealogical information about his family’s history of dislocation, while another, Jane, talked at some length about her prison experience that led to the decision to leave). To help elicit the stories (through empowering the clients) the researcher employed basic counselling skills, specifically active listening, empathy, open-ended questioning and, where appropriate, self-disclosure, and discussion.

The end point of the interview was mutually determined by researcher and co-researcher and, in each case, occurred when the story was brought up to the present. At that point the researcher asked the participants about the experience of the interview itself. In each case the comments were favourable and along the lines that it had been a useful
experience, that it had helped each of them look at cultural dislocation in a new way, one which provided an overview of the events and experiences.

**Validation interview.** The purpose of the validation interview was primarily to validate the narrative accounts and, in the process, to empower the co-researchers by including them in the final rendering of their own narratives, as well as to elicit their responses to the experience of reading their own stories. Each of the co-researchers was given a copy of his or her case study account with a request that he or she read it to check for errors and to make any changes or additions that needed making. The results of the co-researchers’ self-reviews are reported at the end of Chapter IV.

**Case Study Accounts: Stories of Self-Exile**

Audiotapes of all the interviews were transcribed. The transcriptions were then rendered, by the researcher, into narrative accounts according to the following principles. First, each of the accounts was arranged in a narrative form, that is, into a story with a beginning, middle, and end. Second, because the co-researchers did not always relate experiences in the sequence in which they had occurred, events were arranged chronologically. Third, for the most part, the co-researchers’ own words were used but were altered from the first to the third person (and, for reasons of confidentiality, the names of the co-researchers and those mentioned in the narrative were changed). In addition, where appropriate, links and themes that appeared to be implicit in the narratives but were not mentioned by the co-researcher, were elucidated. The reason for these "narrative interventions" was to give the stories a clarity and coherence that simple verbatim transcriptions would not have, while providing an accurate rendition of each of the stories.
The validation interviews (see above) were used to verify that the accounts were accurate and that they had retained the essence of the co-researchers' stories.

**Comparative Analysis (and Interpretive Comments)**

As Cochran (1990) notes, "a story is indefinitely analyzable" (p. 17). But in order that both researcher and research (not to mention reader) not be held hostage to interminable theorizing, explication and analysis must find their method. The approach taken with the personal narratives gathered here is based on the assumption that "we live experiences as a story, aware of a beginning, a middle, and a striving for closure" (Cochran, p. 14).

The general movement in life-story is from *incompletion*, the birth of longing, through to its opposite, *completion*, the realization of desire (Cochran, 1990), from irresolution, through (attempted) resolution to "the sense of an ending" (Kermode, 1967). But, people's lives as lived are seldom as neat as those same lives as told. Beginnings, middles, and endings, especially to the individual living them, are seldom tidy, although upon reflection they may gather, or have imposed on them, an orderliness that helps to make sense of the whole.

Using a hermeneutic approach (see above) I dwelt on the individual accounts until I was highly sensitized to the elements in each story. I identified the salient features and pivotal points in a systematic fashion and consulted with my research supervisor before arriving at the research findings.

In examining these stories a structure of self-exile narrative emerged that resembled the framework of a *rite of passage*; both the experience of self-exile and the story of that experience seemed to reflect the three phases of a rite of passage: *separation (preliminal)*,
transition (liminal), and incorporation (postliminal) (van Gennep, 1965).

Broadly speaking (there were individual variations) the first stage, separation, involved the period up to, and including, actual departure from South Africa, the second stage, transition, included the journey from homeland to adoptive land as well as the first years in Canada, and the third phase, incorporation, the period during which the self-exile adapted to his new homeland and came to terms with being away from his birthplace. (See below, Chapter V, "Comparative Analysis", for fuller discussion.)

The test of adequacy for a narrative analysis is its ability to render a story understandable in itself, as well as comparable to other stories, without doing violence to that story's integrity, its "truthfulness" as experienced and told by the individual who has lived it. I believe that the rite of passage provides a framework that fulfils these requirements.

Because life-story interviewing privileges phenomenological experience, meanings, themes, and understandings, to a large extent, have been derived directly from the narratives themselves. However, in response to the fictive and mythological (Elsbree, 1982; Frye, 1990; May, 1991) elements in personal narrative, interpretation, in part, involved a literary-type analysis, examining story structure and themes.

At the same time I have mentioned certain psychological theories, including cross-cultural (e.g. invalidation, self-shock) and developmental theories (e.g. Erikson's psychosocial approach) in interpreting and discussing the self-exile stories.

By attempting to integrate conventionally "scientific" psychological theories with more literary approaches I have attempted to follow the lead of those who emphasize the value of an interdisciplinary approach in the human sciences and encourage incorporating literariness and artistry in scientific discourse (Clifford, 1986). I have done this in the spirit of generative theory and practice as proposed by Gergen (1988).
The narratives gathered here reflect only a segment of each of the co-researcher’s still ongoing lives, essentially from the moment (or moments) of deciding to leave South Africa and the events which led to this decision, up till a time of (an, at least, partial) coming to terms with life in self-imposed exile, from dissolution to resolution. However, as the parts often reflect the whole, since "in lives, the central characteristic is repetition of experience" (Cochran, 1990, p. 11), and cycles exist within cycles, so the stories covered here call upon and echo elements from their narrators’ lives from the period before self-exile and, in all likelihood, anticipate or prefigure events yet to be lived.

In these analyses, special emphasis has been placed on the importance of context in creating and maintaining a personal text (Cochran, 1990). However, because a text is dependent upon a particular context does not mean that the latter simply determines the former. Rather the text-context relationship is one of interdependence. Just as a context supports a certain text so a text also helps create and support the context in which it exists.

Although the primary objective of this study is to understand the self-exile experience by looking for a common structure and themes in the stories of self-exiles, there were important aspects of each story that might have been lost if only the common elements had been emphasized and examined. To avoid this potential loss, and because each story is meaningful in, and of, itself (not simply in what it shares with other stories) I appended to the end of each account some interpretive comments.

As noted earlier, hermeneutic interpretation is not intended to be definitive. Rather, exegesis and analysis should be credible and supported by the evidence. While the case study accounts were read and validated by the co-researchers, the interpretive comments and comparative analysis were not (although they were discussed with and read by the thesis supervisor). Any interpretations (both in the interpretive comments and in the comparative
analysis) are, therefore, those of the researcher and I am responsible for all mistakes, misinterpretations, and discrepancies.
CHAPTER IV  
Results: Stories of Self-Exile

Claire’s Story

In 1979, at age 31, Claire B. decided to leave South Africa. Together with her husband, John, and their two children, four-year old Alex and six-week old Eve, she left home, friends, and family, to move to Canada, first Toronto and then Vancouver where they settled. At present Claire is a practising counsellor.

For as far back as she can remember Claire always felt that she would not spend her life in South Africa. Thus, in leaving her birthplace Claire was fulfilling an idea that had taken root early in her life. Having established itself, this nascent conviction that she would leave was sustained by experiences of both a both political and personal nature.

Politically speaking Claire grew up in a family that was quite anti-government, one in which there was always political talk going on; every time a new restrictive law was brought in everyone would be very upset. But while all the members of her family felt an immense frustration with government policies Claire, because she was a really sensitive child, took it on more than the others.

Although her parents had been the ones to sew the seeds of Claire’s political awareness, as she grew older she began to see an hypocrisy in their stance. She observed that while they were politically vocal they were not politically active; they mostly just paid lip service to their ideals. What most shocked her was their attitude towards blacks because Claire had grown up believing that her mother and father would welcome people of all races as equals. But Claire’s parents were really only okay with blacks as long as they remained
in their place as servants. Claire reacted against this hypocrisy and went far beyond what her parents espoused politically, to the point where they eventually rejected her politics, although she was never really a radical.

Claire’s emerging politics, thus, put her at increasing odds with both her parents and her country. But the groundwork for Claire’s disaffection with South Africa had already been laid earlier by her mother’s disparaging view of South African culture. Although her mother had fairly deep roots in South Africa, her forebears arriving there with the 1820 settlers from England, she identified more with England than with South Africa. She spent the first two years of her married life in her ancestral homeland and always portrayed it as a wonderful place. Throughout her life she has remained a true anglophile and, through her, Claire grew up with a sense of South Africa as inferior to England.

As a result Claire felt a shame about her country and her identity, both because she had come to see South Africa as culturally inferior and because she belonged to a group of people who were capable of perpetrating such horrible laws and generally behaving the way that whites did. To Claire South Africa is a shame-filled society, its people carrying a sense of the terrible things that have gone on through the entire history of that country.

But shame, for Claire, was not only a cultural legacy, it was also a familial one. Her family was filled with shame from all kinds of problems, mental illness being one. As a child in that family Claire had inherited that sense of shame. At the time, however, Claire was not aware that what she felt was shame even as she experienced its effects. Her ability to put a name to, and understand her feelings, came only later, once she had moved to Canada and put some distance between herself and her family and country.

Apart from feelings of shame, Claire also experienced other difficulties because of her family and her culture. In her family Claire was the youngest, the only daughter with
two older brothers and everything, everyone, in that family was male-oriented, even her mother. In this respect, her family was simply a reflection of South African society as a whole which was, and still is, very paternalistic and patriarchal.

In South Africa a woman is only valued if she's a wife and mother but being a wife and mother is not valued in itself. Girls and women are put in a terrible double-bind, expected to fulfil cultural expectations and yet devalued for doing so. The only careers that were considered acceptable for Claire were nursing and teaching. Her mother would say things like, "I think you should be a teacher because then you can be home when your children come home from school". As a girl growing up and, later, as a woman Claire felt that she didn't have a voice, that nothing she had to say was of any interest to anyone.

Claire fulfilled some of these familial and cultural expectations of her as a women by doing her nursing training. Yet she yearned for something different, a life away from the strictures of family and country. So after completing her training she left South Africa to travel in Europe with the intention of not returning. One year later, however, she decided that she could not afford to study abroad and returned to finish her degree. (She had completed one year at university in South Africa prior to nursing school).

Even after returning, however, Claire knew that she would eventually leave. She simply couldn't see the country ever working itself out. At university she studied African History and saw what had happened in most African countries that gained independence from colonialism. There was so much chaos and the same is happening in South Africa now. She felt that South Africa would not be a place where she could flourish. Yet despite these feelings part of her wanted to stay and fight, fight for the rights of blacks. She felt that people like her needed to stay.

But Claire had some frightening experiences that caused her to back away from the
political struggle and, concomitantly, strengthened her determination to leave. Claire was harassed by the Secret Police, even though, politically speaking, she had really done nothing. All that she had done was to have received some unsolicited literature on the South African Communist Party (SACP) from an Irish Republican Army (IRA) member whom she’d met in London. The South African secret police, of course, found out about it and visited her apartment, which really scared her.

There were also other factors that made her and her family a target. John worked for an organization in Johannesburg that was trying to improve urban life for blacks. He also happens to be related to a well known South African writer critical of the political system. Twice Claire had her phone tapped, once when she was a student in Cape Town and then again in Johannesburg after she and John were married. The two of them also received anonymous, threatening phone calls.

It freaked Claire out that the police would waste so much energy on people like them who were really not a threat to the state. It scared her. She felt that she didn’t really have the courage to battle that system. She felt powerless in the hands of those people, in the face of that regime; there was nothing that she could do. And she had a child, which made her think, "There’s no way I’m going to put myself on the line to be arrested. I don’t want to do that. I have a responsibility to this kid."

It was not simply fear of the state apparatus that encouraged Claire to leave but that, in the face of such pervasive injustice she was not sure that she could make a real difference. In fact, in such an oppressive environment even well-intentioned actions might create problems precisely for those they were intended to help.

When Claire and John lived in Johannesburg, this wonderful, intelligent black woman, Gloria worked for them. They treated her as an equal and Claire believes that Gloria
learned some things about life from the two of them, about what was possible in terms of social interaction. But when Claire and John left Jo'burg Gloria went to work for some people who forced her to call them "master" and "madam" and paid her a pittance. Claire thought, "What did we do that for?" What an experience for this black woman to gain a small taste of personal equality and then to be forced back into an oppressive situation. That has always troubled Claire and, to this day, she still thinks about Gloria.

Given these difficulties Claire just couldn't wait to get out of the country. Yet despite her resolve to go she felt a tremendous guilt about leaving and a shame at her powerlessness and lack of courage. What made it even more difficult was the fact that she felt quite alone in this. Even though John shared Claire's desire to leave he didn't experience the conflict—wanting to leave but also wanting to stay and fight—to the extent that she did. He didn't have the same kind of political intensity.

Nor could Claire speak to most of her friends because they were very threatened by that kind of talk. Some weren't negative or unsupportive they just didn't comment either way. Most just expressed sadness that Claire was leaving. She would speak with people who were planning to leave but, in her idealistic state, she was very shocked that they, unlike her, didn't seem to feel any guilt because to her the guilt was really strong.

Claire's parents were also not at all supportive of her leaving. In fact, they were really angry with her. Only John's mother was very supportive saying, "There's no future in this country and I'm glad you're going," which helped a bit. She's an Afrikaner. To Claire there sometimes seems to be a lot more honesty amongst Afrikaners.

In general, though, Claire felt quite isolated in her struggle to come to terms with her guilt about leaving. Perhaps, she thinks, this was elitism on her part, her thinking, "Nobody feels like I do".
There were some things that made departing easier, such as the fact that Claire and her family had to leave Cape Town anyway when John was transferred to Jo’burg. Claire had grown up on the coast and loved the sea, especially around Cape Town where she’d been to university and where she and John spent the first three years of their marriage. When she got to Jo’burg Claire hated it with such a passion that it made leaving South Africa easier. In addition, a Canadian friend whom she’d met in Cape Town had filled her with an excitement about Canada, saying to Claire, "You would love Vancouver because it’s so like Cape Town. You must come".

But in spite of her desire to get away and her expectations of Canada, the reality of relocating to a new country proved traumatic. Claire had no understanding of what an incredible thing it is to move, especially for someone with a tiny baby. She was in a state of symbiosis with her baby and her whole instinct was to nest, to create a home. They were totally uprooted, had nowhere to live, no security. John had landed immigrant status because the Canadian authorities felt that he would find work, but he didn’t have a job.

The first three weeks in Toronto, staying with some people whom she barely knew, Claire was shell-shocked. It was probably a combination of jet-lag, having a baby that was the centre of her focus and not having anywhere that she could call hers. She just wafted through those weeks not taking in very much.

Claire was not completely without resources, however. Both John and her are, by nature, quite optimistic. They tend to brush aside the bad things that could happen, and the two of them thought, "Oh, we’ll be just fine". They arrived in Toronto thinking they might settle there and John was offered a job, but he flew to Vancouver just to check it out. It was in August during one of those wonderful dry summers and after two days he called and said, "Come. I haven’t got a job but we’re not leaving Vancouver".
At that point Claire was still very buoyant about the whole thing. She had an overall optimism and a determination that this was going to work and that they were going to be happy here, that there wasn't going to be any problem. That's just who she is or, rather, was. Now she's become more realistic. At that time, though, she would just gloss over the things that could possibly go wrong.

But in the face of persistent difficulties even Claire's determined optimism began to falter. She and John had practically no money, which was a major stress. They'd never had huge amounts of money in South Africa but were comfortable. In Vancouver, at the time, the housing market was going wild and Claire and John felt desperate, thinking that if they didn't get a place immediately they would never be able to afford a house. So they bought a house that they really couldn't afford. They needn't have worried, though, because a year later the prices dropped right back down. Unfortunately they weren't familiar with the market, never having experienced anything like it.

Claire also couldn't work. Her B.A. was worth nothing. She hated nursing and, in any case, would have had to have done extensive further training to qualify here. As it was, they had no money to pay for baby-sitters to free her up to study. And in any case she didn't know what other kind of work she could or would do.

Another major stress was cultural, the sense of not speaking the language. For instance, Claire would go into a store and ask for something and nobody would understand her because she'd used the wrong terminology. Once she asked for "press-studs" and the store clerk said "press-studs?" When Claire described them to her the clerk said, "Oh, snap-fasteners". Instead of realizing that it was simply a language problem Claire felt inadequate. She would often find herself tongue-tied, thinking, "What word do I use? I don't know what word to use".
Other cultural dissimilarities also caused problems in social interactions. When Claire first arrived she thought that Canadians were quite rude. There were some women living on her street who had kids the same age as hers and with whom she car pooled. When there were issues such as Claire not being on time some of the women could get really nasty and outspoken. Claire was shocked because, in South Africa, people never, ever tell somebody that they’re pissed off about something. It really was quite an aversive experience for her.

Claire realizes that her responses to the women’s outspokenness had much to do with personal guilt that she carried from her family, always feeling like she’d screwed up. But, regardless of that fact, in South Africa she’d never had the kind of encounter where somebody would challenge her or tell her that they’d been hurt by something that she’d said. It was never part of her culture for someone to do that.

South Africa is a "high context" culture where there’s an unspoken understanding of exactly what a person means irrespective of what he’s said. So if someone says "No" to being offered a drink, it’s presumed that he could be persuaded, whereas here when a person says "No" it’s "No". The offer isn’t repeated. So Claire felt a lot of anxiety around the women in her area. But at the time she didn’t understand why, she just felt stressed.

Claire’s stress was added to by her isolation as a mother at home with kids and as a newcomer in an unfamiliar environment. In the suburbs where she lived, Claire found that there was nobody in whom she was particularly interested, except for one woman, a Canadian of English descent. Claire was an intellectual and a thinker whereas most of the other people she was around would say things like, "You use such long words, we don’t understand you". Claire would think, "Long words? What are you talking about? Who am I living amongst?"

Claire also didn’t like associating with South Africans because, although some of
them were really nice people, many were of the kind she would never have been friends with in South Africa. They were very materialistic, just out here to be well off and live the good life, and quite right-wing.

John, on the other hand, did join South African groups. One of these, the "Lunch Bunch", seemed an absolutely horrible organization, made up mostly of men who told awful sexist and racist jokes. John would come home and repeat these jokes and Claire would think, "Those aren't even funny. Over my dead body would you ever see me in a place like that". John thought she was just being uptight. Claire thinks that, perhaps, she was pretty elitist about the whole thing.

Her attitude towards other South Africans was reinforced by a negativity she picked up amongst Canadians, a feeling like, "Oh you're a South African, part of that regime, one of those loudmouthed, beer-swilling, back slapping types". A friend of Claire's said that she found South Africans very arrogant and Claire thinks that that's true, that South Africans are noisy and arrogant. But she's one of them.

Such attitudes fit well with Claire's sense of shamefulness about being a South African. At that point, however, she wasn't even aware that she was ashamed. She just knew that she didn't want to mix with her fellow expatriates, didn't want to just stick to her group and create a little South Africa here. She used to hate going to parties where there were just South Africans, millions of South Africans.

Not feeling comfortable socializing either with South Africans or the Canadians in her area Claire also didn't connect with anyone politically. She didn't get involved in local political organizations because she didn't really identify with the politics here. Compared to South Africa, there wasn't anything that she felt she could get her teeth into. People were getting hot under the collar about things that didn't seem, at the time, to have a lot of
meaning for her. Local issues seemed mundane and banal. She didn’t know what people were fighting about.

Part of the difficulty was the difference in the nature of political involvement between South Africa and Canada. To Claire, that felt like a loss. Back in South Africa, people who belonged to political parties were impassioned. People like van Zyl Slabbert, former leader of the Opposition, had a terrific commitment and integrity, a sense of conviction. Claire respected that, whether or not she agreed with a particular person’s stand whereas, in Canada, people seemed to switch sides with ease. She came to lose respect for some Canadian politicians for that.

But while Claire didn’t participate in local issues neither did she get involved with South African politics. On one occasion she had intended to attend a talk being given by an Afrikaans man who was apparently a very impassioned speaker but, in the end, she didn’t go. She’s not sure why. She just didn’t seem to have the same energy for South Africa once she was here.

Claire’s lack of energy in regard to South Africa extended beyond the political arena. For instance, while still in South Africa she had started writing some short stories but, for some reason, couldn’t complete them there. She had felt that grip of suppression. So she had thought that when she got to Canada she would write those stories, but never did. It just felt too far away, like something had slipped out of her hands. She didn’t feel that she could reach back to that experience and write about it with conviction.

Instead, Claire teetered on the edge of writing. She went to one or two workshops but just didn’t have the confidence to do it, feeling, "What have I got to say here that anybody would be interested in hearing?" Claire was also put off by a journalism workshop she attended where the instructor said that it was almost impossible to get articles published
here because editors have their favourite writers who they go to if they want anything written. Claire felt so discouraged she thought, "Well, I can never write in this culture".

But Claire was feeling despondent over more than just her inability to write. Although she didn't realize it at the time, she was actually under enormous stress. Especially at the beginning she was in quite bad shape. After she'd been here just over a year her parents visited and her dad, who's a doctor, said, "I think you're in an anxiety depression," to which Claire responded, "What nonsense". But he was right; she was depressed. It wasn't a lethargic depression, she was just overfunctioning like crazy. But Claire didn't see it at all; it took her father to see that she was in trouble. So he put her on anti-depressants which really helped. That whole five-year period from about '79 to '84, when her kids were little, was a very difficult time for her.

Then things began to change for the better. Claire, while doing courses for a social work program, attended a class given by child psychologist Gordon Neufeld. He was a very inspiring teacher and he opened a door for Claire to a way of thinking and understanding to which she hadn't been exposed before. But it was only a way of thinking, it wasn't personal transformation. Still, it inspired her to enrol in the social work program and this proved to be an incredibly transforming time for her in terms of knowing herself.

What was especially significant for Claire was seeing how her identity as a woman had been suppressed in South Africa. In the social work program she started to understand her own worth as a person, as a woman with creativity and energy and something to say that was of value. At that point her reason for never wanting to live in South Africa again changed. She said, "I will never go back to South Africa," not because of the politics but because of the status of women there. It was not a political decision any more, it was more about her identity, who she was and the fact that she would not be valued in South Africa.
When she went back to school Claire started to really feel at home here. She made friends with people with whom she could connect and resonate in a way that she hadn’t since her university days in South Africa. She started to develop a career identity. She was ploughing her own path instead of just being John’s wife and her kids’ mother. It was quite heady.

The extent to which she was changing became apparent to Claire when, during this period, she and her family paid a visit to South Africa. In particular she became aware of how she had changed in terms of her discoveries about the status of women. It was really distressing to see how the women in South Africa gave away their power so readily and didn’t even have a sense that they were doing that. They would be very threatened if she said anything about it. It was just not something that one would comment on.

Not just the women, however, but the whole country seemed unchanged. The place still felt really static, stuck in the iron grip of nationalism. Everywhere there were signs of the things that Claire most hated. The petty official at the airport asking stupid questions epitomised everything that she found so embarrassing as a South African. Even though petty apartheid was starting to come down she didn’t really notice much of a difference in the feeling of the place.

It’s hard for Claire to separate her reactions to the country at the time, from those towards her family of origin because she really had a difficult time with her parents. Being with them was very stressful. They were quite defensive as were some of her former acquaintances, particularly John’s old friends. Claire felt like she only talked superficially with these people and got no sense from them of what was happening there.

Both from her parents and from these friends, Claire felt an anger and resentment directed towards her for having left. She felt that her opinions didn’t count. The message
was, "You don’t know what goes on here. You chose to leave. There’s nothing you can say". That was really distressing because her views hadn’t changed from when she had lived in South Africa. So what was different? Why could she say these things when she lived there but not now that she was a Canadian? It was hard to feel her right to speak being invalidated. Quite a few ex-South Africans that Claire has spoken to have had that same experience. When they went back they got the feeling, "There’s nothing you can say. You left for the good life and here we are. You ran away".

But there were some good things about the visit. It was lovely for Claire to see her brother and her close personal friends. Claire didn’t feel a sense of estrangement from them at all. It was as if they had never left off. When she had lived in South Africa she and they had been similar in their political thinking and it was great to talk to them again and really get their viewpoint. The fact that she was still very good friends with some of these people told Claire that even though she was very screwed up when she lived in South Africa, she had an ability to choose friends that fit with her. She continues to write to those friends even though some don’t write back. It’s important for her to just keep up the contact.

