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Preface

The seeds of this volume were planted at the 17th Congress of the International Association of Gerontology in Vancouver in July of 2001 during a conversation between the editors. Following numerous e-mails and telephone conversations with potential contributors, the silhouette of our edited collection began to take shape. Springer Publishing committed to the project at an early date but an array of unforeseen and unpredictable circumstances delayed completion of the work. Thus, we are both glad and relieved to reach the end of an editorial tunnel and see the light of the print version of the book.

Home and Identity in Late Life, the first comprehensive volume on the concept of home and aging in more than a decade, consists of original essays and research studies providing a contemporary perspective on the complex relationship between home and identity as this relates to well being in late life. Perspectives presented are myriad. They represent a diversity of geographical, philosophical and methodological lenses revealing the depth and richness of the human experience of home.

Key features of the book include a critical interdisciplinary focus, an international perspective (with contributions from five continents), introduction of novel theoretical perspectives on the meaning of home, detailed empirical research, and exploration of practical implications of developing deeper understanding of the concept of home for planning and designing residential environments for elders. Aging societies throughout the world are moving through unprecedented demographic transitions. Increasing numbers and proportions of elders are expressing a variety of needs, presenting new challenges and exploring new opportunities. Against this backdrop, both researchers and practitioners are investigating the possibilities and constraints of “aging in place” and are creatively planning and promoting ways of providing the opportunity for
older adults to remain in their own familiar dwellings and communities. As part of this process, scholars are becoming increasingly attuned to the complexity of the relationship between elders and their environments and to the need to understand the meanings and values that underlie a sense of being “at home.” This book provides avenues for deepening our understanding of the meaning of home and community that will be critical as we progress in such endeavors.

The volume is organized in six sections exploring key elements of home. An opening section establishes a context by providing a comprehensive interpretive review of the status of research on home and aging over the past decade. Section II consists of chapters providing a critical perspective on the meaning of home in different cultures. Chapters include an empirically based analysis of dimensions of the meaning of home (comparing the former East and West Germany), a critical analysis of the relationship of home to elders’ sense of self and identity, an interpretation of the role of cherished possessions and memorabilia as elements in the creation of home, and a chapter illustrating the manner in which the arrangement and use of