There was one other positive experience from that trip, a visit with Gloria who was thrilled to see Claire and her family. When it came time to say goodbye Claire gave her a big hug. They were standing outside the house where Gloria worked and a black guy riding by on a bicycle said, "That’s what I like to see. White people hugging black people". He had this big smile on his face and it was such a neat experience.

So parts of the visit were good but when Claire flew back to Vancouver she found herself thinking, "This is home. Isn’t that great, coming home. This really feels like home and I’m glad we live here." Vancouver is a very lovely city, very like Cape Town with its beaches and mountains and forests. Physical beauty is very important to Claire and she can
rejoice in the beauty of this city.

But it is not just that Vancouver replicates some of the natural beauty of Cape Town that makes it feel, in many ways, just like home to Claire. Over time, she has also developed an interest in, a feeling for, the place, its people, its political and social issues. She has experienced parallels between Canadian and South African culture which have allowed her to relate more to this society.

On a visit to Saskatoon she visited the Plains Indian centre where they put on a dance. One man who was dancing in costume seemed, to Claire, very like an African witchdoctor. She also went to the Louis Riel memorial park and was deeply moved. What had happened to Riel and his followers seemed so similar--so similar and yet not--to how the blacks in South Africa had been seen as primitive, how they had been robbed of their territory.

Claire has similarly gained an understanding of how the Indians were deprived of their rights, of how much they gave up, of how much their culture has not been understood. When she first arrived in Canada she didn’t particularly like Indian art because she couldn’t identify with it. Since then, Claire has really come to love Indian art and to identify with their culture. In regard to local politics generally, Claire is now quite immersed, very much a part of things, and it feels quite different than when she first arrived, when she couldn’t relate to local issues.

In other areas too, the longer Claire spent here the more facets of her life that had been in abeyance started to come to the fore. Writing has re-emerged as a path Claire wants to pursue. More than anything else, what Claire wants to use her degrees for is to do a lot of writing. But the focus has shifted. She can’t see herself writing stories about South Africa again. It’s too hard to touch that from here. It feels too distant.
Claire feels that she is not alone in this. There are not too many people who've been able to write about South Africa away from it. Nadine Gordimer, Andre Brink, both had to stay in South Africa to write. But then, in contrast, there’s Doris Lessing who is Claire’s absolute heroine. Lessing has written a lot about England even though she was born and grew up in Rhodesia. So it is possible for a writer not to lose her capacity to write even if she has moved away from home, although Lessing has such prodigious talents that they would probably emerge anywhere.

The truth is that Claire hasn’t done any creative writing in Canada because she hasn’t trusted herself to do so. She knows, however, that she can really write well when it comes to social work papers and articles. What her degree has done for her has been to give her an avenue to write and, at some point, that will open the door for her to write creatively again.

There have also been changes of a more personal nature. Previously, a big part of Claire’s life had been not really knowing what she wanted. She would take in other people’s wishes and not even question them. She suspects that that came not just from her being female but also from being South African because she sees similar behaviour in John too.

This lack of assertiveness is also quite British, that attitude of, "Don’t hang your dirty laundry out in public, don’t let people know what’s going on, present a good face to the world". Canadians don’t have that as much, that need to look good in front of others. It strikes Claire that here it’s more okay to be direct.

When Claire first lived in Vancouver she was unfortunate to encounter those particularly abrasive women in her neighbourhood. Now she doesn’t see most Canadians that way. However, she does still periodically run across that attitude of, "I’m going to tell you exactly what I think. It’s my right to state what I think", which is a misunderstanding of
assertiveness. Whenever she encounters this, in her practice or elsewhere, she still considers it as pretty heavy duty but can deal with it much better than she could previously. So part of her self discovery has been to be more clear in herself—about what it is she wants—and to put it out, not to just do things because she thinks other people want her to.

But Claire didn’t come to that place without some struggle. It put real stress on her marriage. In general there was much more growth for her, in coming to Canada, than there was for John. He went into the business sector and that’s not an area where, traditionally, one looks for personal growth and self-understanding.

When Claire went into graduate school it was tremendously threatening to John. She began discovering her rights as a woman and feeling used by her husband. She accessed her anger and John was just blown away by it. Claire had always been a person who wanted to talk things through but would allow John to shut her down because she felt so powerless. Now that’s not true any more. She has claimed her power. She won’t be shut up any more. But even though Claire and John have gone through some really difficult times, Claire thinks that in the long run he’s pleased that, through her growth, there’s been some movement for him.

In concert with coming into her own as a woman, Claire also began to confront her sense of cultural shame. Of the two primary negative feelings that Claire experienced in relation to South Africa, shame and guilt, the first has proved more difficult to deal with. To Claire there’s a distinction between shame and guilt. Shame is the sense that, "I am bad in some way," whereas guilt is more that, "I have done some bad thing". Shame has much more to do with who a person is in the core of her being rather than just with what she has done.

Claire felt guilty about some things that she had done when she was growing up in
South Africa, things that were arrogant and awful; for instance, the way she sometimes treated the servants who worked for her family, expectations she had of them which she shouldn’t have.

What Claire struggled with more was her sense of shame that she was part of that privileged group who could behave the way that whites did. But both in South Africa and initially in Canada, Claire was unconscious of her shame. She didn’t understand that as a result of it she was negating her cultural heritage, negating her people, negating everything. The social work program helped her to see, and to change, this.

One day Claire was sitting in class and a professor was talking about working with clients from other cultures. He was referring in particular to people who’d fled, refugees who were struggling with anger, self-dislike and shame, and how important it was that they own these feelings. Not just for themselves but for their children because, otherwise, they pass on to their kids these feelings of shame which then cuts them off from their cultural heritage. If a person does that, in a sense she’s committing a terrible crime. Hearing the professors words, Claire really got it. She felt "My God, I am ashamed. I have been ashamed and I have denied my roots. I haven’t given my kids my heritage".

Claire has picked up this same denial in other South Africans, for example, in the writings of Laurens van der Post. He really angers her because she can see herself in him, in how he has distanced himself from South Africa. He talks about being born in Africa, about his farm in Africa. He never says South Africa. He never talks about speaking Afrikaans even though he is an Afrikaner. He talks about speaking Dutch.

He’s become this guru figure who has romanticized his past, calling it Africa rather than South Africa, which is a very different thing. He makes himself out to be this wonderfully evolved man and he’s not because there is a whole part in him, the shadow, that
he hasn't dealt with, hasn't incorporated. And that angers Claire but it's also her stuff. It's what she's struggled with and what she feels she is emerging from.

Claire used to put South Africa and South Africans down in front of her kids whereas John didn't. He communicates a real love of South Africa to them. Claire came home after that professor's lecture and asked her children whether they had picked up the shame from her. They said "Well, we heard those things you said but didn’t let it affect us".

Since then Claire has been working on coming to terms with her shadow, her cultural shame, to say "I recognize it, I see it, and I acknowledge what I've been doing". This process has made her a lot freer. It's been wonderful to begin to feel that she no longer has to apologize for her society to her kids and to other people, that she can be proud of the country she lived in.

This fact really came home to Claire when she visited South Africa for a second time, in 1992. It was very different than the trip in 1986 had been. She felt really excited to be back in South Africa, that she could really enjoy her country in a way she never had before. This was because two things had changed: herself and her country.

Claire's eyes had been opened by the professor's remarks. She recognized that she needed to really acknowledge her roots, her South Africanness. She thought, "Boy, it's true, I've denied my roots because I'm ashamed of my country". So she wanted to go back, enjoy it and take what was good for her from it.

In addition, South Africa had also changed. There was a wonderful new inter-racial freedom there even though, paradoxically, everybody was terrified. The whites all had electronic gates and wouldn't go out after dark and the blacks were suffering terribly. Still, there was a sense of energy and change in the air.

Claire also had her daughter with her and wanted her to experience what a wonderful
country it is in many ways. Eve had not lived there other than for the first six weeks of her life. She had gone with her mother to South Africa in '86 and liked it then, but this time she just adored it.

When Claire had lived there her guilt and shame had got in the way of seeing what a staggeringly beautiful country it is. Now, revisiting there she was quite bowled over by the beauty of the place, especially the Western Cape. Plus there’s something about the people there, that’s very lovely.

So Claire could experience her connection to the place and to the people without feeling "I’m guilty, I’m responsible, I’ve run away, I have to do something to compensate". This time that wasn’t there for her at all. Instead, when Claire thought back to some of her behaviour towards blacks when she was young she didn’t so much feel guilty any more as she simply regretted it. She could acknowledge what she had done without feeling guilty, in part because she had done it unknowingly.

The trip also provided Claire with the opportunity to see that she had let go of the guilt towards her parents. Visiting with them she was stunned at how crazy her family of origin is. She looked at her parents and thought, "My God, I don’t know how I wasn’t schizophrenic". She realized that there is no way to make a meaningful connection with them.

So when she left to return to Canada it was the first time that she felt no guilt in regard to her parents because she thought, "There’s nothing I could do to connect with them or improve our relationship. There’s nothing I could ever do that would make them happy. Nothing that would be considered good enough". This trip back was significant in that it settled things for Claire both in terms of her family and her country. She came back to Canada and thought, "Thank God I am not guilty any more," and that was wonderful.
Seeing her parents again, re-experiencing their craziness, validated Claire’s initial decision to leave south Africa. Her parents are just so difficult, so enormously intrusive and controlling that in order to find herself she had to get 12,000 miles away from them. Had she stayed in South Africa with them, she doesn’t know how she would have found herself.

But although self-exile meant liberation from familial intrusion and constraint it also truncated the positive familial links that did exist. Claire still loves her dad and is sad that the separation means that they haven’t really been able to pursue their relationship. At 81 he is slowing down but is still a very interesting man and it would have been nice for Claire to have had some talks with him.

Claire feels most keenly her dad’s huge loss, that he has been unable to see beyond her mum’s stuff to what kind of person Claire is. In fact, she and her dad would get on quite well if it weren’t for her mum. The two of them, her mum and dad, are very enmeshed, hostile enmeshed, and his thinking has been very coloured by hers. Despite this, in this past year, he and Claire have managed to connect a little.

But while Claire feels sad about the loss of her father she knows that there’s nothing she can do about it. She can experience the loss rather than feel guilt. She can grieve the loss and honour some of the good things that were, and are, there in the relationship.

The other huge loss for Claire has been that of her brother and his family in South Africa. He was the one person in her family with whom she connected while growing up and is still the only one she can connect with now. A person has to connect with family. It’s so important for one’s whole psyche. Claire would really like to have more contact with him and his kids whom she also loves. She feels very sad about that.

Claire does have some family who live in Canada although this doesn’t fully compensate for her lost connection to her brother. She has a cousin, whom she really likes,
who lives in Toronto. And John’s brother is here in Vancouver. His daughter and Claire’s kids get on very well and that’s made a huge difference to her kids. But Alex and Eve have really missed not having grand-parents. Their biggest sadness is over John’s mum who they really loved and who was just a super "ouma" (grandma). So leaving South Africa involved a choice and either way there would have been a loss. If Claire had stayed in South Africa she would have lost herself, but in moving she has lost family and her kids have lost their grandparents.

On balance, however, moving to Canada has been good for Claire. When she went back to South Africa last year and met with some of her friends Claire thought that they were such wonderful people that it would be lovely to be around them more. But she has established some really close friendships in Canada with people she values enormously and who she would never have met if she had stayed in South Africa.

Claire is also much more willing now to have South Africans come into her life than previously when her attitude was, "No, no, stay away, I don’t want to know you". But with her diminishing sense of her South Africanness Claire has not gone out of her way to promote such friendships. She can meet with these people and even enjoy them but doesn’t feel a need to see them ongoiningly. When she makes friends now it’s with people who she enjoys regardless of their cultural background.

All in all, Canada has proved to be a source of opportunity for Claire more than a place of loss. It’s been a place of discovery because of her own self-growth and that’s been mainly because of the career she chose.

Of the experience of reflecting back and talking about all of this Claire feels that it has been really great because it helps wrap things up for her, puts it in a nutshell. It’s like a ritual which feels really appropriate at this stage of her life where she has moved into a
clearer sense of both her losses and her connection to South Africa.

**Interpretive comments.** Claire’s self-exile story is about shame. Shame threads its way through her narrative even though for much of the story Claire does not recognise what she felt as shame. Shame was Claire’s shadow; it was always present but, initially, hidden in darkness. It was only when she emerged into the light of self-awareness that Claire could see and then embrace her shadow and, thereby, loosen its previously unseen grip on her.

The pervasiveness of shame in Claire’s life-story derives from the fact that it is a function of who she is. Feeling undervalued, rejected, silenced, and disempowered as the youngest child and only girl in a "crazy" family, Claire was predisposed to the abasement brought on by association with a culture that she saw as inferior and immoral. Being ashamed and guilty she felt powerless to change things; being powerless she, in turn, felt increasingly ashamed and guilty.

Powerlessness seemed, to Claire, to be a condition of living in South Africa. Powerlessness was created and sustained by state terror and intimidation directed even towards those, like Claire, who "did nothing". For those who refused to conform, their attempts at change were rendered ineffectual, distorted or inverted by a pervasive societal repression. When Claire tried to "treat Gloria as an equal" she felt that she succeeded only in increasing the black woman’s suffering by heightening her awareness of her inferior status. In Claire’s experience, a rotten system infected all who lived within it even, or especially, those who opposed it.

With shame as the root metaphor (Sarbin, 1986) for her life story, it was difficult for Claire to extract elements that were not shameful upon which to base a more positive identity. The joyous, the self-sacrificing, the socially conscious, the innocent acts of her life
in South Africa were all tainted by her being white, identified with what, she felt, was a deservedly ashamed people.

Where the virus of shame has taken hold simple escape may be insufficient to limit, never mind reverse, its spread. In fact, the very attempt to get away may intensify its virulence. By wanting to leave South Africa Claire felt that she demonstrated her "lack of courage" thereby exacerbating her feelings of shame. By going she was abandoning people like Gloria, in effect abandoning those principles which insisted that she "stay and fight".

Shame isolates the individual. Although there were other white South Africans who shared with Claire the conflict between selflessness, the moral injunction to fight injustice, and selfishness, a commitment to one’s own needs, Claire’s elitism (perhaps a defensive reaction against shame) caused her to feel that she was alone in her inner turmoil, that no one around her hurt as deeply as she did.

Shame thrives in silence. In South Africa Claire felt that she had "no voice". Her first five years in Canada were similarly characterised by voicelessness. In fact, because she "didn’t speak the same language" as others in her adoptive culture Claire’s muteness, her inability or unwillingness to speak for fear of being unheard or misunderstood, was intensified. Simply going shopping she risked feeling inadequate, while interactions with neighbours proved intimidating, alienating, or invalidating. In her marriage she felt shut down.

In regard to the written word she felt equally voiceless. Although self-exile provided refuge from the "grip of suppression" that blocked her ability to write in South Africa it also removed her from the source of inspiration. The discouraging remarks of the journalism instructor reinforced what she had felt in South Africa, both in her family and in society in general, that "nothing she had to say" was of any value. This lack of a voice meant that she
was unable to express (even to herself) her despair, having to rely on someone else, her father, to recognise and name her depression.

In this silence the critical judgements of others seemed especially loud, clear, and persuasive. Lacking a self-affirming voice Claire was unable to contradict the negative evaluations of those, such as her friend, to whom all white South Africans were "arrogant" and "loud", especially since Claire still concurred with these views. Instead she tried to distance herself from the source of the stigma. This is the tactic of the discredditable person (Goffman, 1963) of a van der Post who hides behind a partial truth, transforming himself from a South African into an African. Claire's elitism served similarly to deny her South African identity. Self-negation limited her ability to adapt to, and flourish, in an alien, sometimes hostile, environment.

To counteract the effects of denial of self both from within and from without Claire had to begin to articulate her self anew. Like Lessing she needed to discover her own "prodigious talent" and learn to speak her self in the language of both her old and new culture without denying either. This Claire began to do when she attended university and came into contact with people with whom she could "resonate". Having her words, and her self, heard and reflected back to her facilitated Claire's self-expression, both oral and written.

But while Claire began to establish a sense of self in a new culture she had not yet escaped the lingering shadow of the old. Away from her supportive community and back in South Africa on her first visit since leaving there Claire again felt shamed by, and ashamed for, her homeland and, by extension, herself. The petty officials at the airport caused her to feel embarrassed. In response to the resentment and disapprobation of family and acquaintances she felt a defensiveness arising out of guilt and shame. She again felt silenced,
her opinions even less legitimate than before because now she was a "Canadian", someone who had "run away".

But the visit also provided Claire with the opportunity for self-validation. Observing the quiescent behaviour of South African women she became more aware of how far she had come. People who were like-minded, her "real friends", not only affirmed the choice she had made to leave but, through their ongoing friendship, demonstrated to her that "even though she was screwed up" when she lived in South Africa she was able to make some good choices for herself.

Most significantly, on this visit Claire experienced a moment of reconciliation and resolution, a transformative event that acted as an antidote to the shame and guilt she had carried as a white South African. At the end of her visit with Gloria she embraced, and was embraced by, someone she felt she had hurt and abandoned. Gloria's hug represented a symbolic act of inclusion, of acceptance, of forgiveness. It was also an act of self-affirmation by Claire.

When Claire hugged Gloria she did so publicly in contravention of social proscription and against her own earlier fear and powerlessness. Moreover, she was witnessed approvingly in this act by a black everyman, a "guy on a bicycle" who, in effect, granted absolution to Claire on behalf of all "non-white" South Africans.

But South Africa was no longer home. Canada, being the place where Claire had begun to find herself had become home. Here the women's community had validated Claire's worth as a person and taught her the value of assertiveness. Here, although she could not directly confront patriarchal South Africa, she learnt to speak her mind to her husband who was a product of that culture.

Feeling more secure, more at home, in Canada Claire could start to resuscitate and
incorporate previously denied elements of her past into her new life. She observed parallels (both positive and negative) between South Africa and Canada that allowed her to bridge the gap between the two. The beauty of Vancouver seemed to equal, even to replicate, that of Cape Town. She saw that Canada had (mis)treated its Native and Meti people in a manner akin to South Africa’s (mis)treatment of the blacks.

This latter similarity lessened the legitimacy of Canadian judgements of South Africans and diminished the shame Claire felt at belonging to a pariah community. At the same time it rendered Canadian culture more familiar and, hence, easier to relate to. These likenesses and Claire’s increasing sense of empowerment prompted her to become more involved politically. With the benefit of distance (temporal and geographical) some aspects of South African culture even began to compare favourably with their Canadian equivalents, politicians being just one example.

The most profound change occurred when Claire engaged with her shadow. The words of the professor about cultural shame threw light on Claire’s situation revealing the stark outlines of her shadow. In an epiphanic moment ("I really got it") Claire was awakened to her denial and its effects on herself (as well as its potential effects on her children).

Like Peter Pan, Claire had been separated from her shadow. To recover it she had to return to the place where it was lost. This she did on her second visit to South Africa, a very different experience than the first. Having understood and acknowledged her shame she was no longer subsumed by it. She could see past the tragedy of South Africa to its beauty and ebullience, and she could share in these with her daughter.

Claire’s ability to feel some joy and even a tentative pride in her South Africansness was made easier by the fact that the country itself, in particular the white community, had also begun to acknowledge its shadow. By attempting socio-political change South Africa
gave Claire less to feel ashamed of, less reason for her to disown it. Despite the evident fear of the whites and the continued suffering of the blacks there was an energy, a sense of change in the air that predominated over the fear and suffering.

Claire’s guilt had also diminished, having been transmuted into regret. Rather than feeling responsible for, and wanting to change what could no longer be altered—her early unwitting mistreatment of blacks—she could acknowledge her culpability, regret her actions, without blaming herself. Similarly, in regard to her parents, guilt was re-experienced as loss. It is this loss—of family—that Claire still feels is irrecoverable.

The latter half of Claire’s self-exile narrative is filled with a sense of hope and personal growth. As she herself pointed out, self-exile has been positive for her. But dislocation, almost inevitably entails loss. The seemingly irreversible loss of family, for herself and for her children, has been the price paid by Claire for ridding herself of shame and of finding her self.

**Jane’s Story**

Born in South Africa in 1940, Jane N. has been in Canada since 1974. She came to Vancouver after leaving the country of her birth and spending six years in exile in England. Currently Jane attends university where she is taking a degree in counselling. She also works part time as a school teacher.

Although, by the time she went into exile from South Africa, Jane had undergone some traumatic experiences her early years were, in many ways, quite typical for a white South African. Jane grew up in a family that was liberal but not politically active. After finishing high school, she went to art school where she met some people who were...
politically involved. One guy, Gerry, whom she later married was from a very political family and through him Jane became more politically active.

After two years at art school Jane left and, with Gerry, went to London, not with the idea of leaving permanently but to carry on with her art studies there. That didn’t work out. Her marriage broke up and she came back to South Africa and tried to get back into art school. In the interim, however, the school had been taken over by the state which had instituted a committee run by the police to screen staff and students and Jane wasn’t allowed back in. Her parents also weren’t prepared to support her in going back to university to do fine arts there. She felt totally frustrated. There seemed nothing left for her to do except become even more political.

Aside from feeling thwarted in her studies there were other reasons for Jane’s increasing political involvement. While growing up, Jane hadn’t got on well with her mother who, she felt, didn’t like her. She did get along better with her father but for the first twelve years of Jane’s life, he was an alcoholic. She liked her younger brother but he was very different to her. He was reliable and sensible and would never get involved politically. In contrast, Jane was very political, and in politics, specifically the Communist Party (CP) she found a family.

But while alienation from family played its part in pushing Jane towards politics there were also sound moral reasons as well as social pressures to become an activist. In fact, it was hard not to be political in South Africa and membership in the CP was particularly attractive. Amongst the youth who were political, to be invited to be a member of the CP was the highest honour. In those days everyone wanted to belong but you couldn’t get in.

Having found, in a political cause, a rootedness and direction she had lacked, there was little to prevent Jane from completely giving herself over to that cause. Her whole
identity came to be associated with being political. Being a South African meant being political and Jane’s identity became totally, completely bound up with that. But if political activism provided emotional and psychological refuge it also carried its dangers.

In 1964, in the wake of Sharpeville (a massacre of black protesters by South African police), Jane was arrested. It was a very bad time. There were countrywide arrests, thousands of people were thrown in jail. Jane and her compatriots were held in isolation.

Although imprisonment might have been an expected outcome of her political activities it was, nevertheless, traumatic. The scariest part was being interrogated. Even though Jane says that she wasn’t really tortured she was made to stand for eight hours while her interrogators kept up a barrage of questions. They then brought out an electric shock suitcase with which they must have wanted to scare Jane, but she was so naive she didn’t even know what it was. When she got back to her cell, however, she realised what it was and then she did get scared. The worst moment for Jane came when she was kept overnight in an isolation cell for blacks. It was July and cold and there was only paper on the windows, the toilet was plugged up and the only blanket she had was stiff with blood, urine, and vomit.

Having initially been arrested under "emergency" legislation that allowed for up to 90 days imprisonment without trial, Jane and the others were finally brought before the court following a 30-day hunger strike by two of the prisoners. Jane was charged and found guilty on three counts--belonging to the Communist Party, furthering the aims of communism, and furthering the aims of a banned organisation--and given a total of three years imprisonment.

Imprisonment was a very painful experience. Jane and the other convicted women were sent to a maximum security jail in Barberton where they were locked into a small cell and treated badly. The wardresses tried to break the prisoners by creating a very
unpredictable environment. They would unexpectedly change the schedule, give surprise searches, or tell Jane and the others that they could have certain things and then not allow them to. Sometimes the wardresses would be nice and then, just when the women were feeling comfortable, be horrible.

The dynamics amongst the prisoners were bad too. Although these women had all known each other before prison they didn’t have to live together. Perhaps being together for 24 hours a day in the same cell was what made them take it out on each other. But it was also more than that.

There was the question of trust. It was so threatening to the group that somebody might try to curry favour with the authorities or sell out. The women had to make rules about how they talked to the guards and whether they would allow themselves to be taken out to speak to a senior officer in the prison system. It got so that people were watching every tiny little interaction with the wardresses to see if anyone was getting too friendly.

At one point the authorities tried to manipulate the situation to their advantage by offering to release Jane. Because she was the youngest this would have given them some good publicity. Jane was tempted but she couldn’t accept. Just going through the process, though, caused a lot of problems for her.

Although it was good to get out of prison, in some ways it made things worse. Immediately upon release Jane was a banned person, subject to 24-hour a day house arrest. Under banning orders she was cut off from all political activity prevented from seeing or communicating, even by telephone, with any other banned person. She couldn’t go into a library, a trade union office, or any public building including schools. Nor could she attend any gatherings which, under South African law, meant not being able to be in the company of more than two other people at the same time. She was allowed no visitors.
The only way in which Jane could change her situation was to get her house arrest reduced, from 24 to 12 hours, by getting a job. So she worked for her father but still had to report to the police every day. She also still had to live with her family. Her grandmother, who was 96 years old, was living with them and was such a terrible woman. Jane would close her door and her grandmother would hammer on it to get in. It was unbearable.

Jane felt that she had to leave, that there was nothing else for her to do. Looking back, Jane now feels that if she had had a life other than politics she might have stayed. Not everybody who was under house arrest left. But Jane had only been political and could no longer be active because she was being watched, day and night, by the police. She was under a five-year ban and house arrest and once that expired the government would likely have automatically extended it for another five years. So, in 1968, she applied for an exit permit and was really lucky to get permission to leave because after that people like her were no longer given such permits.

Although Jane felt she had no choice but to go she felt conflicted. Despite the fact that lots of people left there was a judgement attached to running away. Even though many of those people still worked in politics, there being a whole government in exile, those who stayed in South Africa (not the leaders but the revolutionary youth with whom Jane associated) always judged those who left as running away from the problem. They were always resentful. Jane knew she was doing something that wasn’t right and so she judged herself as well.

Guilt about leaving and the pain of separation was, however, ameliorated by the fact while Jane was physically leaving the country, South Africa continued to be very much a part of her life. In London, there was a big South African political community in which Jane became completely immersed. She worked for the African National Congress (ANC) which
had close ties with the CP and felt *totally* part of this family.

After she arrived in England the ANC sent her to a sanatorium in the Soviet Union to recover from her time in jail. It was like a big reward. Jane was made to feel so taken care of that she didn’t miss South Africa at all. Similarly in England. She was in London but was living South Africa. She worked for the ANC where her job was to do a news review for the leadership. She would read every single South African newspaper looking for tiny news items, a little strike here and a strike there, and put it all together. She loved that job. Working in the ANC office was very social. All these great minds would congregate there. One moment Jane would be typing a letter, the next she’d be witnessing a big political debate between Joe Slovo and "Doc" Dadoo. It was incredible.

In London Jane really felt part of a community. People looked after each other. If a person had a problem there were lots of places she could go to. You could just drop into anybody’s house at any time and get food. Working around Tottenham Court Road, Goode Street and Soho, was great.

But being in exile in England was not all wonderful. In remembering the good parts Jane recognises that it is easy to forget the bad, to separate her political working life, which was exciting and full, from her personal life which was almost nonexistent. She was quite depressed. First of all, it took a couple of years to recover from coming out of jail and she was in a big city that she didn’t know. Everybody talked about how it took three years to get used to London.

When she first arrived in London, before she was working for the ANC, Jane got so depressed she even went through the motions of committing suicide. She drank some wine and took some tranquilizers but quickly vomited them up. She wasn’t really serious--it was just a gesture--but she was depressed.
Jane had no life outside of politics. She and her fellow political activists were called full-time revolutionaries. They got paid according to how much they needed to live. Jane got 17 pounds of which eight went on rent. That left her no money for cigarettes and she had to go to the party leadership to ask for more. Jane also spent a lot of time in pubs although she didn’t necessarily drink that much. A couple of relationships that Jane had didn’t work out well.

Nobody’s life felt stable. They all shared a belief system that guided their lives that if you were young and unmarried you would just have to accept never being married. You just couldn’t start a family and have kids in that kind of unstable situation. One of the conditions of belonging to the ANC was that if you were recalled to South Africa or sent anywhere in the world, Moscow or Tanzania or Algeria, you’d have to go. Even husbands and wives wouldn’t necessarily be sent to the same office to work. People couldn’t count on even being with their kids. That was a reality.

Jane remembers only one person who had the guts to say that he wouldn’t go back to South Africa. He said that he wouldn’t be a member of the ANC because he couldn’t go back. Jane really admired him for that, because everybody else said they would go but knew they would never have to. They would talk about what great revolutionaries they were and that they would return if asked to, but deep down they would know that the chances of being called back were very slim.

So everybody just lived from day to day. It was a conscious thing. In some ways this fitted with Jane’s pathology. She felt free, but it was also horrible and very confusing. She was floating, totally rootless. The only thing for Jane to hang onto was her clear political ideals. Those values were so strong that they were the only stable thing.

But those values were also like a creed. In fact politics started seeming like a strait
jacket, terribly limiting because it took Jane’s whole life. Jane had this growing feeling that
she wasn’t doing anything for herself. This feeling was particularly acute when she came
back to England from the Soviet Union where she had been sent, for a second time, to attend
the CP school. Following her return to England, after a year and a half in the USSR, Jane’s
job changed. She no longer worked in the office. Instead, she was working at home, reading
the newspapers, totally alone all day. She knew that her work was meaningful but she didn’t
have contact with people and so felt increasingly isolated.

Jane also had a feeling of not being valued, not being satisfied. In large part this was
because of how the ANC and CP viewed and treated women but also because Jane’s own
thinking at the time, how she thought about women and their role, coincided with the
movement’s view. She felt very conflicted about it. Intellectually she might function
somewhat independently but this wasn’t really the accepted way to be. There were women
who were real feminists and who behaved independently but they did it outside of the
organisation.

Increasingly dissatisfied with the limitations and sense of personal invalidation that
accompanied her life in politics Jane began a gradual process of becoming somewhat
alienated from the ANC and later the party itself. But because her entire identity was bound
up with her political cause, because the CP was her "family", this process, of which she was
largely unconscious, was very difficult and accompanied by a lot of guilt. She wouldn’t
have had the strength or the will or have had strong enough alternative values to have
justified her leaving at that point. Jane had also just received extensive training in skills that
the party needed and she knew that she was making a difference, a real contribution to the
struggle. Were she to leave she would have felt like, and been seen as, a traitor.

During her second stint in the Soviet Union Jane had met Michael, a Canadian
attending the CP school there who had subsequently returned to Canada. The two of them had talked about living together, but since Michael didn’t want to live in England that would have meant that Jane would have to leave London and the movement there. Leaving to get married was okay for a woman. A man wouldn’t have been able to do that. In fact, it was really the only acceptable excuse for Jane to leave, because women followed men. And by marrying somebody like Michael, who was very political, she would maintain a degree of "respectability" in the eyes of the movement.

There was one guy, though, and only one, who said to her, "You can’t find happiness living somebody else’s life, following somebody else," and he was right. Nonetheless, in 1974, five years after first meeting Michael, Jane left London and came to Vancouver.

Immediately upon arrival, she absolutely hated it. Jane thought that Michael would have rented an apartment for them, but he hadn’t. He had a son from a previous marriage who had been looked after by Michael’s parents. They were determined not to take care of this kid any more and moved out leaving Jane, Michael, and his child in their house.

Jane was absolutely furious. At that point she was only here as a visitor and hadn’t even decided whether she wanted to stay. Suddenly she was lumbered with this situation looking after a kid who wasn’t hers, but who had been told to call her "Mummy".

The situation was indescribable. Michael went to work, the kid went to school, Jane was stuck in the house, alone. For hours at a time she’d look out of the window and not a person would walk by. She hated the quietness. Joh’burg was vibrant, London had seemed like the centre of the of the world, Moscow was this big beautiful city. Suddenly she was stuck in Dunbar. Jane thought she had come to the ends of the earth.

Everything around her seemed totally, disgustingly green. South Africa was brown and London was grey. Vancouver was so overwhelmingly green it made her want to vomit.
Jane was totally miserable. She thought she was going to die. Her situation, redolent of when she had felt captive in her parents' home during her house arrest, felt unbearable.

Perhaps worst of all, her marriage to Michael was really terrible. He was very violent. Jane had known in England that he was violent but she thought it was because he couldn't adjust to living in that country. She was very unsophisticated in those days or maybe she was just psychologically hooked into that kind of relationship. Were she in the same situation now she would know that he wouldn't change.

But, at the time, Michael had represented an escape. Jane was aware of that and so she felt very guilty about leaving London. The guilt stayed with her all the time. In fact, she still feels guilty. If she hadn't stayed with him there would have been no reason not to go back.

But things were so bad that Jane didn't think she would stay. In fact, in her mind there was not one doubt that she was going to leave Vancouver, go back to London. She was drawn to going back. She had led this glamorous life, had a wonderful job, had flown all over the place. But it's easy for people to say that they're going to go back. It salves their conscience even if, like Jane, they never do go back.

After the initial shock of feeling trapped in Dunbar, things did get a little better. Jane got Michael to move out of his parents' house and into an apartment on the East Side. Then they got married, moved into a house and had a daughter, Cindy. But Michael became increasingly violent, and when her daughter was about two and a half years old, Jane left him.

Having a child made Jane feel really safe from the pull to return to London. She no longer needed Michael, because she could now say, "I can't leave because of my daughter". When she left Michael an amazing thing happened; she started liking it in Vancouver.
Suddenly she started seeing some possibilities and began to do things that she would never have been able to do in London or South Africa, especially with a child.

Jane started studying. She had studied a bit in jail and had some credits towards a degree. First she went to Langara and did a year there, then to Simon Fraser University (SFU) where she got a grant and scholarships and took a teaching degree. She also began to become aware of feminist issues which she definitely wouldn’t have in Johannesburg or even in London. She really started changing.

But if things were changing in Jane’s personal life, politically the shifts were more tentative, more cautious. When she first came to Vancouver Jane stayed involved with the CP. Once again the party was her home and Jane just slotted right in. It was the only way that she knew how to be and it was the only thing that give her respectability, both in her own eyes and in eyes of South Africans because she was still only functioning as a South African. The only way to be acceptable to all her South African friends and comrades was to join the local party because then they couldn’t say that she had left the movement.

Unfortunately, the party in Vancouver, unlike the South African party was dead. It was so unbelievably boring that Jane only attended meetings in order to maintain her "respectability" but she never mixed with the others socially. Occasionally, she would go to a big function, a dance or a banquet, but they were not meaningful. She mixed just enough to feel part of a community but had no personal friends in the movement.

Together with some other South Africans Jane formed an organisation that worked on South African issues. She also joined the local branch of the ANC. Gradually over the years she came to hate both groups. Everything that she had disliked about the ANC in London, the sexism and the power struggles, seemed intensified here in Vancouver.

But Jane was so psychologically enmeshed with her political "family"
that she felt vulnerable to attack should she try to leave. Michael’s father was on the Central Committee of the CP and even if, in reality, he wasn’t that powerful, in Jane’s mind he was. If she offended the party leadership her name could be blackened and she would be out of the community. As a bad girl who didn’t toe the correct party line she would be excommunicated, not just from the party in Vancouver, but everywhere in the world. And the party was the only place that she had known as a home.

Despite her fears Jane slowly extricated herself from the CP. She also left the local ANC group, although she still considers herself a member. The process, however, was slow, painful, and filled with ambivalence. Withdrawing from the party meant that Jane felt even more isolated even though, during this time, she was attending university as well as teaching.

Jane was separating out from the CP but hadn’t yet created a new community for herself. She remained tenuously linked to the party, attending meetings less and less frequently. But then, just as she was on the point of pulling out completely, things started to get really interesting. People started to discuss serious changes within the CP, the possibility of making it a different kind of organization, re-examining Marxism, seeing what was wrong and maybe even giving up the name Communist because they didn’t want to be associated with things that had been done in the name of communism.

So the party became vital and alive and Jane started going to meetings out of choice because, for the first time, she could see something meaningful being attempted. People seemed to want to make a real difference and not just go on in the old way, simply accepting things. Jane thought that there might be a real place for her.

But even those who wanted to make changes were still pretty much trained to think along traditional lines, except for a couple of people who didn’t function in that automatic
way. A big battle started taking place in the party because they were dealing with issues that were real. But this, too, developed into a power struggle and Jane was already sick of that aspect of politics.

In the end, it was not just that Jane had begun to hate politics, the sexism and the power games, that caused her to leave politics. In many ways she felt that she had no choice but to get out. Her whole being just went on strike. She could no longer function, just couldn’t do anything political.

After having felt, throughout her political life, that if she didn’t read a newspaper she didn’t exist, she could no longer read a newspaper. She kept on ordering, and then having to cancel the papers because they would just pile up, unread. When she met people she would often feel embarrassed because she didn’t now what the hell was going on in the world. Even so, she could no longer bring herself to think or act politically. This is still so for Jane.

But leaving politics was difficult for Jane, so she did so cautiously, in lots of little steps. Before each step she would build up other resources in her life. Partially, that involved creating a new community. Having spent her adult life in a closed, self-sufficient community Jane found it really hard to make friends here in Canada.

Jane still had this attitude that she didn’t like this place and these people. She always talked about "this place" and "these people" as if she wasn’t one of them. One of the things she didn’t like was that people seemed so low key, not responsive. Nobody ever got excited about anything. Life in South Africa and amongst the exile community in London was very intense. In Canada everything was so laid back.

Being so impassioned meant that Jane was always getting into trouble. At SFU she would get sucked into discussions and get very emotional and excited and realize that she had
offended half the people in the room. Frequently after a class break people wouldn’t sit with her because they thought she hated them simply because she had argued with them about something that they had said in class.

It was really hard for Jane to change her behaviour. For so long she had been with people who argued so much. South Africans wouldn’t get offended. They were impassioned and would scream at each other, argue back and say "You’re full of shit," but they’d still be friends. But she couldn’t do that with Canadians. She had to be polite and careful and pick her words. She had to always tone down whatever she said ten or twenty times and then it might be acceptable. She couldn’t just let an emotion come out and use whatever words came to mind.

Jane felt that she did not know how to make friends with Canadians. For some time the only Canadian she felt close to was her boyfriend. Other than him she didn’t really have any close friends, only acquaintances. Both in London and in Vancouver she had South African friends. She has always felt more comfortable with South Africans. Even now if she meets a South African, even one she has never met before, somehow they speak the same language and there’s a connection.

With South Africans Jane has always felt that she could relax, that it is less effort, that she could be more herself. She finds that strange because she never really had a self, never was anybody as a South African. When she’s with South Africans Jane doesn’t feel that she’s being judged as she does when she’s amongst Canadians.

Unlike some other expatriate South Africans Jane’s sense of being judged doesn’t come from her being ashamed about being a white South African. Jane has never felt that shame because she really committed her life to the struggle and didn’t protect herself as a white. Maybe it was easier to leave South Africa as a white and be safe, but lots of blacks
did it too. And she didn’t live a life that was any different from blacks in exile. She really paid her dues. The struggle was the main part of her life.

Still, Jane has always felt isolated and wonders if, in some ways, it’s because she’s South African. She now has some good friends but they’re all pretty new and she’s really had to work hard at it. It’s not the same as in South Africa where she seemed to make friends without realizing it, without consciously developing a relationship.

The friends that Jane has made in Canada she’s made consciously. It’s been a deliberate process and she can’t take them for granted the way she takes South African friends for granted. Even though she would not have seen some of these people in 20 years she could go to South Africa, phone them up and say, "I need to come and stay with you," and they would say, "Alright, sure, come over". She wouldn’t even give it a second thought. She couldn’t do that in Vancouver without a feeling of imposing.

The one time Jane did start to make friends amongst Canadians was with other CP members, at the point where the party was breaking up. She felt that there were a couple of people there that she would like to know. But even though there is still a tentative connection with some of those people, things didn’t really work out. The party eventually split. No organization took its place, people became scattered. Jane’s chances of meeting these people again are slim because they would be involved in areas in which she is no longer active. She wasn’t together with them long enough to really establish a close personal relationship and so lost them.

It was only when she entered therapy that Jane started making lasting friends, building a community and making other significant changes in her life, although therapy alone hasn’t been responsible for all the positive gains she has made. For instance, to have gone to university and become a school teacher were huge achievements for her.
The most significant change for Jane, however, came about mostly as the result of chance. Jane’s daughter had a boyfriend, Rob, who was Cree. He had been adopted into a middle-class family, so-called sophisticated and successful but, in a way, quite racist. Rob’s life had been really terrible. He went through a particularly bad time during which he made a number of suicide attempts. Through this period Jane helped and supported him.

Rob’s suicidal behaviour involved alcohol and possible cocaine addiction. Because her father had been an alcoholic this brought back a lot of memories for Jane, not visual memories but memories of feelings. It was really traumatic for her to work through Rob’s suicide attempts. Finally, in May 1993, Rob died in a fire in his house which may or may not have been accidental. It was a very bad time for Jane. She had never experienced anything like it before, even when her father died.

The really strange thing was that through the experience of Rob’s death Jane felt, for the first time, a connection to Canada. Prior to that time she had never, ever thought of herself as being Canadian and, in fact, is still not sure that she does. Following Rob’s death, however, Jane began to feel more connected to this place. It was almost as if he gave her his Canadianness, as if she became Canadian because he was Canadian and he was like her son.

What Rob gave Jane was a connection to the people here, to their suffering. The whole situation with Native people in North America seems, to her, actually no different from that of blacks in South Africa. Jane feels she has a real connection that is meaningful even though very painful. She feels that there’s a purpose for her here which is something that she didn’t have before.

At the same time, Jane’s experience with Rob again highlighted for her some of the negative aspects of Canadian culture when compared to that of South Africa. The only
people who looked after Rob were Jane, his girlfriend’s mother and his coach’s wife (Rob was an accomplished athlete.) His family didn’t seem bothered, the therapist he was seeing refused to respond to his suicide attempts because he said he was being manipulated. The hospital released him. Nobody took him seriously.

When Jane discussed Rob’s situation with others from the counselling department where she was a student the advice she got was, "Don’t get sucked into this, because you’re making it difficult for your daughter". Everybody was saying, "Stay away," which undermined her because that wasn’t her take on things. In the end she didn’t stay away, but she was torn and so didn’t put as much energy in as she now thinks she should have.

In South Africa people would have taken care of Rob, they wouldn’t have sent him home from the hospital to go alone to his apartment after drinking a bottle of lighter fluid and spray paint. That would definitely never have happened within the movement in South Africa. He would have gone to somebody’s home, he would have been put into bed, he would have been looked after. Nobody would have made any judgements about it. He would simply have been treated like somebody sick and would have been taken care of. Here the culture is that everybody’s responsible for themselves. You can help a bit but don’t get sucked in.

For all its painfulness, though, her experience with Rob made Canada a real place for Jane. Before these events Canada felt temporary, as if she was just squatting here. It would now be hard for her to say that she could leave this country, hard for her to say whether she would like to live in Canada or South Africa.

This is a significant change because, previously, Jane had decided that as soon as she had finished her master’s degree she would go back to South Africa to work there. This decision was strengthened when, in 1989, she and her daughter visited South Africa. The
government had unbanned all the political organizations and it was legal for Jane to enter the country again. It was the first time in 22 years that she had been back.

It was an incredible experience. What was especially amazing was meeting all the people with whom she had been in jail and hadn’t seen or even written to. It was as if she had seen them just yesterday, the connection was so immediate and so close. And even though Johannesburg had totally changed the atmosphere was so familiar. It was so exciting, such fun.

There was such a good atmosphere there that Jane didn’t want to leave. She knew with complete certainty then that she was going to go back to South Africa. She saw a place for sale and thought, "I just want to stay here". Even talking about it now Jane still really wants to be there. But she finds the persistence of such longings strange because she has now lived in Canada almost as long as she lived in South Africa and she questions why she still has the intensity about South Africa, what’s the difference between South Africa and Canada?

Part of the answer Jane thinks, lies in the importance of her time at art school. Those two years, despite her being very mixed up, emotional, and confused, were really the only time that she felt that she was doing something totally, personally for herself. Consequently South Africa, especially Jo’burg has a big connection for her, representing a time and place in which she doing something that she wanted to do.

In fact when Jane visited South Africa she wanted to go back to art school. There was this sense of wanting to take up something that hadn’t been finished when she had lived there. Unfortunately Jane couldn’t have managed it on her own and so put it out as a possibility to her mother to see if she would help out. But as with the previous time, her mother didn’t seem to want to facilitate her studying.
Regardless, Jane still felt an incredible pull to be back there. The difference between this time and when she had lived there before was that Jane felt that she could function and be useful in South Africa without having to be political in the way that she had been. The needs in that country are so great and so varied that she could go back and never have anything to do with the ANC or politics and there would still be so many things that she could do that would be valuable and important.

And yet, were she to go back, she would not cut herself off from the political community completely because she still supports what they do. But she wouldn’t want to be part of that dirty game. She realizes that somebody’s got to do it but it’s not going to be her. There are now so many other possibilities for helping whereas, before, there weren’t. One simply had to be political. Unfortunately since Jane visited South Africa things there have changed for the worse. Although politically there has been some progress, the level of violence has intensified. Jane would now be scared to go back.

In addition, Jane is not sure that she could leave her daughter behind and Cindy definitely does not want to move to South Africa. At one point Jane tried to get her daughter to come with her. Cindy was tempted because, in those days, she was swimming competitively and Jane said to her, "If you went to South Africa and swam there you could go to the Olympic Games because the times are so slow you would make it on to the team". Cindy thought about this and said "Okay, let’s go". She was prepared to go and even do her last year of high school there, but when she started thinking of the violence there and that she would have to learn Afrikaans she decided that she would never go. For Jane to have gone on her own would have been to sever herself, yet again, from family.

So while it might be easy for Jane to say the words "I’m going to go back," to actually leave Vancouver would be hard. In any case Jane has started to appreciate the
energy that’s here, in Canada, too. It’s different than in South Africa. It has a spiritual quality, which is non-existent in South Africa. It seems to her that among the blacks in South Africa the spirituality has been lost whereas, here, amongst the First Nations people, it hasn’t.

For Jane this sense of spirituality comes not only from the Native community but also from the women’s community of which she is a part. It’s not a formal spiritual practice but, in the women’s group to which Jane belongs, there’s a sense of ritual that is spiritual while also connected to real life. In addition, evidence of spirituality is all around her in the culture. She just has to turn on the television and there it is. That’s not the case in South Africa. There, it seems, everything has been put into the political struggle. Jane doesn’t know if she could go back to South Africa and be without that spiritual component. The perfect solution would be to alternate living in Vancouver and South Africa for six months of each year, just keep moving back and forth.

But Jane knows of some people, who are very political, who have gone back to South Africa and have found the adjustment difficult. One couple she corresponds with are very depressed, they’re missing London. Another friend, with whom she was in jail, also went back and is miserable, missing London.

Jane is, therefore, aware that returning might not be all that she would want it to be. In fact, the time she visited South Africa there were a number of things which she couldn’t stand about the place. For example, the way people just shouted at each other on the road. They were so rude and crude and Jane realized, "God, Canadians are so civilised compared to these people". South Africans were so aggressive, especially when driving. Jane drove a couple of times but it was too scary.

The sexism also really got to her. For example, one day her brother came home from
work and insisted that his wife get him a drink. Jane doesn’t know anybody here in Canada who orders his wife around in that way, even people who are quite reactionary. And her family, by South African standards, is very progressive.

So now Jane is not sure that she would go back even though a big part of her clearly still wants to. If she were to die tomorrow, or in a week’s time she definitely would go. She would spend her last days there. She would want to be in that light, in that physical place with all that energy and music. Even though, in many ways, it’s so terrible there, South Africa is very upbeat. In a way Jane’s situation is tragic, especially because half her life is here with her daughter. Whatever Jane chooses to do is a big loss.

**Interpretive comments.** Jane’s story is, in many ways, an archetypal tale of exile, of displacement and banishment, sometimes externally imposed, sometimes self-inflicted, at times both. It is about self and belonging, specifically the search for a sense of self that belongs and a belonging that allows for a "real" sense of self. The event around which this narrative pivots, Jane’s actual exile from South Africa is, to some extent, only the most visible exile in a life-story filled with metaphoric and literal exiles.

From the beginning Jane lacked both a sense of self and a sense of belonging. She did not know who she was and she felt alienated from her family. In part she lacked an identity *because* she did not know where she belonged. She began, therefore, in a state of symbolic exile.

The displacement motif emerges repeatedly throughout the narrative. Jane felt that she did not belong at home. She left art school and South Africa. She was prevented from returning to art school. She was imprisoned in jail and then at home, cut off from her community. She fled to England and subsequently to Canada. She left her marriage. She
eventually left the political movement that for years was more family than her family-of-origin had ever been.

Each of these "steps", however, represented not only an exile, a movement away from something but also a progress, however faltering, towards something. Jane’s narrative moves from fragmentation towards integration, progressing, through successive alternations between self-abnegating dependence and isolated independence, towards a more integrated, albeit incomplete, inter-dependence, a more autonomous but connected sense of self. This struggle to find "home" lends to Jane’s narrative an Odyssean quality full of false starts, blind turns, dangers encountered, and obstacles overcome.

The greatest test for Jane, and the paradigm for her tale of exile, involved her attempts to separate herself from her chosen family, the Communist Party. In fact, the story of Jane’s self-exile is as much, if not more, about her withdrawing from the constraining security of political involvement as about her leaving South Africa. Her leave-taking from South Africa could, after all, be considered more an exile than a self-exile, more forced upon her than self chosen even though, nominally, the decision to leave was hers.

England, physically a place of exile felt, in many ways, to be a place of homecoming as Jane returned to the fold of her political community after the internal exile of imprisonment and house arrest in South Africa. In England she "lived South Africa". In leaving the political movement and coming to Canada, Jane exiled herself from her adoptive family and severed the thread that had kept her connected to South Africa.

The extent to which Jane was enmeshed with her political "family" and, consequently, the difficulty she had in leaving it, is apparent in the Faustian arrangement she entered into by joining the CP whereby, in exchange for the promise of community, identity, and meaning offered by the party Jane forfeited future claims to her self. Once she joined up her
time, her energy, her beliefs, her very self, belonged to the cause. Since, at the time she joined the movement, Jane did not feel that she had a self she, no doubt, saw or at least intuitively felt the gain to be all hers.

In joining the CP Jane was, of course, not driven by Faust-like pride and ambition but rather by an existential, albeit unconscious, longing borne of an alienation from family and society as well as genuine social and ethical motives. And the CP, unlike Mephistopheles, had some good intentions and beneficial effects, both politically, for South Africa, and personally, for Jane, as evidenced later by her persistent nostalgia for the communality and genuine caring she experienced in the movement. But as a foot soldier enlisted in a greater cause there was a personal cost for Jane, the subsuming of a self to the demands of ideological conformity.

Jane’s account of her joining the CP corresponds to Malan’s (1990) disparaging view of white South African activists as engaging in politics as a cover for their personal problems. But one need not share Malan’s cynicism or Jane’s characterising of her personal issues as pathology to recognise the potential significance of personal factors in the decision (or non-decision) to become politically active.

The almost accidental manner in which Jane felt she entered into politics reflects the mix of circumstance and choice with which life altering experiences sometimes seem to occur. Emphasis on circumstance may, however, belie the powerful forces, both personal and social, which underlie what may appear to be accidental or opportunistic.

It was, to some extent, Jane’s understandable inability to recognise, at the time, the personal factors in her political choices that accounted for the difficulty she subsequently had in extricating herself from dependency on the movement even at the point where she had become disillusioned with it. This splitting of the personal and the political is particularly
evident in her recounting of her time in England in the first phase of her exile following departure from South Africa.

As the initial phase of her exile proper, her time in England embodied all the conflicting elements of Jane’s exile narrative. It is, in some ways, both the zenith and nadir of her story and it is evidence of Jane’s split-consciousness at the time that, in describing this period she had trouble "putting it together".

Jane’s first tendency was to remember the "fun" and "glamour" of her political involvement, the wonderful treatment she received in the Soviet Union, the intensity of daily contact with the political elite of the South African exile community. Only after further reflection did she recall the "non-existence" of a personal life, the isolation, the suicide attempt, the rootlessness of a floating existence.

This splitting, the sense of dividedness and ambivalence, is a common feature of exile. It is a particularly strong element in Jane’s narrative surfacing before, during, and after her leaving South Africa. Given this sense of a divided self, the term self-exile takes on added meaning for Jane. For much of her life Jane was in exile from her self, that is split off, dissociated, from aspects and potentialities of her self.

Taken in this sense, Jane’s self-exile narrative is characterised by the opposing but tied forces of alienation and dependency. As a child she did not feel that she belonged to, but felt dependent on, her family of origin. In prison, although she was with her chosen "family", she was in a situation of enforced proximity and dependence upon her fellow inmates who functioned both as guardians and guards to each other. In England she had to adopt a posture of obeisance and conformity, "toe the party line", in order to be taken care of, psychologically and materially, by the paternalistic father-figures at the head of the political movement.
Escape from the confines of politics came only in the form of further dependency. With Michael she was captive to yet another family, forced into the role of "mother" to his child to whom she referred only as "the kid", trapped in the nauseatingly green placidness of suburban Vancouver.

Each of the successive "families" to which Jane attached herself offered her security, but at a price. Each inflicted its own form of violence or neglect. Her mother rejected her. The party disavowed her value as a person, other than in her political role. Michael physically abused her. Michael's father represented, to Jane, an old-testament patriarch with the power to banish her from the security of a political Eden lest she violate the implicit sanctity of the CP.

In Canada the push-pull of Jane's existence persisted. In escaping the limiting confines of the party she also lost the support and sense of self with which the political community had provided her. Her uprootedness was re-emphasized. This engendered a deep ambivalence. Jane "knew" absolutely that she would leave Canada but made no active move to do so. She left the ANC but still considered herself a member.

In order to "find" her self, to achieve a sense of integration and belonging, Jane had to abandon the false security offered her by each of the successive families to which she had attached herself and create her own family. This she did, in part, by having a daughter, which legitimated her remaining in Canada. Cindy, unlike Jane, was rooted in her country. Cindy, offered the opportunity, some might say the bribe, to further her swimming career by following her mother to South Africa chose, both literally and figuratively, not to "swim for" (that is, neither to represent nor travel to) South Africa. By deciding to stay put Cindy, in effect, made the decision for Jane to remain in Canada as well.

But perhaps even more importantly for Jane's sense of connectedness to Canada were
her "family" ties to Rob. Through sharing in Rob's suffering and death/suicide Jane achieved some form of redemption. Rob gave her his Canadianness. But he did more than this. He gave Jane her self. Rob was able to do this because he acted as a link between the disparate, fractured parts of Jane's life.

Rob, like Jane, was a displaced, decontextualized individual. A Native, born and brought up in a racist white family, he was, as was Jane, in exile from his own family and culture. He was an outcast. He also embodied the suffering of all First Nations' people in Canada, which, to Jane, was more like than dislike the oppression of the blacks in South Africa on whose behalf she, for so long, committed herself politically. Through Rob, Jane recreated a context of meaning which she felt had been lost when she came to Canada and severed her political ties.

Furthermore, Jane entered into Rob's life in a way that she did not, or could not, enter into the lives of black South Africans despite her dedication to their cause. Jane was valued for what she could give to the cause but not for, and in, her self. Thus Jane was forced to keep her personal and political worlds separate or, rather, to mesh her personal world with the political so that the former existed chiefly as an expression of the latter.

Through her relationship with Rob Jane began to integrate her political beliefs with her personal needs and in so doing re-enact, and reauthor the "pathological" elements of her life that formed the sub-text of her life-narrative. Jane "mothered" Rob, who was "like a son" to her in a way that her own mother never did for her. His death by alcohol embodied elements of her father's life and death allowing Jane to grieve, belatedly, her father's death. Through immolation, Rob died, but Jane was resurrected, phoenix-like, from his embers. He gave her a "purpose" for being here in Canada. Through the personalizing of political meaning Jane finally felt that she could begin to make a home in exile.
Despite, or perhaps because, of her discovery of purpose in Canada, however, ambivalence continues, at the time of the interview, to characterize Jane's life. Having a sense of purpose in Canada has offset, but has not replaced, her hankering for an unfinished past in South Africa. It has, however, made it more difficult for her to go back, in space and time, to the site of that lost opportunity. Although she has engaged in activities that have nurtured and nourished her sense of self—going to school, discovering feminism and native spirituality—she has been unable to recapture, and thus move on from, the one time in her life when she did something "totally" for her self, attend art school. Having failed to realize her dream of being a visual artist she still longs to live in that special "light" of South Africa.

But the idealised past for which she longs is no longer unalloyed. The dream has been tainted by endemic political violence in South Africa and by some unfavourable comparisons with her newfound life in Canada. When Jane returned to South Africa for a visit, there was a recognition of how she had been changed by living so long outside of that country. For example, having earlier thought that South Africans were passionate and intense, and Canadians bland, she came to feel that South Africans were aggressive and Canadians civilized. Whereas, before, she saw Canadians through South African eyes, she has subsequently, to some extent, come to see South Africans through Canadian eyes. At the same time, however, her friendships in Canada can never replicate the ease, the "at homeness" she felt in her friendships with South Africans.

In feeling that she is in limbo, being rooted in two places simultaneously, not belonging completely in either place, Jane seems condemned to remain in exile. For, although exile has allowed Jane to find her self, part of that self remains attached to a time and place no longer recoverable without loss of a self that has taken root in a new
environment. For Jane this is tragic. Whatever choice she makes, to live in Canada or South Africa, represents a loss. Jane’s story, thus, remains unfinished. She has yet to find home.

Paul’s Story

In 1973 Paul H. left South Africa for Europe with his wife, Sarah, and nine-month old daughter, Hannah, not knowing where they would end up. After a brief period of travel they came to the U.S.A. and then to Canada. A scientist by training, a doctor by profession, and a story-teller by avocation, Paul lives with his wife and four children in Vancouver.

When, twenty years ago, Paul left South Africa he was enacting a process of uprooting that, as a Jew, had been part of his family heritage. Paul’s maternal grandmother Ethel, was an immigrant from Plungyan, Lithuania which she left in order to escape the pogroms and the persecution of Jews in the Baltic States. She was brought over to South Africa as a young woman by her brother who had immigrated some years before and had become a farmer in the Calviniad district in the Cape Province. Paul’s paternal grandfather, likewise, came from Plungyan. Although they were from the same Lithuanian town Paul’s grandparents met and were married in South Africa.

On his father’s side Paul’s forebears came originally from Hungary, emigrating from there to British-ruled Palestine. Paul’s father came to South Africa as a child with his parents and never went back to Palestine even after it achieved independence as the state of Israel. Having immigrated at the young age of six, he completely lost his ability to speak Hebrew and, instead, became fluent in the then official languages of South Africa, English and Afrikaans, especially in the latter.

Paul’s childhood was spent in rural and semi-rural South Africa. He was born and
lived his early years in a little village called Fishhoek on the coast outside of Cape Town. When he was about four years old his parents moved to the South African interior, to Ficksburg, where they bought a hotel. Ficksburg is a little village on the Caledon River close to the border of Basutoland (then a British Protectorate surrounded by South Africa, now the independent nation of Lesotho). Paul’s family spent about ten years in Ficksburg and on Sundays the family would often drive into Basutoland to get to know the area. After ten years the hotel business failed and Paul and his family, including two sisters and a brother all born in Ficksburg, returned to Cape Town.

Those early years were mostly secure, happy years for Paul. He had a loving family. He had a father who worked hard and was able to put him in private school and, later, support him through his first years in university. Paul did experience a few incidents of anti-semitism, in the form of name-calling and some threats, but nothing that was ever physically hurtful. But if these were predominantly years of security they were also years of insularity, of ignorance about the oppressive nature of South African society. Looking back Paul feels that he was living in a white cocoon.

Paul’s parents were, in many ways, typical of white South Africans. In Cape Town they lived in a middle-class house on a nice street. They weren’t abusive towards blacks but they fitted in with the pattern of white behaviour. They paid the help in the house the going rate which was not very high. Paul doesn’t recall being particularly abusive towards blacks either, either in his spoken or body language or in his thoughts. He just accepted the situation as it was. He accepted that there were maids who came in to clean the house, and gardeners, and that they were separated from their families who usually lived hundreds of miles away in the Transkei or elsewhere in the interior.

Right up until matric Paul didn’t really question South Africa. In fact, at high school
and university, he often felt defensive about his country and its apartheid policies because of the way the world viewed South Africa. Paul felt that he had to defend the status quo because that was the way things were and any alternative would lead to chaos and disaster.

Paul took the government line without really thinking his position through or actually looking at the arguments. It was purely a reaction. He'd find himself saying, "Hey, that's unfair to attack us, you don’t really know us, you don’t really understand us. Look at the other countries in Africa. They’ve killed more people since liberation than before liberation". He believed that even though black people in South Africa didn’t earn as much or have the potential to earn as much as elsewhere in Africa, at least they were alive. They had some food. And if things were so bad in South Africa, how come there were a lot of black people coming down from the surrounding countries such as Malawi, to look for work there?

In part, Paul’s defensiveness for his country came out of ignorance, in part from an identification with the Afrikaner and what he stood for, or at least the good elements of the Afrikaner. As evidence of this identification was Paul’s love of the Afrikaans language. In Ficksburg where he had attended an Afrikaans elementary school, theatre had been one of his favourite pastimes. But, interestingly, Paul would only act in Afrikaans plays. Paul loved the Afrikaans language, loved speaking it, loved the poetry of it. In fact, he loved it to such an extent that he even outdid the Afrikaners in their own language.

At the age of nine in Ficksburg, Paul entered an eisteddfod where he read an Afrikaans poem. He was competing against Afrikaans boys, but read with such expression that he won the gold medal. That love of Afrikaans, of poets like "Oom Lokomotief" ("Uncle Locomotive") has always stayed with him. Even when, after returning to Cape Town, he attended a private Hebrew school, Herzlia, he would only participate in Afrikaans theatre, refusing to act in English or Hebrew plays.
As much as he loved the language, encounters with individual Afrikaners and with white culture in general, often proved less positive. These encounters were to produce cracks in the protective cocoon in which Paul had been living. One particular incident occurred when Paul was about sixteen. He’d gone to a farm during the summer holidays and was invited by the farmer to go on trek with the sheep and the black shepherd. But on the morning of the trek, the farmer who’d been wonderfully warm and welcoming to Paul and whose wife was all red-cheeks and apple-pie, started shouting at one of the African labourers on his farm. Paul was shocked because he had never seen anybody talk to a black man like that, as if the black man was no better than a horse.

But while cracks were appearing in the cocoon there was no great rebellion on Paul’s part. So when his first leave-taking occurred it was not particularly because he wanted to get away from South Africa. In 1968, at age 20, Paul had married. He had finished his bachelor’s degree in science at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and wanted to experience other things. He managed to get into a research institute in Israel, the Weizmann Institute, which offered graduate degrees in theoretical nuclear physics. Also, at that time, the Zionist Federation of South Africa was keen to get young Jewish South Africans to experience Israel, hoping that they might like it and stay there, and they helped sponsor him, paying all his fees for two years as long as he remained in the graduate program.

Paul spent from ’69 to ’71 in Israel. Living there, in an international student residence, he was suddenly catapulted into contact with the rest of the world and into experiencing other political viewpoints. He engaged in discussion with immigrants from all over Europe and America. There were a Polish couple, a French couple, an Israeli couple, a Brazilian couple. Not only did he encounter different perspectives but people also asked him about his country.
Initially, upon being questioned, Paul found himself wanting to be an objective story-teller about South Africa without committing himself to one side or the other. He would say things like, "This is the government viewpoint. This is why apartheid came into being. Theoretically, there's separate but equal development amongst the different races". Paul felt that the way the government looked at things made some sense. If you can retain each ethnic group's cultural heritage then you can support that approach. Paul was trying to justify apartheid in the theoretically good sense of it. And then Paul would try and give the opposition point of view, saying, "In actual fact even though they say separate and equal, it's most certainly not equal," and so on and so forth. He would try to be an independent story-teller.

But the reactions, by others, to his words were often very emotional and, as a result, Paul began to think, "Do I really believe in what the government says about apartheid or don't I?" He realized that he had to make some decision, some commitment. Coincidentally this began occurring towards the end of his stay in Israel, in 1971, at about the time of the death of his father when he felt the need to go back to South Africa and be with his mother and family through the grieving process, and to stay there for a while.

So the final breaking of the cocoon really occurred in South Africa. Paul first put his head out through the cracks in Israel, but on arriving back in South Africa, after having been away for two years, he found that he was no longer the same person he had been before and that he had to make a commitment. This was very clear within the first few months after returning home and dealing with his father's burial and talking to the family. Even now, it remains so strong and so clear in his memory that there was no turning back, that he had to make a commitment.

For Paul and Sarah making a commitment meant deciding that they would leave the
country. But Paul hadn’t yet finished his master’s degree. He had completed all his course work but hadn’t chosen a thesis. He decided to do his thesis in South Africa but to leave immediately after its completion. For the year and a half after they got back Paul worked on his thesis. He switched from nuclear physics into bio-engineering and did a project at the Groote Schuur Hospital and UCT. In early ’73 Paul, Sarah, and Hannah left South Africa.

But in those one and a half years of waiting to leave, Paul underwent a metamorphosis. It was clear to him that the reason for leaving was that he was not comfortable to live any more in South Africa as it was. He had this sense of being a split person, that he was living a lie, that no matter what he said with his words--that he didn’t like apartheid, that he didn’t agree with it--he was still living this comfortable middle-class existence, able to finish his degree at UCT, with food on his plate, able to go to the movies and to the theatre. As that split got stronger and stronger Paul and Sarah felt that they had to take a stand.

Up to that point Paul had never joined any political party, had never helped in any black cause. He and Sarah decided that it was important to make some gesture. They found a black school that needed help, Fezeka High in Nyanga, and became friendly with the principal and vice-principal. They then went back to their families’ neighbourhoods, went to rich business people (Paul’s father-in-law owned a big lumber yard and knew contacts in the business world), went to friends of Paul’s late father and started soliciting donations.

They collected money for a theatre, for a fence, for books, for scientific instruments. They wrote a letter to the Bantu Education Department asking permission to bring white students from UCT on a voluntary basis to give lectures and extra lessons to the black students. But the letter they received in reply refused their request, saying that it was against the Bantu Education Act to have white students teaching in a black school. Nevertheless,
Paul and Sarah did everything else that they could.

In those fifteen months that he worked with the school, Paul had a furious energy because he knew that he didn’t have much time left in South Africa and he wanted to do something before he left. He got friends of his involved. His parents-in-law came to a prize giving at the school and they donated money. These were people who wouldn’t normally have gone to such events.

Despite his commitment to Fezeka High, however, Paul knew with an absolute certainty that he would soon leave the country. There was a sense of inevitability about it. He felt that it was the black person’s country. They were the majority. Paul did not feel guilty but, regardless of what he did or didn’t do to help, if he stayed in South Africa under existing conditions he would still be benefitting from an unjust system and he just couldn’t do that any more.

In those days, in early '73, the apartheid policy was still completely entrenched, there were no signs of the system disintegrating and life for most whites was still fairly good. Paul’s mother and sisters and friends couldn’t understand why they were leaving and, in order to make the break, Paul and Sarah had to separate from friends and family, become a self-supporting unit together and isolate themselves. This was made easier by the fact that the two of them always saw eye-to-eye on the issue of leaving South Africa. Maybe because they married so young and their ideas were formed in unison, there was a congruency between the two of them. The decision to leave was a joint one and it became strong to the point that it brooked no argument.

There were also other factors that made it easier to leave. Paul and Sarah were young, had just been married for a few years, had just had their first baby, had no professions, no house, no roots. They were going to have to put down roots somewhere and
just being married with a child was a risk in itself. They were at a point of decision making, of transition and, somehow, that gave Paul some confidence. He had to go out into that new world and he might as well choose a place that, in his conscience, he felt better about.

Israel had been ruled out because Paul and Sarah were opposed to the militaristic policies of the government there. For the two years that they had lived there they had resented being pawns of the state and they didn’t want either themselves or their children to be put into that position, or to be sent to Lebanon to fight. Other than Israel, however, the country they ended up in could be anywhere, but it had to be out of South Africa.

Friends thought that Paul and Sarah were crazy. They were going with a nine-month old daughter and no objective in mind, no place to go to. And although he had made a firm decision to leave, there was still a conflict. Fundamentally, Paul loved South Africa, the simplicity of that country. Even now there is a part of Paul that is forever South African and will never be anything else, because his childhood was there and there was a magic to being a child in that country. But although Paul’s childhood had been wonderfully magic and simple and basic, with wonderful friendships, he didn’t want Hannah to live the lie he had. He didn’t want her to grow up split, speaking one thing while living another.

In the final analysis, Paul and Sarah simply needed to feel cleansed, that they were living a truthful existence. This was so even though the black people they had been working with were saying, "But you’re the type of white persons we would want to remain in South Africa". That didn’t seem to help. It did, however, deepen Paul’s sense of conflict. He felt torn because he liked those people and they, in turn, seemed to like and care for him and his family.

Paul recalls how, one night, shortly after his eldest daughter was born, he heard a knock at the door of the little flat they were living in in Green Point, Cape Town and there
stood Banzi Lubelwana, the vice-principal, and Mr. Ndandane, the principal of Fezeka High, and their wives. They were carrying piles of gifts, clothes, and toys for the new baby. They came in so formal, dressed in suits, just the four of them, and were worried whether the neighbours would be concerned that these black people were coming to visit Paul’s family.

So there was a weeping, wounded part of Paul that would have loved to have said to these people, "Yes, I want to stay here, and maybe build a new South Africa with you and I want to be part of it, whatever it would be". Nevertheless, Paul and Sarah felt they had to go. It wasn’t enough just to help at a black school.

And, in the end, the people from Fezeka High seemed to respect Paul’s decision. They said, "If you have to go then we want to honour you". And they did. They invited Paul and Sarah to be guests of honour at the graduation ceremony of the matriculation class of Fezeka High where they presented the two of them with a book and Paul with some shirts.

Despite the sadness of the occasion there was a wonderful sharing that occurred that evening. The black people had a custom that the recipient open his gifts in the presence of the giver so that the joy of giving and receiving could be shared. As Paul unwrapped the shirts and the book there was a chorus of "Oohing and "Aahing" from the school assembly.

The book that Paul and Sarah received was one on tribal costumes of South Africa. Earlier, when Paul had been asked what he wanted from Fezeka he had said, "I don’t want anything". But they insisted on giving him a gift so Paul said, "Well, give me a book that tells me something about the black people," because the irony of living as a white person in South Africa under that system was that it prevented whites from learning about the black people. Paul knew very little of their language, of their culture.

Actually Paul had spoken a bit of Sotho (the language of the Basuto) when he was a child but had lost it all. But otherwise here was a big hole in his childhood. Various black
people had just sort of weaved through his life without him really knowing about them. Paul felt that, as he was going to go away from South Africa, he wanted to take away something as a symbol of his connection to that country and especially to the blacks.

There was in fact another symbol of Paul's connection to South Africa, also provided by Fezeka High, that remained behind in that country. In commemoration of, and gratitude for, the work they had done, the school named its theatre after Paul and Sarah's daughter. Paul still has a picture of the commemoration plaque. When years later, during rioting in the township, the school was burnt down, the theatre, ironically, remained standing.

At the end of the night of gift-giving, Paul was asked "Where are you going?" because he still didn't know where he and his family were going to end up. In that sense, they were going into exile. They were going to buy a caravan and travel in Europe and look for a land. Paul was thinking vaguely of Scandinavia, but really had no idea where they were going to finish up. He only knew that he couldn't live in South Africa any more.

Paul did not, however, have to spend long wandering in the wilderness. After a short period of travelling in Europe he decided to contact the supervisor of his master's thesis in Cape Town. It turned out that this man had actually left South Africa and was in Atlanta, Georgia and he made an offer to Paul: "If you're not doing anything, drift over to Atlanta and we'll see if maybe you can get into a doctorate program". So after nine months of travelling they sold the caravan and came over to Atlanta.

Then, just as Paul started on his doctorate, his supervisor was offered a job in Canada. He, in turn, offered Paul the opportunity to go with him to Hamilton and continue his studies there. Paul had no idea what Canada was like but decided to take the opportunity that had been presented him. He went to the Canadian embassy in Atlanta to ask for a student visa and the official there persuaded Paul to emigrate. The official said, "You're
crazy to go as a student. Why don’t you go as a landed immigrant and you can work. You won’t have any problems". The man probably looked at Paul’s qualifications and thought that an engineer would be good for Canada.

So getting into Canada was remarkably easy even though Sarah didn’t fulfil all the immigration requirements since she was pregnant with their second child and couldn’t have the necessary X-rays taken. So, instead, they went on what was called a minister’s permit.

Just as getting into Canada was easy, adapting to living in Canada also proved to be relatively painless for Paul. Effectively, most of Paul’s post-secondary training occurred here. He finished his engineering degree then switched to medicine and trained as a doctor. Being in university here, going through the program with other Canadian students, made it much easier to acclimatize, to become Canadian. Paul was simply accepted as a colleague, as one of the guys, although with an odd accent. It made emigrating very easy and Paul still has friends across Canada from his university days.

Being with Sarah also made leaving South Africa easier because the two of them were self-sufficient. They really relied heavily on each other and learnt to share. Paul would look after kids while Sarah studied and vice-versa. If Paul had a problem he could bounce it off Sarah and if she had a problem she could bounce it off him. Having two heads together to solve problems, they always found a solution. They learnt to live on very little money and to appreciate that.

It was actually a wonderful experience being a newly married couple in a foreign country. In fact Paul’s advice to any young couple is that a very good way for them to solidify their marriage would be to leave their home country and go to a new place, because it’s like being thrown onto an island where the couple has to survive. Paul feels that he and Sarah could now go to any country and do fine because of the survival skills they learnt.
But while adapting to Canada seemed unproblematic, even exciting to Paul, coming to terms with his broken ties to South Africa was more difficult. For those first years there was a total separation from South Africa. It was as if, the minute he left, it was behind him. The only way that he could deal with that wrench, that wound, that separation, was to close the door and not look back. And it needed a good ten years of separation before he could begin to reconnect with South Africa.

In those first ten years, if and when Paul encountered people who wanted to know about South Africa, he most certainly was not overflowing with information. He was not ashamed of being a South African, but on the subject of his country he tended to be quite restrained. If someone asked him a question he might reply, "What do you want to know about South Africa?" but he never volunteered any information.

It wasn’t so much a denial of his past that caused his reticence, as that he didn’t seem to have an interest in, or an energy for, sharing about South Africa. In some unconscious way, he didn’t want to talk any more about South Africa. It was too painful for him. He just wanted to leave it behind. The door was closed. That chapter had ended and he had embarked on a new chapter.

In keeping with cutting his ties to the past, Paul also didn’t actively seek out a South African community in Canada. When he and his family first came to Hamilton, in ’74, there weren’t many South Africans there anyway. Occasionally, inevitably, he would bump into fellow South Africans and they would laugh at his jokes and it was a little easier to develop an immediate connection. But Paul didn’t particularly seek out South Africans and he never joined any South African groups. He was in a new life and was just going to do whatever came his way.

But even as Paul embraced, and was embraced by, the present and future that was
Canada, the past that was South Africa could not easily and summarily be dismissed. Paul never questioned whether it was right or wrong to have left. It was the only decision he could have made. But Paul retained a strong emotional attachment to his childhood years in South Africa. He had a sense of loss, of regret of not being a child there again. Moreover, not only could he not become a child again, but South Africa was no longer the same place. It had become another, a different world, not the world of his childhood any more.

Because it was impossible to return to a vanished past, Paul needed to find other means of trying to achieve the same ends. Eventually an alternative way of recapturing the past came to him. After having shut South Africa out of his life for almost ten years, he grew interested in reading stories by South African writers, especially those of Herman Charles Bosman (one of the best known Afrikaans short-story writers). There is one story in particular, "Under the Withaak", that he has read and reread innumerable times. It's about a leopard and has an almost spiritual, mythic, undertone to it.

Perhaps more importantly, a little later Paul shifted from being merely a story-reader to become a story-teller, recounting tales from his South African childhood. Through his own story creations Paul was keeping his link to South Africa alive or, rather, reviving that connection.

But Paul was also hoping to do more than just create a link for himself to the past. He felt a regret that his children, living a different life in Canada, couldn't repeat some of the magic that he had experienced in South Africa. His hope was that, through hearing his tales, his children would have a history that they could feel a part of. All of Paul's children have listened endlessly to him telling his stories.

There was also another reason for Paul becoming a story-teller. Despite his claims that he fitted easily into Canadian society there were, and are, times when Paul feels that he
is not understood by the culture he has come into. Sometimes when he tells people about some experience from his past he can sense by their responses that they get only part of what he is telling. The listener would almost have to have lived through those experiences in order to really understand them, the texture, the colour and so on. But Paul desperately wants people to better understand the cultural context from which he comes and, therefore, to understand him better.

Unfortunately, as a scientist and a doctor, Paul had no creative way of expressing his emotional attachment to South Africa until he hit on the idea of story-telling and theatre. His pursuit of this new direction culminated recently in him performing, on stage, a one-man mythico-biographical account of growing up in South Africa. It’s gratifying for Paul when not just a South African but a non-South African comes up to him after a performance and says, "I listened to you and it was as if I was there and I felt it," because then Paul thinks, "Ah, I'm getting through".

This telling of stories, to his children and to others, didn’t begin, however, until about five years ago. It took that long, some fifteen years after leaving South Africa, before Paul could begin to tell tales about his past, because a tremendous wounding had occurred. It was a wound that was in part self-inflicted but without any choice. And it needed those years of isolation to let the wound heal before he could retrace the steps and talk about that time creatively.

One factor that facilitated the healing was simply that Paul had grown older. As the years passed and he looked back through the tunnel of time, events changed in their symbolic meaning. What may have hurt or wounded him terribly at one time could, with the benefit of time, be looked at differently.

In his play, Paul tells of one such symbolic transformation. When he was a young
boy in Ficksburg a black man called Sidwell, who worked for Paul’s father, one day called Paul to join him and a group of other black workers who were standing around talking. Sidwell proceeded to show Paul how to make a certain hand gesture, teaching him to insert his thumb between the index and middle fingers of his clenched hand. When the young white boy successfully imitated the hand sign, Sidwell and the others laughed and Paul thought that they were delighted at his accomplishment.

But then, some years later Paul discovered that, in South Africa, the gesture, implying sexual penetration, meant "Fuck off!" and he felt humiliated at the thought that he had been the ignorant butt of Sidwell and the others’ private joke.

Paul carried with him the memory of what he thought had been a cruel mockery until, many years later, a native Brazilian provided him with an alternative meaning for the apparently crude gesture. The man pointed out that in many African cultures this sign is a symbol of fertility and power. With this new insight Paul rethought his encounter feeling that Sidwell, instead of mocking him, had perhaps, instead, initiated him into a shared and powerful secret. Through this, and other, stories Paul revisited and reinterpreted the past. He began to feel a sense of forgiveness towards both the country, South Africa, for the wound it had caused him, and towards himself for being a white South African.

Although such reformulating of past experiences has occurred as part of what, to Paul, is primarily an inner journey, external events have played their part in helping Paul reconnect with his South African identity. Of particular importance has been the emergence, in the past ten years, of a new South Africa. With that emergence has come the realization for Paul that what he and like-minded people were thinking when he lived there wasn’t so outrageous. Then, they were talking of a multiracial state with one man one vote. Now, suddenly, it’s a possibility, although Paul crosses his fingers and hopes that the transition to
a stable multiracial state can be accomplished with relatively little bloodshed.

As part of this change in South Africa there was also the release of Mandela. More than the actual man himself, the symbol of Mandela was important to Paul, the symbol of a man undergoing a wounding, coming through that experience and not focusing on vengeance, not being embittered. There's almost a Ghandi, Jesus-like quality in that. The man had been incarcerated for 27 years and when he came out he was, and is, still prepared to say, even to right-wing Afrikaners, "We can talk, we can find some room for you". Those are remarkable words.

There have also been other stories coming out of South Africa, other scenarios of change, reconciliation, and tolerance. In contrast to Paul's remembered episode of the Afrikaner farmer talking to the black man like he was a horse, there is the recent story of the son of F.W. de Klerk, the President of South Africa, becoming engaged to a coloured woman (a woman of mixed black and white racial heritage). Or, there is the image of de Klerk himself saying, "We made a mistake. We acknowledge that apartheid was a mistake. Let's try and forgive each other and build together".

What all of this does is help Paul to look back on that strong force that made him say, "I can't stay here, I can't live a lie," and say instead, "Okay, let's forgive," if that is the right word, or at least "Let's look at it again, and look at it with less fierceness". What it means is that the lie that Paul felt he was living no longer seems so much of a lie because some of those people who, in a sense, forced him to live that lie have now admitted that it was wrong.

If de Klerk and all the Afrikaners were, to this day, still saying, "Apartheid is correct, it's the only way, the black man deserves to be treated like this," and gave a whole variety of reasons why, that would only perpetuate the lie, it would widen the split. Even
though these events are happening thousands of miles away from Canada, all of them—the change in South Africa, the ability of the Afrikaners to acknowledge their mistakes, of Mandela, in spite of everything, to forgive them for their mistakes—have had their affect on Paul.

How could they not? Paul will die with a part of him still South African. Until ten years ago Paul might not have been able to acknowledge that fact. The last ten years, however, have been different. Paul has been much more able to look back, to integrate the past with the present, and more willing to share that integration with others as he does through his play. In the first ten years in Canada Paul wouldn’t have been ready do to such a thing. The events would not have been clear enough in his psyche, his consciousness, for him to have put them together in a way that he could stand up in front of others and, in effect, give his story away. The play has been another step in his healing process.

Paralleling his inner journey back to South Africa Paul has also undergone a spiritual reconnection with his Jewish identity. For Paul and his family those first ten years in Canada were spent in a spiritual wilderness. They had no interest at all in any spiritual or religious community. They were much more humanistic in outlook. Paul had grown up in a very typical South African-Jewish family which was quite assimilated. His family was semi-kosher, he went to synagogue on high holidays, had a barmitzvah and attended a Jewish school. But he and Sarah, who is also Jewish, didn’t want their kids to go to Jewish school and for the twelve years of their married life didn’t belong to any synagogue.

When Paul’s daughter came to the age of batmitzvah the family had to make a decision whether to continue in their secular, humanistic, ways or to align themselves with a spiritual community. At that point they discovered an alternative synagogue, Or Shalom, where they felt accepted. For the past ten years they have committed themselves to
supporting this community. They also joined the Peretz Schule (a more secular Jewish organization with East European Socialist roots) but couldn’t commit themselves fully to both the Peretz and Or Shalom. They have remained primarily involved with Or Shalom and participated in the drama program at the Peretz Schule. It was with the help of the drama teacher there that Paul developed his play.

The play, or at least an excerpt from it, acted as the serendipitous catalyst for a very real link back to Paul’s past. The incident was a coda to his involvement with Fezeka High almost twenty years before. In 1992 there was a festival for immigrants held in Vancouver. Paul was waiting to recount one of his tales and on the stage with him was a black South African drummer, Themba Tana, who had also immigrated to Canada. At the time Paul and Themba didn’t know each other.

When the two of them were introduced Themba mentioned that he was originally from Cape Town, from Nyanga. Paul responded, "That’s interesting because I helped at Fezeka High in Nyanga, where Mr. Ndandane was the principal," to which Themba said, "What! I went out with Mr. Ndandane’s daughter". Themba was approximately the same age as Paul, had grown up in Nyanga, knew Mr. Ndandane, had gone out with his daughter. Paul had grown up at the same time, very close by but had no way of connecting with him. And years later the two of them were sitting in Canada on a stage sharing this commonality, having grown up in different worlds but in the same country. They were both so happy at discovering a shared, albeit separated, past. It was very emotional for Paul.

Themba also told Paul this amazing story of a recent trip back to South Africa as a professional drummer. One night he was walking with friends through Nyanga when, suddenly, there were sirens and lights coming towards them. Within two seconds, twenty years of living in Canada were stripped away and Themba was simply a terrified black man
running from the police, jumping over fences to get away.

Since coming to Canada Paul, too, has gone back to visit South Africa. Like Themba he too felt, in being in that country, the years in Canada fall away (although as a white person, this was not terrifying). Each time Paul went back it was very easy to slide back into a certain way of talking, a certain way of thinking, back into living the lie, speaking again about how bad this or that was but still getting into the car and going out to a nice restaurant or a movie and not truly seeing the black people.

Within a few days there Paul would become South African again, would again find himself speaking Afrikaans. It was really strange that he could adapt so easily. This sense of almost never having left was sometimes unwittingly reinforced by old acquaintances who would bump into him on the street and would think that they just hadn’t seen Paul for a while, completely unaware that he’d been in Canada all these years. Just because Paul had been away he didn’t necessarily appear any different.

On these visits, the sense of belonging but not belonging made connecting with old friends a mixed experience. Since leaving South Africa neither Paul nor Sarah had kept up a correspondence with any of their friends there, but when they visited they made a point of phoning people and meeting them. It was good to see old connections. Paul and Sarah felt accepted by them. But even though, during the few hours they spent together, Paul might feel close to some of these people, there was the knowledge that he was not going to remain there and he would have to say goodbye. So each little meeting was a mini-death.

The trips back did serve to give his children a taste of their family roots. On one holiday the two older children stayed for a brief time at Paul’s school. After returning to Canada from another trip, 13-year old Hannah wrote two poems about South Africa which caught the sense of the split, both inner and outer, that Paul had felt living there.
The last time that Paul visited South Africa was in 1986 so all his trips occurred before the recent liberalising changes in South Africa. Each time, therefore, Paul would always go back to a country that was still under apartheid as he’d known it. This had the effect of confirming for him the rightness of the decision he’d made, in 1973, to leave. Although it was always good to see his family and he felt welcomed by friends, the sense that there had been no change in the country reaffirmed for him that he had had to leave, had to do what he was doing. And each time Paul came back to Canada he would feel like he was coming home.

To Paul it seems peculiar, almost paradoxical that he would claim to be so split, so wounded by his love of the country and of its language, Afrikaans, then go into exile, be unable to talk about South Africa for a number of years here in Canada, and yet go back there and so easily slip into speaking Afrikaans, into his South African identity. To Paul, this seeming contradiction reminds him of the saying, "The greatest love is a silent love". His leaving, his not wanting to look back, not wanting to talk about South Africa for all those years in Canada must have masked a deep, unconscious love. Now, at least, he’s beginning to verbalize that love.

At least Paul hopes that what comes through in his stories is the love, not any dislike of South Africa. His overriding feeling now is one of love. But Paul first had to go through the process of silence and distancing before he could break the silence and, through words and stories, return to the past.

Paul has not yet developed a similar passion for Canada. It may be that the stories he eventually creates about Canada are ten to fifteen years in the future. At present his stories are still mainly rooted in South Africa with only a few about the transition to Canada. Very little is coming out of his imagination about his life here in Canada although that, no
doubt, will come.

Paul has a vision that some day, after South Africa has had time to go through its transition, he might go back as a visitor and tell stories of the kind that he has been telling during the interview, of a South African who left his country and had to survive in a foreign land. He would talk of what the value was of this, what this South African gathered from his journey in a foreign land, and bring this knowledge back with him as a gift to South Africa.

The need to take something back to South Africa derives not only from a need to make the symbolic return real but also, perhaps, to make recompense for the way in which Paul left his country. As Paul sees it, his reasons for leaving South Africa were, in a way, very selfish. He left because of a driving personal reason, because of a split that was driving him crazy and his need to be whole, to be complete again. In some symbolic way, his exile, his isolation, his subsequent reading, and then telling stories about, South Africa was, and is, a way of making himself whole again, somehow completing the circle.

**Interpretive comments.** Paul's self-exile narrative is, in his own words, a story of wounding and healing. Ostensibly, the wound was that of self-exile but there were, in fact two woundings, separate but linked, the "self-inflicted wound" of self-exile arising out of an initial, unchosen injury which was the loss of purity, of childhood innocence and wholeness. This loss of purity resulted from a betrayal, the telling (and living) of a lie by those in whom Paul trusted and with whom he identified.

The lie was that Paul's childhood was not an incorruptible paradise but built on what was, for others, a hell. The lie was embodied in the disjunction between the Afrikaans farmer's warm welcome to Paul and his abusive words to the black labourer. This discrepant
behaviour reflected a society that was two-faced; the face that Paul had believed in, "all red-cheeks and apple-pie", belied by the other face out of which came words that spoke to a person as if he was an animal. The division between these two faces occasioned the split in Paul's cocoon.

What made the split so painful for Paul was his realisation that it existed not only in the external world of South Africa, in the separation of, and inequality between, the races but in himself, between what he had thought to be true and good and what he came to see as false and unjust. Even though Paul had been protected from knowledge of this lie by the magic circle of childhood innocence, once he became aware of its falseness he was forced to recognise his complicity in its maintenance, the extent to which he had been part of the deception and vice-versa.

To emerge from a cocoon is to shatter its wholeness, however illusory, just as Adam’s bite into the apple destroyed its integrity. Once the bitter knowledge of the rottenness at its core has been tasted Eden can never be returned to. For Paul to have tried to return to his paradise would have been for him have continued to be fed by, and feed into, the lie. But while paradise had been lost, or rather, because it had been lost, it could not easily be forgotten and so Paul hungered persistently after what could never be truly regained. It is the attempt to recover this lost purity that drives Paul’s narrative.

For Paul, his deep sense of betrayal by South Africa came, in part, from his strong identification with the Afrikaner (or, as he hoped, "just the good elements of the Afrikaner") given expression through his love of their language. Although it is not unusual for twentieth century Jews in the diaspora to assimilate into the culture of their adoptive country, manifesting what Kalmar (1993) has termed the eji (embarrassed Jewish individual) phenomenon, the desire to downplay ethnic differences in order to minimise the risk of
discrimination, it is unusual for South African Jews to identify with Afrikaans culture as did Paul.

Most, although not all, Jews who came to South Africa chose to live in cities rather than in the country and to assimilate into English-European culture, often adopting a liberal political outlook in which the Afrikaners were cast as the villains in the apartheid drama. Afrikaners were the architects and prime proponents of apartheid (although many English-speakers were happy to benefit from it even while decrying it) and Paul’s identification with the Afrikaner would likely have increased his sense of woundedness once he uncovered the lie.

It is probable that Paul gained his affinity for Afrikaans culture and language from his father who, despite being originally Hebrew-speaking and from a British colony, came to speak Afrikaans better than either Hebrew or English. As an emigre from a Palestine colonised by the British, Paul’s father may have empathised with the Afrikaners for whom the traditional enemy was not, as is conventionally assumed, the blacks whom they subjugated and saw as inferior, but the British who defeated and colonised what the Afrikaners believed to be "their" country.

It is perhaps no accident, then, that Paul’s break with South Africa coincided with the death of his father. In returning from Israel to South Africa to lay his father to rest he also came home to sever and bury his ties to his father’s adopted land. But to simply abandon South Africa would have been to have left it and himself in a state of impurity. To regain his faith in the world (and, by extension, in himself) Paul needed to attempt to restore some purity to that world. To do this and to offer recompense for his sin of omission, his unwitting collusion in an unjust system, Paul worked with a "furious energy" on behalf of Fezeka High before inflicting the wound of exile on himself.
A self-inflicted wound is a paradoxical phenomenon. It may be, simultaneously, both a self-denying and a self-enhancing act. Against both nature and reason a person harms himself. But self-injury may be a means of limiting further harm. When Paul could no longer tolerate the split in himself he wounded himself further ("split from" his country) in order not to exacerbate the wound and to allow the healing to begin.

The depth of Paul's initial wound derived partly from his recognition of his involvement in the lie. Learning the truth about South Africa not only sullied the purity of his childhood it also challenged his sense of himself as a good person. Having uncovered his part in the lie, he could no longer think of himself as pure or whole (that is, having integrity). Hence his need to be "cleansed".

The question for Paul was who betrayed whom? If he was the innocent victim of an act of betrayal then his moral integrity, although not his trust, could remain intact. If, on the other hand he was the betrayer, then he was complicit in the lie. The first two parts of the parable of Sidwell reveal how, for Paul, everyone in South Africa was guilty of betrayal, of the lie. If everyone was culpable (although not necessarily equally so) then perhaps Paul's collusion was lessened or, at least, mitigated by virtue of its being shared.

When Sidwell called Paul over and taught him the hand gesture, Paul felt "taken in" (that is, included) by the black community. When he later came to believe that he had been "taken in" in another sense (that is, duped) Paul saw how a poisoned environment contaminates everything and everyone within its sphere. Not only had the whites, especially the Afrikaners, betrayed his trust (and his love), so had the blacks. If all of society, oppressors and oppressed alike, were duplicitous and untrustworthy then there was no way to remain in South Africa and not be part of the lie. Even after having left South Africa and returning there as a visitor from Canada it was too easy to "slip back into living the lie".
The sense of having been made dirty by the lie of South Africa, of having been implicated in, and penetrated by that lie, meant that even the entreaties by some blacks that he was "the type of white" that they wanted and needed to stay, were insufficient to convince Paul of the possibility of redemption while remaining in South Africa. The stain of South Africa was such that only a splitting off from the source of the stain itself held out hope for its erasure. Otherwise the privileged nature of his life—going to the movies, to university, having food on his plate—belied any words he might have said.

If words spoken (and gestures made) in, and in regard to, South Africa could not be trusted, then one way for Paul to avoid implicating himself in the lie was to opt for silence (at least as concerns South Africa). Thus, for the first ten years of self-exile, Paul chose not to talk about his country except out of politeness when questioned. To talk about, to look back to, South Africa would have been to have risked turning into a pillar of salt, to have risked not only being immobilised, unable to move forward into the future away from the corruption of his homeland, but also being dissolved back into a rising tide of painful (and sullying) memories.

For Paul the language of deception was also the language of stories, like those he told in Israel when trying to be an "objective story-teller" about South Africa. For the first ten years of self-exile Paul did not tell stories. He spoke primarily the "safe" language of science and medicine. But if science helped him avoid speaking the lie (and about the lie) it created another untruth, that of self-denial. To re-enter his denied self he had to once again venture into the world of stories of the kind he loved to perform in Afrikaans as a child.

But if he was to step back into a magical childhood realm he had to tread carefully lest it, once again, prove a deceitful and treacherous place. At first he approached that world by reading the stories of others. His choice of stories is revealing. The writings of Herman
Charles Bosman and others like him reflect a time in South African history when "it was fun being an Afrikaner....There was laughter, fun, and a lust for living" (van der Post, 1990). Unlike more recent Afrikaans writers such as Breytenbach (1984), Brink (1992), or Malan (1990) whose works are characterised by irony, cynicism, and embitterment at the worm in the bud of the Afrikaner soul, Bosman’s more light-hearted stories evoke a land and a time very much like the one Paul remembered, or imagined, his childhood to have been.

These idealising, mythologising tales revived and nourished the dreams of Paul’s broken past allowing him to recapture some of the lost purity and to mend, or bypass, the rupture of exile. Having taken words in he could then begin to put them out, to express his self. In his play (a performance of which I attended) he did this through an interweaving of autobiography and mythology (both African and North American Native). Mythology universalizes the particular (and vice-versa) linking the merely human to the transcendent. By mythologising his story Paul made meaning out of the humiliation, the loss of faith and of purity, of the wounding he has experienced.

But just as myths can reveal hidden truths so they can deceive and obscure. The danger for Paul in myth-making was that he would recreate and repeat the lie he was trying to undo. Just as Bosman’s stories idealise a South Africa that perhaps never really was, Paul’s childhood stories evoked a time and place that existed primarily in his sheltered childhood imagination.

However, unlike when he was a child, Paul’s stories were not merely a mouthing of Afrikaner mythology. They included stories of his own awakening and disillusionment. Significantly they included tales of black heroism and martyrdom as exemplified by Mandela. To Paul, Mandela was a symbol of the restoration of purity to an impure world. He was the antithesis to the Afrikaans farmer and his wife. What they split, Mandela tried to heal.
Not coincidentally Paul’s breaking of his partial silence on South Africa was paralleled by the unsilencing of Mandela. Released from life imprisonment (which in South Africa, unlike in North America, literally means for the duration of the prisoner’s life) Mandela, like Jesus, was miraculously resurrected, given voice. Rather than speaking words of vengeance, seeking retribution, he was (and, as of this writing, continues to be) magnanimous, "Christ-like". Mandela stands as a symbol, *in extremis*, of Paul himself. Mandela, wounded by his country, emerged triumphant, unembittered, unvengeful towards all whites, Paul included. Paul, also wounded and betrayed by his country can only try to emulate this Christ-like behaviour.

Also important to Paul has been the fact that Mandela’s release was an indication that those who perpetrated the lie (or at least some of them) were willing to acknowledge their part in the lie. De Klerk, on behalf of all whites, confessed to the "mistake" of apartheid.

De Klerk aside, there were other words and events which allowed Paul to reclaim his South African identity. A black Brazilian, himself perhaps the descendant of African slaves, gave Paul the words which helped him transform the story of Sidwell from one of broken trust and rejection to one of shared trust and inclusion. Themba Tana, Paul’s unknown black "other" in South Africa, shared his story and a stage with Paul. Hannah wrote poems which reflect the split which Paul experienced, indicating that his eldest child understood his wound. The Fezeka High theatre, a place of story-telling that bore Paul’s last name remained standing, alone amongst the school buildings destroyed in the fire sparked by black anger towards whites.

In tandem with this "inner journey" of reclamation of his South African past Paul also rediscovered his Jewish identity. Paul was not only cut off from South Africa, but as an assimilated Jew had been "split off" from an even older and deeper cultural heritage.
Although Paul could not find sanctity in Israel (which, to many Jews, is their "natural" homeland) because its militaristic policies replicated the lie that Paul was escaping he could, nonetheless, return to his Jewish roots. By joining the Jewish community in Vancouver Paul ended his wanderings in a "spiritual wilderness" and began to heal the cultural wound of exile passed down to him through his forebears.

The final chapter in Paul's healing journey remains to be written. He dreams of one day returning to South Africa with his stories, the prodigal son making an offering of the story of his life in exile. In imagining this return he sees himself as a "visitor" to South Africa. Although a part of him "will die South African," Canada has become "home" and he will return to his birthplace only as a sojourner.

When, or if, he returns, there is no guarantee that Paul's "gift" will be welcomed in a post-apartheid South Africa. But it may be less important whether or not Paul ever actually makes it back to the place of his childhood to present his offering, and that it be accepted, than the fact that he can imagine doing so. By fantasizing a return in which he reciprocates for the gifts given him by South Africa (his magical childhood, the presents from Fezeka High) he completes, if only in thought, the magical circle broken in childhood.

Validation Interview

Following the narrative interviews, each of the co-researchers was presented with her or his case study account (the researcher's rendering of the individual's story) and asked to read the account to check for accuracy and to make any necessary corrections or desired changes. The co-researchers were also asked to give their reactions to reading their own stories.

Paul commented that he had "really enjoyed" reading the account and that he had no
major changes to make. He found reading his own story "very moving" an experience enhanced by the fact that the narrative had been rewritten in the third person. Reading an account of his experiences written as if it was someone else's story gave Paul a perspective on his experiences which he had not had before, allowing him to feel both part of the story and separate from it.

Claire commented that, in reading her story, she noticed that in recounting earlier experiences (her years in South Africa) her terminology had been "more extreme" than when she had discussed more recent events, when her language seemed "more moderate". She felt that this discrepancy was reflective of the fact that, in the past, her thinking had been more "rigid", and that her thoughts now on those same experiences is "not as extreme as presented". As a result, she made some changes to the account that toned down some of the statements such that they reflected her present thoughts and feelings, rather than how she had felt when telling her story.

Jane had a somewhat similar reaction to Claire but to an even greater degree. She stated that she felt "uncomfortable" with the first part of her account (the time in South Africa, London, and the Soviet Union) although she acknowledged that what I had written reflected what she had told me (as well as how she had expressed it). She particularly felt uncomfortable with the strength of her negative comments about the political movement of which she had been a part. As a result, Jane made quite extensive alterations to the tone (and, to a lesser extent, to the content) of the description of the first half of her narrative, her time in South Africa, England, and the Soviet Union. The second half of the story, covering her time in Canada, she left virtually unchanged, saying that it reflected her actual experiences very accurately.

Thus, for both Jane and Claire, there had been a shift in perception between the
telling and the reading of their own stories. In initially recounting their experiences they had felt a greater intensity than when subsequently reading the account of those experiences. It seemed as if the telling was closer to a re-enactment, while the reading was more of a critical assessment, of the experience of self-exile.

It is noteworthy that, particularly in Jane’s case, the change in perspective between telling and reading, mirrored the process that all three co-researchers seemed to go through in their actual self-exile, at first rejecting or negating aspects of their past (in order to make the break from it) and later achieving an accommodation with that past as they re-integrated disowned aspects of their selves into their current lives (See below, Chapter V, "Comparative Analysis", for extensive discussion of this process).
CHAPTER V
Comparative Analysis

So, we are to live by our own fictions and recognize them for what they are.

Elsbree, The Rituals of Life.

Put simply, a story is a series of events linked together in a progressive narrative. The way in which events are linked constitutes the story’s structure, while the meanings of the narrative events constitute the story’s themes. Structure, themes, and events are, thus, interdependent and a comprehensive narrative analysis must consider all three elements: narrative structure, themes of meaning, and events that move the story along.

Narrative Structure: Self-Exile as a Rite of Passage

As with all stories, the story of self-exile has a beginning, middle, and end; uprooting is followed by the search for a new home and, eventually, by the putting down of roots in a new environment. This process, with its sequential, overlapping phases, resembles the structure of a rite of passage which van Gennep (1965) saw as falling into three stages: separation, transition (liminality or marginality), and incorporation.

In separation, one leaves (psychologically or physically) an established existence in which one has a definable place. In incorporation, one enters a new existence in which one has earned a place. As drama [or narrative], separation and incorporation constitute the beginning and end. The transitional or liminal phase is the middle or means. (Cochran, 1990, p. 73)

Strictly speaking exile itself is not a rite of passage, which is a "ceremon[y] accompanying an individual's 'life crisis'" (van Gennep, 1965, p. vii). Rather, it is the story of self-exile, the retelling of the events, which is equivalent to a rite. As one of the
participants, Claire, noted, telling her story was "like a ritual".

Story, however, mirrors (and orders) experience and both the actual experience of self-exile and its telling follow the sequence and logic of a rite of passage, with its transition from a lower state to a higher state....The first part involves separation and conflict. One was firmly entrenched in a stable world...which is ruptured. [In] the middle [or] transition...one wavers between two worlds....Through ordeals and tortures, instruction and revelation, one is ceremonially destroyed and cast into hell to be reborn....The basic logic of a rite of passage is that one must first be destroyed to be elevated to a higher level of existence. The two movements of the middle are catastrophe and loss as the old world withers, and the endurance of hell as the new self incubates....During a rite of passage...a person dies and is symbolically reborn. (Cochran, 1990, pp. 42-43)

In self-exile, where a dominant theme is "home", or a sense of place (home is lost or abandoned, then searched for and, finally, discovered or recovered), being "reborn" is synonymous with "finding (or coming) home" where home is both a physical place and a symbol of belonging. Home is more than an external structure or concept but rather an extension of self and vice versa:

Home: it is a metaphysical principle and an ontological condition embodied in a place: the location which affirms who I am, projects what I may be, and vindicates whatever I have had to do to get there. (Elsbree, 1986, p. 39)

Coming (or finding) home, then, means coming back to (or finding) one’s self.

Since going into self-exile means both leaving, and searching for, home, there is both a linearity and a circularity to self-exile, a passage forward in and through space and time as well as a circling back to the beginning. As a progression from separation to incorporation (dis-integration to re-integration, dissolution to resolution) self-exile constitutes a "quest-cycle in which the conclusion is the starting point renewed and transformed by the quest itself"
The first stage, separation, begins with *internalised exile* (a sense of disentitlement and exclusion) followed by internal exile (increasing separation from community and family) through to actual departure from the homeland. The second phase, transition, includes the metabasis from homeland to adoptive land (including the time in transit before final settlement) and the initial years in the new country. The third phase, incorporation, is the time during which integration of, and by, the new culture (*acculturation*) occurs as well as incorporation (reintegration of the past with the present and future), in effect a symbolic homecoming in exile involving a sense of inclusion, connectedness, and putting down of roots in the new environment.

While events can be related in a progressive fashion, themes cannot. To the extent that it is possible to do so themes are examined as they emerge from the events within the structural framework of the rite of passage. However, the attempt to fit all events and themes into three distinct phases, inevitably leads to some distortion. Processes of separation,

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15 As a *metacycle* or *total quest myth*, the self-exile story incorporates all four narrative (or dramatic) modes: *tragedy* (fall), *comedy* (spring), *romance* (summer), and *irony* (winter) (Cochran, 1990, following Frye). The first stage, separation, is dominated by the tragic mode in which the person "strives not in sunshine but under a growing shadow". As the person moves towards, and into, the second stage, transition, the ironic mode increasingly emerges. In irony "effective action is difficult". The third phase, incorporation, is characterised initially by comedy "filled with reconciliation, *reintegrations* [italics added], impending harmony" and eventually by romance, "the realization of design or making dream a reality" (all quotes from Cochran, p. 35).

16 Like Frye, Elsbree (1982) also sees all stories as falling into particular categories. Although it is harder to delineate the circular progression of the self-exile narrative using Elsbree’s taxonomy, various phases of self-exile do correspond to one or more of his five classes of story. The separation and transitional phases include *fighting a battle*, *enduring suffering*, and *taking a journey* (not necessarily in that order), while the incorporation phase is comprised of *consecrating a home* and *pursuing consummation*. 
transition, and incorporation do not occur in neat, linear, stages. It may, therefore, be more accurate to talk of elements of separation, transition or incorporation which may occur at different times for different people. By the end of her account, Jane, for example may be considered to still be in a transitional phase not fully settled in Canada. Nevertheless, some of her experiences were clearly of an incorporative nature. Paul, on the other hand, experienced only a short transitional period, finding it quite easy to adapt to his adoptive country, even as he underwent some of the experiences characteristic of transition. Regardless of its limitations, however, the rite of passage is, I believe, a useful model for understanding the experience of self-exile.

**Themes of Meaning and Narrative Events**

Themes are abstract concepts derived from the meaning given to actual events. Therefore, themes of meaning and narrative events are, here discussed together.

**Separation.** The dominant themes of the separation phase of self-exile are exclusion and personal deficiency. Subordinate themes are awakening, disillusionment, loss of trust, threats to the integrity of self, commitment, disempowerment, conflict about leaving, and unfinished business.

A superordinate theme of self-exile is exclusion or non-belonging; a sense of separateness not only gives rise to, but permeates the story of self-exile. Although the act of departure, by abruptly severing the individual from his context, ruptures his life and life story, it is only one event (albeit a pivotal one) in a tale of exclusion begun some time before the leave-taking proper and continuing for some time after.
Therefore, although cultural dislocation occasions discontinuity in life-story it also, conversely, represents continuity of narrative. And while the saga of non-belonging becomes the self-exile’s own story, the elements which go to make it up are already present in the environment prior to her being aware of them, forming the context from which her personal text (her identity) is derived and in which it is constructed.

The protagonist thus steps into an already scripted narrative of exclusion. In fact, these elements may not only precede his awareness of them but may even antedate his own life. (This is not an argument for environmental determinism, but rather an acknowledgement of contextual influence.) Paul’s conviction, despite his deep attachment to South Africa, that it was not his country and that, therefore, he had to leave was embedded in, and arose out of, a legacy of deracination passed down in his family through generations of enforced dislocation. Likewise, Claire’s certainty, extending as "far back as she can remember," that she would not stay in South Africa, was a by-product of her mother’s dissociation from an inferior colonial culture.

A sense of otherness and disconnectedness from community and country constitutes a form of internalised exile as the person comes to feel that she does not truly belong (as did Claire) or that he has no real right to that place (as did Paul). Regardless of whether the sense of exclusion is primarily self-chosen (as it was by Claire’s mother) or societally-imposed (as it historically has been for the Jews) and even if the individual is unaware of this legacy and its effects it can, nevertheless, sew the seeds of eventual self-exile.

For the self-exile, an inherited sense of separateness from the society in which she has grown up is not the only possible source of exclusion. Feelings of non-belonging can originate closer to home, within the self-exile’s own family. As a result of maternal rejection and family dysfunction Jane felt that she did not belong to or in her family-of-origin.
Similarly, for Claire, her mother's dislike for her and her parents' "craziness" helped impel her from home.

Clearly not every instance of familial rejection or dysfunction results in self-exile, although it may be a contributing, even prime, factor (especially where such experiences are reinforced by, and interact with, other experiences of exclusion and disentitlement). Claire left South Africa, in large part, because of needing to get away from family in order to "find herself". Jane's leaving was an outcome of events precipitated by her involvement with a political group that represented, in part, the family she lacked (as well as a legitimate means of social activism).

But feelings of cultural and/or familial exclusion, however strong, need not on their own (or even primarily) predicate self-exile. Equally, despair over social and political conditions (pervasive injustice, endemic repression) and a felt inability to change these conditions need not necessarily cause people to leave their country. For Jane, Paul, and Claire, it was a combination of factors--personal and political--that culminated in self-exile.

To the extent that social or psychological forces can affect a person without his being aware of their influence he is a passive character in his own unfolding drama. It is by awakening (at least to some extent) to these forces, both internal and external, that the individual becomes an active participant in his own story, not simply a protagonist but also author (or co-author) of that story.

For the white, liberal South African, awakening is the moment of "rebirth" or "birth into...second consciousness....essentially the discovery of the lie. The great South African lie" (Gordimer, 1983, p. 119). (Note, here, how precisely Gordimer's language mirrors, or rather prefigures, Paul's own description of his awareness of the "lie".)

For all three co-researchers this awakening, unsurprisingly, occurred during
adolescence or early adulthood, the period (in Western culture) that marks the onset of identity formation. At this point, however, awareness is focused more on the socio-political situation and the person’s part in maintaining or/and opposing it than on personal factors. Thus Claire experienced the effects of shame, Jane lacked a sense of self, but neither was aware of exactly what it was they were experiencing, or why. Paul had a sense of a split but did not fully understand its cause or its nature. (For the self-exile, conscious awareness and understanding of the personal, psychological factors involved in self-exile comes later, mostly during the incorporation phase, when distance and life-experience allow for insight that is lacking when the person is still in the thick of events.)

Awakening brings with it a sense of disillusionment, even betrayal, and a concomitant loss of faith and trust. For the co-researchers what formerly seemed true was revealed as a lie or hypocrisy, what was trustworthy became discredited, what was seen as positive became negative, what had previously seemed neutral was now perceived as callous indifference. Disillusionment seemed to occur regardless of whether the awakening was sharp and painful as it was for Paul in his encounters with the two-faced farmer and with Sidwell, or more gradual as with Claire’s dawning awareness of her parent’s hypocritical attitude towards blacks. Claire’s experience was, in may ways, typical of that of the young, white South African growing up in a liberal family:

The sensitive child listening to such [political] discussions may well have been confused by his parents’ liberal pronouncements, given the second class status of the well-loved maid or gardener. Confusion often turned to confrontation as the growing adolescent challenged adult acquiescence in ‘the system’. (Frankental & Shain, 1986, p. 213)

Feelings of disillusionment and betrayal may arise even (or especially) where a basis of trust is lacking or limited. Despite Jane’s fractured, tenuous relationship with her parents, she experienced their refusal to assist her with her studies (when she could not re-enter art
school) as a betrayal. To Jane, this failure of support paralleled and underscored the state's exclusionary behaviour. Jane's inability to fully accept her parents' lack of assistance was demonstrated by the fact that many years later, as a visitor from Canada, she still sought her mother's help (yet again refused) to attend art school in Johannesburg.

The absence or loss of trust, of a justified trust (Baier, 1994) in those around one (family and/or community) may render the world unsafe and untrustworthy and occasion a withdrawal or split from that world. This may create (or further) the sense of internal exile, a severing from one's established community (and possibly family) even while in geographical proximity to them. Thus, alienated from, and unsupported by her family, Jane was driven further into politics, although this was not entirely a reactive response. While, in Jane's case, distance from family and community resulted in her joining an alternative community (the CP), Claire, who mistrusted not only the politics of her parents and of the community in which she had grown up, but also the political alternatives that she saw around her, retreated into a protective, but isolating, elitism.

In all three of the stories told here awakening prompted, or at least coincided with, a temporary leave-taking from South Africa that was part of the search for self. These journeys, foreshadowing later permanent self-exile, constituted minor rites of passage within the larger self-exile narratives.

In some traditional societies a journey is prescribed for individuals undergoing transition between social roles (Turner, 1967). Temporary absence makes manifest the fact that such individuals, lacking clear societal roles, are structurally invisible within their communities, "at once no longer classified and not yet classified" (p. 96). The period of absence is intended as a defining as well as a sacralizing time (van Gennep, 1965) so that the travellers return from their journey with their powers potentially enhanced, their vision
clarified, their paths clearer.

Each of the people in this study journeyed to and from what was, in effect, her or his cultural motherland—Claire and Jane to England, Paul to Israel. Although "mother" potentially represents a source of refuge and nurturing, for these three people motherland proved to be a place of limited, or false sanctuary, widening the breach that had originated at home.

For Paul, Israel was the site where his "white cocoon" cracked open, where he was confronted by the contradictions in his country (both South Africa and Israel) as well as in himself. For Jane it was the place where her first marriage ended, an event which replicated a pattern of family disintegration. Upon her return she was shut out from the one place (art school) where, in contrast to the rest of her life, she was doing something "totally for herself". Claire, despite her intention to make England a permanent home, was unable to sustain a life there and felt compelled to return to South Africa. In England her casual contact with politics (a member of the IRA) created problems for her when she came back to South Africa.

The time away was, thus, a time of transition enhancing the dissolution of childhood with its relative safety, innocence and ignorance, and marking the entry into the disillusioned and disillusioning world of adulthood. As such it was a time of clarification. Upon returning to the home country the path of each of participants was, in some ways, clearer. Claire felt reconfirmed in her decision to leave. Paul recognised the need to make a commitment which, for him, meant leaving South Africa since remaining in that country was, to him, incompatible with remaining whole. For Jane, her return from England heralded the onset of her deepening political involvement.

A questioning of the world also evokes doubts about the self, about one's place in that
world. The pressure of awareness may force formerly hidden fault-lines into the open so that the person experiences a split in the self, a threat to the self. Threats to the integrity of the self are tied into a recognition of personal moral accountability. Whereas ignorance shielded the white South African child from knowing complicity in an oppressive system, knowledge removed the defense of innocence. For the co-researchers awareness brought with it the burden of responsibility which, in turn, created the demand for commitment.

Whether or not such pressure to commit may be experienced as a crisis is, in part, dependent upon whether, and to what extent, the individual feels ambivalent about becoming politically or social active. For Jane, for whom the most desired life options had been closed off, the decision to embrace and be embraced by the CP seemed, at the time, relatively unproblematic, even desirable. Likewise, Paul found it easy to throw himself into working for Fezeka High, doing so with a "fierce energy". Claire, on the other hand, caught between her desire to see change and her doubts and fears about such change, felt an ambivalence that deepened her shame, guilt, and powerlessness.

Given the historically overwhelming power of the state and the endemic discrimination in South Africa, powerlessness was felt by many to be a condition of life in that country. Attempts at change were (until recently) largely doomed to either failure or only very limited success. Claire, thus, saw her attempts at creating a haven of equality for Gloria perverted when the black woman moved on to other, less liberal, employers. Paul felt deeply the inadequacy of his gesture towards Fezeka, that it was insufficient to restore either moral balance to society or purity to himself. Jane, through incarceration, banning, and enforced dependency on her jailers and her family, was most effectively rendered powerless. Despite Jane’s claim that she "was not really tortured", deprivation and interrogation of the kind that she experienced is, indeed, considered by some researchers (Allodi & Stiasny,
1990) to constitute torture. In fact,

a South African survey of detained and tortured persons indicated that, although men were more often physically tortured, women experienced more frequent psychological torture, and had more of a wide range of psychosomatic and psychological problems, both during detention and after release. (p. 144)

Thwarted personal and political effectiveness can give rise to feelings of futility, disempowerment, even hopelessness that then create, or add to, feelings of personal deficiency (which, along with exclusion, is a dominant theme in both the separation and transition phases of self-exile). Inherited and internalised feelings about exclusion and disentitlement, experiences of disempowerment, loss of faith and integrity, guilt, shame: all or any of these may contribute to a sense of personal inadequacy and deficiency in the self-exile. For Paul, the sense of personal deficiency arose from his feeling impure, lacking wholeness and integrity, having been tainted by the pervasive corruption of his environment. Jane’s feelings of deficiency derived from, amongst other things, rejection and a lack of identity while, for Claire, deficiency was associated with shame and guilt, feelings intensifed by her failure to act, her "lack of courage".

Feelings of personal insufficiency may increase isolation and marginality. Claire, believing that friends and family did not share her experience, retreated into elitism as a response to her sense of otherness. She had to look forward and outward to friends who had already left to find what limited support she could. Paul and his wife felt increasingly cut off from friends and family and drew closer together as they prepared to leave. Jane felt judged by, and thus separated from, those in her community who saw her as abandoning the struggle.

The desire to leave a troubled situation (regardless of the legitimacy of doing so) may create feelings of conflict and ambivalence. Although all three co-researchers believed that
they had no choice but to leave South Africa they also felt deeply conflicted about going (Claire because she thought that should stay and help, Paul because he would have liked to have tried to create a new South Africa, Jane because there were others in equally difficult circumstances who made the choice to stay).

In a sense, when she left South Africa, Jane was not going into self-exile, England being a continuation for her of South Africa. It was when she departed England for Canada and chose to leave the South African community there, that her self-exile began. But in quitting England, too, and again despite her certainty that she had to go, she felt deeply conflicted and guilty. To cope with such feelings Jane felt that she had to leave in a way that allowed her to retain a modicum of "respectability", both in her own eyes and in those of people in the political movement of which she was a part. Leaving to get married, especially to someone in the CP, legitimated her leave-taking.

Self-exile involves change in life circumstance. But "changes of condition do not occur without disturbing the life of society and the individual, and it is the function of rites of passage to reduce their harmful effects" (van Gennep, 1965, p. 13). That is, the way in which departure occurs influences subsequent experience (for the person leaving as well as for the communities she is exiting and entering).

Neither Claire, who felt very isolated, nor Jane who was isolated, underwent any kind of ritual or ceremonial leave-taking. The difficult nature of their circumstances, their deeply conflicted feelings about leaving, Claire’s shame and guilt, Jane’s guilt, meant that each of them left, in effect, without the blessings of those they were leaving behind. This left many unresolved issues that followed them into self-exile.

Paul, too, left with unfinished business, but his involvement with Fezeka High and the symbolic acts of farewell, (the gift-giving, the ceremony at the school, the naming of the
school theatre after his daughter) constituted rites that eased his departure. The book of tribal costumes which Paul took with him, could act as a physical and symbolic reminder of his connection to his home country, a talisman that protected his attachment to home. Through the ceremony at Fezeka, Paul received the blessing of those he was leaving in a way that neither Claire nor Jane did.

Transition. For the self-exile, leaving the home country (or, as in Jane’s case, an extension of that country) marks the shift from the separation to the transition phase. There is, however, no clear demarcation between the two stages and the process of transition begins even as separation continues. Thus, the superordinate themes that occur in separation, exclusion and personal deficiency, are also characteristic of the transitional phase of self-exile as are some lesser themes such as disempowerment and ambivalence. In addition, two new themes emerge: identity instability and identity denial.

As implied by the term, self-exile, at least initially, is more a moving away from than a moving towards. It is a move away from a devaluing and devalued environment. In order to facilitate the process of leaving, the negative aspects of home are emphasized. At the point at which she or he left, each of the self-exiles intensely disliked or felt alienated from the environment that was being quit: Claire hated Johannesburg, Jane hated the sexism and racism of the movement, and Paul felt that South Africa was built on a lie.

Because, for the self-exile, the situation being escaped impels more than the sanctuary promised pulls, the eventual place of exile is seen less in terms of what it is than what it is not, e.g. not the source of shame and disempowerment (Claire), of impurity and betrayal (Paul), of dependency, conformity, and lack of self (Jane). The person going into self-exile, to some extent goes blindly. Paul did not know where he was going to live only that it could
not be South Africa (or Israel). Claire knew that she was going to Canada but not where in Canada, nor how she would live nor what she would do once she got there. Her romantic, valorizing notions of Canada based on her friends recommendations, ill prepared her for the shock of relocating. Jane only came to Vancouver after some delay. Vancouver and her marriage to Michael were straws to which she clung (tenuously, ambivalently) to prevent her from falling back into the despair of life in London.

Because self (text) is interwoven with place (context), uprooting threatens the individual’s sense of self. The transitional period is a time of identity instability as the self-exile wavers between two worlds. Unfamiliarity with the new environment, lack of preparedness for change, absence of supports (material, psychological, emotional, spiritual), unresolved issues from the past, all influence the degree of instability (culture shock, self-shock, personal invalidation) experienced.

Of the three participants in this study, Jane underwent the most traumatic experience of dislocation, an experience prolonged and exacerbated by its being a triple dislocation: first, imprisonment and banning, second, exile to England, third, self-exile to Canada. Despite the large South African political community in London, for Jane, the lingering effects of incarceration, the unfamiliarity of London, the constraints and uncertainty of life in the CP, and her lack of identity outside of that provided by politics, meant that life there was little more than a "floating existence". When she emerged from this exile it was into yet another unfamiliar environment, a violent marriage, and with still little sense of self outside of her constricting political identity.

For Claire too, dislocation caused stress and identity disruption. Wanting, but being unable to "nest" with her newborn, stranded amongst people whose behaviour sometimes seemed strange, even hostile, she lacked a sense of stability, of purpose, of identity outside
of that of wife and mother, an identity which she experienced as a devalued one. While her husband offered some degree of support he also embodied elements of a patriarchal South African culture which Claire felt diminished by. As a result of these stressors she went through a depression.

Of the three, Paul experienced the least disruption. Despite his not knowing where he would end up, many of his supports stayed in place across the transition process. He and his wife, Sarah, formed a very tight unit. Paul had a career, contacts, funds which meant that his landing in Canada was cushioned. To the extent that Paul seemed to undergo culture shock it was primarily a positive experience, of the nature proposed by Adler (1978), in his alternative view of culture shock as a source of opportunity and growth. (Jane and Claire, on the other hand, would have to wait for some time to experience the benefits of cultural dislocation.) To some extent, Paul’s transition phase was muted, limited.

While the difficulty each of the self-exiles experienced in adapting to the new culture differed, all three underwent a similar process of identity denial. For a period following departure (Claire and Paul from South Africa, Jane from her political community) each negated his or her cultural identity.¹⁷ Both Paul and Claire felt that they lacked the energy to talk about, to evoke their South African past. Paul only answered questions on South Africa when asked and did not seek out a South African community even though he felt a certain comfort and affinity with other South Africans whom he happened to meet. He found security in the world of science and medicine, and was unable, or unwilling, to tell stories about South Africa. Claire, largely avoided contact with other South Africans and found that

¹⁷ I use the term "cultural" here in its broad sense to denote more than just national or ethnic heritage. While Paul and Claire downplayed their South Africanness, Jane negated her political identity, the world of political activism being, for her, the culture in which she had lived.
she could not write stories about South Africa even though she felt freed from the "grip of suppression" which had blocked her from writing while living there. Similarly, for Jane, after withdrawing from political activity, her whole being went "on strike" to the extent that she was unable to read the newspapers which, formerly, had been her life-blood.

Lack of energy, (of interest, of motivation) may, however, be not the cause, but the effect of self-negation, masking underlying feelings of which the self-exile is unaware and that are difficult to confront. (They are difficult to confront partly because the person is unaware of them, and the person remains unaware of them, in part, because they are difficult to confront). Paul asserted that talking about the past was too painful. This was the pain of his "silent love" for South Africa. For Claire, unacknowledged shame caused her to deny her cultural heritage.

The spectre of these unacknowledged and, hence, unincorporated elements from the person’s narrative, threaten the self-exile’s attempts to create a new self, a new personal story unblemished by the negating elements he is escaping. The past is discrediting and so must be abandoned, cut loose. The impulse to erase the old self is, perhaps typical of the exile, maybe especially so of those, like white South Africans, who wish (or wished) not only to undo their own past selves but to erase the past of the country in which those selves were created and which continued to cast its pall over their lives. James Wood (1994) captures this desire, and its essential unattainability, when he writes of one of South Africa’s most famous (or notorious) exiles, the Afrikaner poet Breyten Breytenbach, that,

the political South Africa he longs for is [a] forlorn impossibility, a place burned free of history and time and memory; a place like the endlessly renewing self, waking up each day to make itself anew. (p. 28)

It is this impossibility of a self (even an endlessly renewing self) burned free of history which the self-exile confronts, for even a decontextualized identity carries the traces
of its abandoned context. Breytenbach (1993) himself recognises the limits of his own longing for self-erasure when he writes "We cannot run away from the past--indeed, our past is the actual running" (p. 147). Physical separation alone cannot eradicate the hold of an unwanted psychological legacy.

Nonetheless, the desire and attempt to avoid and evade one's past is strong for the self-exile and may be an essential part of the transition process, part of the necessary disintegration of the old self-narrative preceding reintegration into a reconstructed life-story in the incorporation phase. Identity negation is a product of the sense of personal deficiency each of the self-exiles carries with himself, and which he is trying to overcome. Like Paul, whose turning away from his past was an attempt at cleansing, at making himself whole again, the need to be made whole is a common feature of all three stories collected here.

Although the struggle to come to terms with the past may be experienced largely as an internal struggle, it takes place in relation to external events. A text is not only sustained by a context but, in turn, perpetuates that context (Cochran, 1990). The self-exile may bring with her, or recreate in the adoptive country, some of the very conditions which she is trying to escape. She may also remain particularly sensitized to those things in the surroundings that remind her of past experiences. The negative attributes she wishes to be rid of may be reflected back by people and events around her, reinforcing already internalised self-negating messages and, thus, making psychological movement difficult.

Claire, for instance, felt caught by the judgements of others, judgements with which she concurred. She found it easy to agree with her friend who saw all South Africans as arrogant. When her husband recounted to her the sexist and racist jokes which he had heard at the "Lunch Club" Claire's negative impression of South Africans, of whom she was one, was further confirmed. Jane, too, felt trapped by the anticipated (or feared) actions of former
allies. One reason she was wary of leaving Michael was because she imagined Michael’s father to be a more powerful influence in the CP than he, perhaps, was, with the power (similar to that of the old CP patriarchs with whom she had worked) to excommunicate her from the party, not only in Canada, but worldwide.

The difficulty for the self-exile in evading those things that evoke invalidating aspects of the past is made more difficult by the fact that those same features may also have been, and still be, a source of some validation, especially in exile. For instance, as much as Claire wished to escape South Africa (the place and its people), once in Canada she missed some aspects of her abandoned homeland: the physical beauty, the commitment of the politicians (even those with whom she disagreed), the inspiration to write (even as she felt blocked from doing so). The self-exile’s feelings may thus be characterised by ambivalence. Underlying the desire to separate from the past may be an unexpressed pull towards that which has been left, an undertow that needs to be acknowledged before incorporation can occur.

The need to deny and escape invalidating aspects of one’s self-narrative can create and/or increase feelings of exclusion, isolation, and liminality. Marginality is most acute for those who are not only severed from these, still active, ghosts from the past, but who experience difficulty moving into the present. Paul, for reasons already noted (family support, a ready made adoptive community, the mentorship of the professor, a ceremonial leave-taking from South Africa, relatively little apparent shame or guilt about the past) was more able to connect with his new culture. Nonetheless, he still felt that he was not well understood by Canadians who could not grasp the context from which he had come. His inability, at that stage, to communicate that context, maintained his sense of feeling misunderstood.

Neither Jane nor Claire, on the other hand, found it easy to connect with Canadians.
Encounters with people in Canada often created any or all of feelings of humiliation, mistrust, discomfort, alienation, and being judged. Claire felt that she belonged neither to the Canadian nor South African community. She devalued both cultures, their politics, their communities. She made a half-hearted attempt to get involved politically with South Africans but did not follow through. For Claire, her sense of deficiency arising from her shame-filled family history and her invalidation as a woman and a white South African, compounded, and were compounded by, her lack of integration in the new culture.

Jane, unlike Claire, was secure in her South African identity, having clearly established a sense of herself as oppositional to the white regime. She felt that she had paid her dues, lived just like the blacks had in exile and felt no shame about her South Africanness. She did, however, feel guilt at abandoning the cause. She also felt a sense of otherness in regard to Canadian culture and, increasingly, to her former political family. Her behaviour at university distanced her from others and perpetuated her isolation. Her situation, like that of Claire, was a difficult one. As a single mother, having escaped an abusive marriage, struggling to work and study, cut off from her community, she had little support.

Lack of community can intensify feelings of powerlessness, futility, and purposelessness and thus add to the sense of personal deficiency. Claire felt depressed, robbed of her voice, silenced. Jane, feeling trapped, unable to move back or forward, maintained a certainty that she would leave even as she made no move to do so. Paul remained split. He adapted successfully to the new environment but did so at the cost of avoiding a painful, but meaningful. He also felt that he was in a spiritual wilderness. In fact, during transition, all three self-exiles were in a kind of wilderness. Wanting not to look (and get drawn) back into aspects of the past they, sometimes, lost their bearing.
However, for all that the transition phase may predominantly be one of struggle (catastrophe and loss), there may also be moments, indicators of progress as the self-exile moves towards incorporation. In being in suspension, in limbo, the self-exile oscillates between being held by the past and moving into the future.

For the three individuals in this study, this wavering between past and future found expression in the visits to South Africa which each of them took during this period. Like their earlier, temporary, travels away from South Africa, the journeys from Canada back to South Africa represented minor rites of passage, acting as agents, or foci, of change, as well as re-enactments, or evocations of past events. Visiting their country of origin each was reminded of what they had left and was made aware of what had been lost, what had changed, what had been gained. This was both a disconcerting and confirming experience.

Upon returning to South Africa for the first time since leaving, Claire again felt ashamed and silenced. She also, however, experienced a sense of movement. By observing the differences between herself and other women in South Africa she could recognize and measure how much she had changed. Her meetings with her "real" friends validated not only who she had become but allowed her to see parts of her past in a more positive light, letting her know that she had not been completely "screwed up" when she lived in South Africa. Her meeting with Gloria, to some extent, released her from past shame and guilt. The cumulative effect of these events was that, upon arriving back in Canada, Claire felt that she was coming home. Such events were of an incorporative nature and representative of a movement from the transition towards the incorporation phase.

For Paul, return to South Africa revealed to him how easy it was to slip back into the lie. This experience helped confirm the rightness of his decision to leave. There was almost a deja-vu like quality to Paul's return as he donned his old, familiar, but
disconcerting attitudes and behaviours, feelings reinforced by encounters with acquaintances who were unaware that he had even left. There was, however, also a reiteration of the sense of loss as each of his farewells from old friends was experienced as a mini-death.

For Jane, the trip back was more difficult, the pull to return still intensely felt. The differences between Jane’s experience and that of Claire and Paul, speak to the differences in how and why each left. For the latter two the sense of, and desire for, separation was strongly felt and clearly articulated. Claire had known from when she was very young that she would leave. Paul came to believe that South Africa belonged to the blacks, not to whites like him. Jane shared no such certainty. She, much more evidently than the other two, was forced out from her homeland, the conditions there such that for her to remain was virtually impossible. Her subsequent self-exile to Canada may not have occurred had the initial exile from South Africa not taken place.

Jane, doubly rejected--by mother and by country--was influenced much more strongly than were either of the other two, by the bonds of rejection (Sennett, 1980),

the way a person continues to be determined by forces or people who have consciously been thrown off. The structures underlying the emotions need not change just because the emotions now bear a minus sign before them: minus-love can be as profoundly shaping as love--more so, if it happens that what is denied persists, while what is acknowledged dies with its day. (Mars-Jones, 1994, p. 15)

Jane, on returning to South Africa was filled with a certainty that she would remain there. Driven by a desire to complete what remained unfinished, she attempted to recreate the past by returning to art school (and, in similar fashion as before, with her mother’s assistance). At the same time however, Jane did experience a shift in her perceptions that allowed her to move forward, to let go, to some extent, of her fierce attachment to South Africa. In comparison to Canadians, South Africans had begun to seem uncivilised and aggressive, while the violence in South Africa felt terrifying, factors that diminished that
country's attractiveness to her.

Incorporation. In the incorporation phase the self-exile emerges from the difficulties of transition and begins to experience a sense of reintegration and to realize hoped-for eventualities. If separation represents the incompleteness phase of a life story, the birth of yearning, incorporation is the completion of that story, the fulfilment (or beginning of fulfilment) of the (possibly unconscious) desires sought after at the start.

Incorporation, thus forms the opposite pole to the separation phase. In contrast to the exclusion, personal deficiency, disempowerment, identity instability and denial that occur in the separation and transition phases, the incorporation phase is marked by inclusion and belonging, increased self-worth and empowerment, a sense of renewal, integration, and identity acceptance. There are also other themes—symbolic transformation, reawakening, making sense of the past, and cultural linkage—which emerge during incorporation. These last are, perhaps, less themes of meaning than processes by which the incorporation takes place.

Not only do themes alter across the stages but narrative movement and direction also differ in each phase of self-exile. Where psychological movement in the separation phase is primarily uni-directional, an egress from homeland and the past, and the transitional phase involves a wavering between the old and new worlds, incorporation is marked by a purposeful bi-directionalism as the self-exile creates an identity in the new context and, at the same time, re-incorporates formerly severed or hidden elements of self, constructing a narrative that bridges the gap between past and present.

As Rushdie (1991) notes, one of the potential benefits of dislocation is "stereoscopic
vision...a kind of double perspective because they, we, are at one and the same time insiders and outsiders in society" (p. 19). This, broadened, dual perspective, however, can only come fully into play when the past as well as the present and future are open to view. It cannot occur with the cyclops-like, uni-directional focus of the separation and transition phases, during which the self-exiled person, to facilitate his exit, either turns away from his past (Paul and Claire from South Africa, Jane from the CP) or, alternately, maintains a nostalgic fixation (Zwingmann, 1989) on that past (Jane in regard to South Africa). Alternating back and forth creates a kind of split or double-bind in which the self-exile simultaneously tries to separate from, and reconnect with, the past.

However, before the self-exile can reopen her narrative to a blocked past, she needs to feel that she has begun to establish a secure identity, begun to anchor that self, in the present. By beginning to attain a stable sense of self in the new country, the self-exile feels less threatened by former, potentially negating elements of a past self.

So, although the two processes (incorporation of, and in, the new culture and re-incorporation of the past) seem to occur simultaneously, in fact, the first period of incorporation requires acts which create a sense of inclusion in the new culture. Incorporation began for Claire when she left the isolation of suburban motherhood to attend university where she found a supportive, validating, environment amongst like-minded people with whom she could "resonate". When Jane left a violent, isolating marriage she started to make a life of her own in Canada, attending university and becoming a teacher. Paul’s incorporation, in some ways began immediately upon arrival in Canada, facilitated by his joining the academic community.

Co-incidentally (or perhaps not, given that white, South African self-exiles tended to be middle-class and educated) university played a significant role in the incorporation process
for all three participants in this study. Departure (or events leading up to departure) interrupted these studies. Jane’s self-exile saga began at the point where she was denied entry into art school. Claire and Paul both left South Africa having completed degrees (a BA and MA respectively) but not their academic careers.

For Claire, and Paul, university provided a place of growth and community, a sense of continuity in their interrupted lives. For Jane, who alienated, and felt alienated from, some of her fellow students, university gave her a sense of personal growth and competence, but not of belonging; it neither helped her connect her with other people nor reconnected her to the past.

Steps taken towards inclusion establish a supportive environment in which an integrated life-story can be constructed. But such acts are more than mere stage-setting, themselves constituting part of the restorying process. (As Jane noted, going back to school and becoming a teacher were enormously significant steps for her.) These acts are, however, stage-setting to the extent that they provide the context in which the self-exile undergoes an epiphany, a significant event (or series of events) that creates a kind of symbolic transformation in which the past is opened for review and reintegration into the life story.

Just as separation involves an act of awakening, so incorporation entails reawakening. What was blocked is allowed in, although in an altered form, and becomes part of the person’s new identity. Claire, hearing the professor’s remarks on cultural shame, was made aware of her own shame and how it had impacted on her life. Paul’s encounter with the Brazilian helped him to transform the story of Sidwell’s gesture from an exclusionary, demeaning, one to one of inclusion and empowerment, while his meeting on the stage with Themba Tana, the black drummer from Nyanga, facilitated his reconnecting with a community that he had not only left, but from which he was excluded as a child. Through
her involvement in the life and death of Rob, the Cree boyfriend of her daughter, Jane felt that she was granted the gift of life or, at least, of life in Canada.

Such transformative experiences are part of the process of *identity acceptance* as the self-exile creates a personal narrative incorporating previously disowned aspects of the past. The actual events, and their subsequent telling and retelling allow the exile to restructure the meaning of the past. Experiences of loss, shame, humiliation, grief, become, instead, elements in a story of recovery, self-worth, hope. Thus, Jane's story of Rob became a means for her of re-authoring her painful separation from South Africa, from her family, and from the political community. It helped her, to some extent, to make sense of, and come to terms with, those experiences. Claire's encounter with Gloria and the "black guy" on the bicycle assisted her in undoing some of the shame and guilt she had felt.

While the transformation involved in such epiphanic moments is experienced internally it is mediated through external events. Even events that are not geographically proximal exert their influence. Because the self-exile continues to feel a part of his country of origin (Paul commented that a part of him would forever be South African) incidents in that country, although physically distant, help precipitate or facilitate personal change.

Events taking place in her homeland influence the self-exile because the personal text which she carries with her, that is her, remains informed by the context in which it was created, even if at one remove. Paul's woundedness, Claire's shame, persisted despite the changes they had made in their lives, in part because the source of those feelings remained extant. The continued existence of apartheid influenced how Claire, Jane, and Paul felt about themselves. Once those conditions began to change, the selves forged in those circumstance also began to change.

This is not to say that personal transformation for the self-exile cannot occur in the
absence of change in his native homeland, only that change is facilitated by events taking place in the environment in which that self was created and to which the person remains attached. Both the self-exile himself, and others around him still tend to identify him with his country of origin. Once South Africa’s story was altered, the story of individual South Africans, even those who had departed, also changed. They began to be seen, and could see themselves, differently. Perceived before as pariahs, perhaps as essentially irredeemable, following the election they were viewed more positively, as being capable of, and willing to, change.

The release of Mandela, the statements of de Klerk, helped heal Paul’s wound, undoing the lie by which he had felt compromised. Progress in South Africa meant that Claire felt less ashamed and could even take delight in that country. For Jane, political movement in South Africa (and changes in herself) increased her desire to go back not only because she was legally allowed to return, but because she could now see a way to be there without giving up on her newfound self. She could imagine being in South Africa and participating in social change without having to belong to any political movement. (This, in fact created a dilemma for Jane and exacerbated her ambivalence about remaining in Canada, since it opened up the possibility of return in a way that had not existed before for her. Hence, at the end of her narrative, Jane still felt torn between South Africa and Canada, that whatever choice she made involved loss.)

The process of narrative transformation, of incorporation is assisted by guides or mentors, characters in the story who facilitate change. In fact, at each stage of the self-exile story, there are figures, both symbolic and/or real, who act to either help or hinder the self-exile’s progress. Regardless of where their presence actually occurs in the story, however, these characters are actively invoked or re-invoked in the incorporation phase, integrated as
characters in the self-exile’s personal story. For Claire, Doris Lessing served as a heroine, an ideal figure, who had succeeded as a writer and as a person in exile. Lessing stood in opposition to van der Post who represented the shame and denial which Claire wished to eschew. Also for Claire, the black man on the bicycle was a symbol of acceptance.

Jane, in recalling her exit from London and life in exile remembered the two men in the ANC who spoke out against conformity and obeisance, the one saying that he would not remain in the ANC if it meant having to go back to South Africa, the other telling Jane that she could not make a life simply by following someone else. Both of these figures represented alternative voices to those—the prison wardresses, the CP leaders, Michael, Michael’s father—who, Claire felt, had hurt or held her back. Even though, at the time, Jane did not heed the advice or follow the example of these two men, in retrospect they served as inspirational figures, as individuals who, unlike Claire, knew their minds and were willing to risk expressing them; they served to confirm Jane’s newfound sense of autonomy. For Paul, Themba Tana, the people of Fezeka, de Klerk, Mandela, Sidwell, were all evoked in the telling of his story of self-exile, brought in as fellow travellers in creating a self-exile narrative.

Amongst the figures who may play a pivotal roles in the self-exile drama, perhaps none are more important than the self-exile’s own family. For the three co-researchers (especially for Jane and Claire) parents played a significant part in their decision to leave South Africa. Although children may also have been important to this decision (Claire’s urgency about leaving was increased by thoughts of the danger to her children of living in South Africa, Paul did not want his daughter to live the lie of that country) it was in the transition and incorporation phases that the role of children became increasingly significant.

Because relationships with children are reciprocal in nature, it is both in what the
parents can give to their children and what the children can give to the parents that they may be important in the self-exile's life. What they give to their parents is a rootedness in the new culture, a sense of *belonging* in the new country. Thus, once Jane had a child, she no longer needed to hold onto Michael to justify her remaining in Canada. Children also represent continuity. They present a challenge to the self-exile in regard to the legacy she will pass on. Paul wanted to communicate to his children the context from which he had come so that they could better understand him and, thus, themselves. The fear, for Claire, of passing on her shame to her children was part of the impetus for her to confront that shame.

In confronting, and overcoming, the obstacles that prevent him from communicating his past, the self-exile feels increasingly empowered. Where the early parts of the self-exile's story is marked by feelings of disempowerment and personal deficiency, the latter part involves increased *empowerment* and *self-worth* (in respect to those previously denied aspects of self). While, in the separation and transition phases, the self-exile may have seen herself as a victim, or pawn, in the incorporation phase, her sense of agency (DeCharms, 1976) increases. This process involves an altered world view which is part of both cause and effect of personal change. For the self-exile, altering her world view requires *making sense of the past*.

For Jane and Claire, feminism played a significant role in this altered world-view. Where, formerly, the two women experienced their disempowerment as being the result of personal failings, feminism allowed them to reframe this as, partly, an effect of being female in a male-dominated (or, at least, predominantly male-oriented) environment. Through a feminist analysis Claire understood her voicelessness to be a consequence of having grown up female in a patriarchal culture (both familial and societal). Feminism not only gave her
the understanding, but also the support to change, for example, to no longer allow herself to feel "shut down" by her husband. Similarly, Jane saw how the liberation movement had devalued women's issues, subsuming them beneath the supposedly larger struggle for racial freedom.

Another means of personal transformation for the self-exile may be provided by spirituality. Spirituality speaks to transcendent values that can bridge or override personal, ethnic, or cultural distinctions. Therefore, the self-exile whose personal and/or cultural identity is damaged or tainted may achieve a renewal of self through spiritual values. For Jane, both the First Nations' and the women's community were not only social and political entities but sources of a spirituality that was lacking in a South Africa consumed by political struggle. Paul, too, found meaning in Native American spirituality (expressed less in his self-exile narrative than in his play) but his primary spiritual awakening (or reawakening) came through his reconnection with Judaism, a connection which also linked him to his cultural roots. But apart from the healing benefits of spirituality, joining a "spiritual" community (such as the community of women or of Jews) provided the South African self-exiles with a sense of self and belonging not tainted in the way that membership in the white South African community was.

In incorporation, however, the three self-exiles may have found personal validation not only through identifying as someone other than a South African but also through coming to terms with their South African identity by means of finding points of cultural linkage, of equivalence and comparability between South Africa and Canada. Through a process of bridging, of equating, elevating, and denigrating various aspects of the two cultures, a sense of integration was created. Claire, for example, saw the shaman in Saskatoon as being like an African witchdoctor, and the treatment of Meti and First Nation peoples in North America
as akin to that of blacks in South Africa.

In this process of linking and comparison, aspects of South African life, even those that had been viewed negatively, sometimes came to compare favourably with their Canadian counterparts. Claire, critical of the politics of her birthplace, nonetheless preferred the consistency of South African politicians to the fickleness of Canadian ones. While, in the transition stage such comparisons may cause confusion and ambivalence as the person fluctuates between the two cultures, in the incorporation phase they are a means of re-evaluation that allow the past to be reintegrated. Comparisons, both positive and negative, while potentially creating dissatisfaction with either the past or the present, can also create a sense of continuity. The beauty of Vancouver being equal, even similar, to that of Cape Town made it easier for Vancouver to be home to Claire.

Jane, like Claire, also saw parallels between South African blacks and First Nations’ people. To her, Rob (and, by extension, all First Nations’ people) suffered just as had the blacks in South Africa. Through her involvement with Rob she again felt meaningfully engaged, but without losing her sense of self as she had before. Even as Jane, perhaps, tended to over-romanticize Rob and his suffering, she came to de-romanticize aspects of her past in a way which allowed her to feel more favourable towards Canada. For example, where, previously, Jane had felt that South Africans were direct and Canadians uptight, she came to feel that the former were aggressive and the latter civilized.

In adapting to her new home and integrating the past with the present and future, the self exile nears the end of her journey:

Taking a journey....is, perhaps, the most mysterious of archetypal actions....the initial momentum is the need to break away, or to find a new home, identity, or commitment, or to return to a remembered place after years of absence. (Elsbree, 1986, p. 37)
For the self-exile, all three of these impetuses--escape, renewal and return--motivate the move into exile. For incorporation to occur, that is, for narrative resolution to be achieved, all three desires must be answered.

Whether or not these goals have been achieved and whether, therefore, the end of the journey has been reached, may become clear when the self-exile journeys back home to visit her country of origin and then returns to her adoptive country. By venturing back the self-exile is tested as to whether, and to what extent, she has both left her old home (and self) and found a new home (and self) in exile.

For Claire the answer was clear; returning to Vancouver after visiting South Africa she felt that she had come home. She could speak of, and remember, South Africa in a way that was not painful as it was when she had lived there (and during her first years in Canada). Thus, as Claire escaped her shame, transmuted her feelings of guilt (towards blacks and her parents) into regret, she could once again delight in the beauty and energy of South Africa, in spite of the evident fear and suffering there. Canada, to her, was more a place of opportunity than of loss.

For Paul, all his trips back to South Africa had occurred during the transition phase (both his own and South Africa's) before the recent political changes there, and re-entering South Africa, therefore, meant re-immersion in the lie. And although Paul, like Claire felt that Canada had become his home he felt a need to regain access to a previously closed off magical childhood in South Africa. This Paul achieved symbolically, through story telling. By recounting tales about South Africa he could journey back to his native land, taking his audience with him, and then return again to the present in Canada.

For Paul and Claire, the transformational experiences which they underwent allowed them to mend the rupture of separation, to re-enter and resuscitate the positive elements of
a previously disowned self-narrative. Where, earlier, the negative features of the self-exile story, the shame, or wounding coloured everything, as those elements were reinterpreted, the positive aspects could emerge.

For Jane, on the other hand, the experience of self-exile remained mixed. For her there was both resolution and irresolution. Jane felt reconciled to her separation from the political community from which she had exiled herself. She still considered herself an ANC member but felt no need to enter again into "that world". But being out of the political community also meant that she was cut off from South Africa and, for her, South Africa, in many ways, remained her home. The pull to return there was rooted in the sense of something unfinished. While, for Claire, Canada represented opportunity, for Jane, South Africa, in particular art school (and what it symbolised), was a missed opportunity which she hankered after and which, at the time of telling her story, she had been unable to recapture.

For Jane, therefore, incorporation remained incomplete. While she saw the value in political activity, she could not, would not, go back into that "dirty game". In fact, to some extent, the unwillingness to completely re-enter the past was true for all three co-researchers. They might have revived the past, come to see the good in it but could only, would only, enter into it in a limited way. Neither Paul nor Claire could again live in South Africa. But Paul dreamt of one day returning there as a visitor to give something back to the country which had given his magical childhood, and Claire could once again delight in her place of birth.

True homecoming, therefore, may remain elusive for the self-exile. But perhaps separation from home is not limited to the exile, instead being true for all who share in the modern condition:

The belief that home exists, that there is a specific, sacred place that guarantees one's
being, has been dying a slow death...and seems nearly extinct now. One of the characteristics of the journey in so much contemporary literature is how frequently there is no Ithaca. The narrative stops, but the journey has not ended; it is merely recessed....That home no longer exists; that at best there are temporary layovers in the particular part of the planet where one happens to be; that exile, physical and/or psychic, may be a permanent condition [italics added]--such are the facts...(Elsbree, 1986, p. 41)
CHAPTER VI

Discussion

Comparative analysis of the three accounts by self-exiled, white South Africans showed a number of commonalities both in narrative structure and in themes of meaning.

The structure of self-exile for the white, English-speaking South African was seen to resemble, in many respects, that of a rite of passage with three sequential, but overlapping phases: separation, transition (liminality), and incorporation (van Gennep, 1965). Reality, however, is always more complex than can be accounted for by any psychological model and, thus, the actual experience of self-exile for the co-researchers did not follow the sequence of a rite of passage in an exact manner. Rather their experiences matched the general structure of a rite of passage but individual experience varied. Elements of each of the three phases occurred out of order and appeared at different points for different individuals. Nonetheless, there was sufficient evidence to for the model to be considered a valid description of self-exile.

The research also found that many themes of meaning were shared by the three co-researchers. The separation phase (the period preceding the decision to leave and continuing until the point of departure) was dominated by a sense of exclusion and personal deficiency, with subordinate themes of awakening, disillusionment, loss of trust, threats to the integrity of self, commitment, disempowerment, conflict about leaving, and unfinished business.

The transition phase, which formally began when the self-exile left her country of origin (or, as in Jane’s case, an environment that acted as an extension of that country), in fact overlapped with the separation phase such that the process of transition began even as separation continued. Because of this overlap the dominant themes of the separation stage
(exclusion and personal deficiency) were also characteristic of the transition phase, as were some lesser themes such as disempowerment and ambivalence. In addition, feelings of marginality (exclusion) and inadequacy (personal deficiency) were exacerbated and given renewed expression through experiences of identity instability, and identity denial (cultural identity in particular).

The incorporation phase (the period of integration of, and into, the host culture as well as re-integration of a denied past) saw a reversal of the themes of meaning of the separation and transition phases. In contrast to the exclusion, personal deficiency, disempowerment, identity instability and denial that occurred in the separation and transition phases, the incorporation phase was marked by inclusion and belonging, increased self-worth and empowerment, a sense of renewal, integration, and identity acceptance. There were also other themes—symbolic transformation, reawakening, making sense of the past, and cultural linkage—which emerged during incorporation. These last were, perhaps, less themes of meaning than processes by which the incorporation took place.

Limitations

The research on self-exile presented here shares the limitations common to case studies generally. First, the findings are not generalizable to a population, only to theoretical propositions. Second, the research and findings may be limited by the inability of individual co-researchers to articulate their experience. Although each of the interviews in this study was marked by a high degree of articulateness and apparent openness, hidden areas and blind spots may have existed because of co-researcher inability or unwillingness to share certain experiences. Thirdly, there may be limits in the researcher’s own perspective. Despite my attempts to bracket my experience, my own experience as a self-exile could well have
influenced the co-researchers’ telling of their stories and my subsequent attempts at interpretation and analysis.

Beyond these general limitations there may be others, more specific to this research. The small number of participants may have weakened the findings. Because of the variety of experiences of the participants, there was the danger, in searching for commonalities, of ignoring or glossing over important distinctions. At the same time, the coincidental similarities (e.g. in age, period of leaving South Africa) may have meant that some commonalities were due to cohort effects and that the findings, therefore, might not hold true at different times (both for other white, South African self-exiles and for self-exiles generally).

A further limitation of this research arises from the restricted nature of the accounts. These were focused on self-exile (from the time of the decision to leave South Africa up until accommodation to the new culture). However, from the few details given by each of the participants, of familial and personal history prior to the decision to leave, it became clear that issues involved in self-exile were a reflection of themes already extant in the individuals’ lives. That is, self-exile was not a self-delineated experience but rather one that involved underlying life issues. Because of the restricted focus of this study, however, the links between self-exile and these issues could not be fully explored or elaborated. The possible links do, however, suggest rich possibilities for further study.

Implications for Theory

Although the present research concerns self-exiles, (and then only a very specific group of self-exiles) it, nevertheless, potentially adds to the psychological literature on cultural dislocation by confirming, disconfirming, extending, or refining, various of the
psychological theories and models of cultural dislocation.

Most models of uprooting and relocation have tended to focus on the post-arrival experience, leaving largely unexplored events undergone by the individual prior to departure. But because cultural dislocation involves both continuity and discontinuity of self as the individual moves from one environment to another, an understanding of experiences prior to leaving is essential for understanding events after arrival in the new culture. An approach, such as the one used here, that looks at the dislocated person's self-narrative both prior to and following departure (as well as during transition), provides a fuller overview of the experience of cultural dislocation.

In addition, a narrative approach, even while allowing for discovery and examination of the common elements of the self-exile experience also emphasizes the individual aspects of each person's experience, an important factor since each person's identity, while created within a common context (common to others in the same culture) is, in the final analysis, unique to him or her.

Traditional models of cultural dislocation have described the process of adaptation to a new culture as following a U-curve (Lysgaard, 1955)--or a variation thereof, e.g. the W-curve (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963)--with the relocating individual moving from initial euphoria through a period of depression (as the difficulties of adjustment hit home), to final adaptation. This present study shows that at least one limitation of these approaches is that, for the self-exile, the initial euphoria may be severely restricted or even non-existent, any relief at having left being muted by the sense of loss, grief, and other possible effects of dislocation.

The findings of the present study tend to confirm some elements of Ishiyama's (1989, 1991) validation theory while, at the same time, disconfirming other of its aspects or, at
least, complicating the picture that it offers. Validation theory is based on the experiences of voluntarily relocating individuals for whom incidents of invalidation would, in all likelihood, be different than for self-exiles (and, similarly, for refugees or "true" exiles).

For the South African self-exiles in this study the denial of identity that occurred in the separation phase meant that, during this phase, possible sources of validation were also potential causes of invalidation. That is, while elements of South African culture from which they felt cut off and which might have served to confirm their sense of themselves were also associated with feelings of invalidation, representing facets of what they felt to be a discredited or discreditable (Goffman, 1963) identity. Because they were trying to escape a negatively identified past, the participants tended to disavow some associations with, or avoid circumstances that would evoke, that past. It was only in the incorporation phase that such aspects of the past began to be considered as unequivocally validating. Thus, future research might extend and refine validation theory by examining its applicability at different stages of a person’s moving into the new culture and also to different categories of dislocated persons.

In demonstrating the impulse to escape a negating past the findings presented here extend Zaharna’s (1989) theory of self-shock, the opposing pulls on the newcomer to a culture to both confirm and disconfirm her sense of self. Self-shock theory focuses on the tendency of any newly arrived individual to feel the inadequacy of her position (due to disjunction between self and the new culture) and to alternately (or even simultaneously) see her previously established sense of self as a source of both potential self-confirmation and disconfirmation. The former self may be seen as both the source of the person’s lack of facility in negotiating her way in the new culture and, at the same time, an important sanctuary from invalidating experiences in a new environment.
For the self-exile, however, the picture may be more complicated. For all of the three South African self-exiles, aspects of a previously established sense of self were felt to be disconfirming and discrediting not only in relation to the new culture, but in and of themselves. Thus, the past was not a viable place to look to for self-affirmation. As a result, for the self-exiles, re-integration of disowned facets of their past selves did not occur until they had begun to create a secure sense of themselves in the adoptive culture (Canada) such that the old self did not threaten the new identity. This finding may have value for further understanding of self-shock (Zaharna, 1989).

Although white identity development is not the focus of this study, some of the findings potentially confirm and extend the work of Sue & Sue (1990) on the racial/cultural identity development of the white (liberal) person. The progress, for the white self-exile South Africans, from initial ignorance of, and (unwitting) complicity in, a racist system, through awareness of societal oppression (resulting in rejection and denial of their own white identity), to an eventual integrated identity which integrates an acknowledgement of an oppressive legacy with a newfound awareness of racist oppression, mirrors the stages outlined by Sue & Sue (see above, Chapter III, "Review of the Literature" for a more detailed explanation of the stages). This present study, by viewing white identity development through a narrative paradigm, may help increase understanding of how white identity transformation occurs, rather than simply reiterating what occurs. That is, rather than just naming and describing the general features of the stages, this research provides a look into the phenomenology of the development of the liberal white identity. In addition, this research also extends some of the understandings of the R/CID model to a cultural dislocation experience.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this present study is its re-emphasising of the
importance of context for the creation and maintenance of identity, and thus on the
destabilising effects of change of context on the individual’s sense of self. By confirming the
claims of various postmodernist theorists (e.g. White & Epston, 1990; Gergen, 1988, 1990)
and personologists (e.g. McAdams, 1988a, 1988b, 1990) that the self is contextually created
and co-authored, this research helps shift the focus away from so-called internal processes
(predominant in traditional psychological approaches) to relational processes. (See below,
"Implications for Practice", for discussion of the importance of context in cross-cultural
counselling).

Klineberg (cited in Furnham & Bochner, 1986) has posited the idea of the foreign
sojourn as a *miniature life history*. Certainly, for the co-researchers in the present study,
individual themes that came to the fore in self-exile (such as shame, impurity, lack of self)
were ones that were evident in the person’s life prior to the exile experience. Thus the crisis
precipitated by uprooting may be thought of as a magnifying lens through which one can
look at the person’s entire life-story.

Assuming that the story of self-exile is a window through which to view life themes
in general it is, perhaps, significant that the dominant themes that emerged in the self-exile
experience, personal deficiency and exclusion, reflect "the core experiences of psychological
trauma [generally]... disempowerment and disconnection from others" (p. 133). If the
experiences of disconnection (i.e. exclusion) and of disempowerment (a primary element in
personal deficiency) are common not only to the self-exile experience but to all psychological

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18 For McAdams (1988a), the two most fundamental needs of humans are intimacy and
power (a connection with others and the ability to act) and thus the most severe crises would
be those involving the loss or thwarting of these needs through exclusion and
disempowerment. Nietzsche, Adler, Freud, Dostoyevsky (all cited in Barrett, 1962), likewise,
all emphasized the centrality of love and power to human life.
trauma, an understanding of the self-exile experience--its losses and its healing--is potentially useful in understanding psychological trauma generally, and in particular those involving transition.

**Implications for Practice**

The potential value of this research for practice derives, in part, from its focusing on a previously neglected area in cross-cultural research: the self-exile experience. Even though this study concerns a distinct group of self-exiles, the findings may provide the cross-cultural counsellor with a theoretical framework that reflects more accurately the experience of self-exiles generally than do models derived from other dislocated groups. By illuminating the issue of personal volition in leaving one’s homeland, this research may alert the counsellor to factors of choice in uprooting, and how the degree and nature of such choice potentially impacts on the culturally dislocated person.

Just as research interviewing may incorporate elements of therapy (Colaizzi, 1978) so therapy can involve aspects of research interviewing. The value of narrative interviewing for gaining insight into a person’s experience as he himself has experienced it has, I hope, been demonstrated by this study. In addition, the therapeutic value of telling one’s story (Birren & Deutchman, 1991), of giving testimony, and of bearing witness (Agger & Jensen, 1990), has been well documented.

When one has suffered terribly, and particularly as part of a whole social pattern, a public acknowledgement is absolutely critical....This has been spoken about a great deal with regard to the torture that occurred in South Africa. It is very important that these events become part of the public record, that they be acknowledged. Otherwise, there’s an incompleteness. We need our identity--who we are, what has happened, our history--to be mirrored in the larger social fabric, to be valued, so that if a part of our lives is then erased or unacknowledged, there’s a terrible gap there and it’s experienced as a kind of betrayal. And we have been betrayed, we’ve been abandoned. (Griffin, interviewed in O’Connell, 1994)
For the culturally dislocated (or any other) client who feels unheard, misunderstood, or structurally invisible (Turner, 1967) within society, simply having the counsellor (or any other empathic person) listen to his story may be therapeutic.

This research also has practical implications for the application of validation theory (Ishyama, 1989, 1990). Recognising that the self-exiled client’s reaction to potentially self-validating aspects associated with her past is dependent on her relationship with that past may assist the counsellor in assessing the appropriateness and potential value of using validation techniques at a particular point in the counselling process. The client from another culture who, in the transition phase, may be ambivalent towards, or rejecting of, certain aspects tied to her culture may, in the incorporation phase, be open to these same features. (Claire, for example, for some time after arriving in Canada felt ashamed of being identified as a white South African while later, in the incorporation phase, she no longer felt such an aversion).

Thus, a client’s openness (or lack of same) to a potentially validating experience linked to the past, may be an indicator as to what phase the client is in and, thus, of some help to both counsellor and client in anticipating the possible progress of therapy. If some aspect of the client’s culture of origin that might otherwise be validating is felt to be unacceptable to the client this could mean that incorporation has not yet begun. Counselling may then focus on why those elements are seen as threatening or negative and what needs to occur for these facets of his past to be let in again. The model may also be of use in normalizing the client’s experience. (In applying the rite of passage model of self-exile to an individual’s experience, it is important to do this in an open and flexible manner, to see it as a descriptive, rather than a prescriptive or proscriptive, framework)

Just as it was for theory, certainly the most important implication for practice lies in this study’s emphasis on contextualizing a client’s experience as a means of assisting her to
understand and work through issues. Agger and Jensen (1990) in their work with exiled couples experiencing psychosexual problems stress the value of contextualization:

In order to work through this crisis [of psychosexual problems in exile] we believe that the consciousness of why this happened plays an important part in a reframing. In this reframing process, a connection is established between the 'political pain' brought about by a repressive system and the 'private pain' which is experienced as individual symptoms, impotency and isolation. When the private symptoms are seen in a new context--reframed--they can again be experienced as political pain, and the result can be more collective activites and less pathology....*The importance of this kind of activity is related to the re-establishment of a coherent identity* [italics added]. (p. 102)

It may, therefore, be not only desirable, but imperative that the counsellor be aware of the impact of socio-political events in the culture of origin on clients’ so called personal problems and that, to this end, the counsellor inform himself of political and social issues in that culture. Where the counsellor lacks such knowledge there is potential value in having the client give the counsellor this information, this having the dual benefit of empowering the client while educating the counsellor.

In addition to being aware of factors in the client’s country of origin that may be part of the client’s life-story the counsellor should also try to be aware of ongoing developments in that country. Each of the three self-exiles in this study commented that they were affected by events taking place in South Africa many years after their departure. The release of Mandela, the end of official apartheid, had significant impact on how Paul, Claire, and Jane felt about South Africa and thus about themselves, since they still identified as South Africans. While in the examples given here, the events (and their effects) were generally positive, such events can equally easily be negative.

It is also important to recognise, that for those who left for socio-political reasons, that not only does the political influence the personal, but that the converse is also true, that the personal impacts on the political. Because those themes that emerge in dislocation (that
hinder adaptation or adjustment or accommodation to the new culture) may tie into underlying personal themes, the counsellor, in working with an uprooted client, may, at some point, need to focus on ongoing life themes.

**Implications for Future Research**

Given the limitations of this study (noted above) replication of this study could serve to either confirm, disconfirm, extend, or refine its findings. Such confirmation, disconfirmation, extension, or refinement might be facilitated by extending the research to a survey of a representative sample of displaced people. Also, studies with different but related groups (from other cultures) might aid in assessing the applicability (or not) of these findings to other groups.

**Summary**

Cultural dislocation potentially poses a number of threats to the dislocated individual’s previously established sense of self. For the self-exile (who is nominally free to remain in her or his country of origin but chooses--both for reasons of conscience and a desire to escape--to leave) this occurs, in large part, because of context interruption (Barudy, 1989), the loss of the socio-cultural milieu in which the self-exile’s identity was created and maintained. A qualitative, phenomenological approach (using a case study method) was utilized to explore the experience and meaning of self-exile for white, English-speaking South Africans living in Canada, and to examine the impact of cultural dislocation on the self-exiled person’s sense of self (identity). Identity was defined as self-narrative, jointly created by the individual and the culture in which he or she lives. Three co-researchers (two women and one man) who were self-exiled from South Africa participated in this study.
During individual in-depth interviews which were audiotaped, the co-researchers described their experience of self-exile from the time that they had made the decision to leave South Africa up until a point where they felt they had come to terms with living in Canada. A comparative analysis was conducted to uncover structural and thematic commonalities. The self-exile experience was seen to be structured as a story with a beginning, middle, and end, which structure resembled a rite of passage, with three sequential but overlapping phases: separation, transition, and incorporation (van Gennep, 1965). The beginning and middle (separation and transition) were marked by themes of exclusion and personal deficiency, the transition by a denial of (cultural) identity, while the end (incorporation) involved a reversal of these themes, narrative resolution being achieved through a sense of inclusion, increased self-worth and identity acceptance.
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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INITIAL CONTACT

THE SELF OUT OF CONTEXT:
IDENTITY RUPTURE AND REPAIR IN SELF-EXILED SOUTH AFRICANS

I am a graduate student in counselling psychology at the University of British Columbia (U.B.C.) conducting research into the effects of cultural dislocation on personal identity. This research is being done for my Master’s Thesis under the supervision of Dr. Larry Cochran (Dept. of Counselling Psychology, U.B.C., 822-5259). I am specifically interested in understanding the experiences of South Africans self-exiled in Canada. I am, therefore, looking for individuals interested in participating in such a study.

The people I would like to interview are ex-South Africans who have resided in Canada for at least five years and who see, or at the time of leaving South Africa, saw themselves as going into self-exile rather than being forced out or simply emigrating. That is, South Africans who chose to leave but who left primarily for reasons of conscience.

Your name was mentioned to me as someone who might fill these criteria and who also might be interested in participating. Your participation would involve meeting with me to tell your story, including your thoughts, feelings and perceptions about the period from when you decided to leave South Africa up to the present here in Canada.

I do not anticipate needing any more than four hours of your time for the actual interview. However, should you require more time to comfortably tell your story, I will make that time to meet with you. All efforts will be made to find a setting that you will find comfortable, convenient, and private.

The interview will be audiotaped. The taped data will be written up, deleting or disguising your name and any identifying information. All taped recordings of interviews will be erased upon completion of this research project. Your participation is purely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from participation at any time.

If you are interested in taking part or if you have questions regarding this study, please call me at the number below. Your involvement will, I believe, provide an opportunity for you to recall and reflect upon an important period in your life.

Thank you.

Lawrence Feuchtwanger,  
Researcher  
874-2007
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

THE SELF OUT OF CONTEXT:
IDENTITY RUPTURE AND REPAIR IN SELF-EXILED SOUTH AFRICANS

The purpose of this research is to explore and more fully understand the experiences undergone by self-exiled South Africans in leaving their homeland and moving into a new culture. Specifically, the research will attempt to examine the impact that cultural dislocation has on personal identity. This study is being done for my Master’s Thesis under the supervision of Dr. Larry Cochran (Dept. of Counselling Psychology, U.B.C., 822-5259).

Your participation will involve meeting with me to tell your story, including your thoughts, feelings and perceptions about the period from when you decided to leave South Africa up to the present here in Canada. I do not anticipate needing any more than four hours for the actual interview. Should you require more time to comfortably tell your story, I will make that time to meet with you. All efforts will be made to find a setting that you will find comfortable, convenient, and private. Your participation will, I believe, provide an opportunity for you to recall and reflect upon an important event in your life.

The interview will be audiotaped. The taped data will be written up disguising or deleting your name and any identifying information. All taped recordings of interviews will be erased upon completion of this research project. Your participation is purely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from participation at any time.

If you agree to participate in this research, please sign two (2) copies of this consent form. You will keep one copy and I will keep the other. If you have any further questions or concerns about the research or procedures, please feel free to contact me at the number below.

Thank you for your time.

Lawrence Feuchtwanger (Researcher) 874-2007.

************ I have read this form and consent to participate in this research project. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time. I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form. ************

Date: __________________________

Name: __________________________

Phone: __________________________ Signature: __________________________

Researcher’s signature: __________________________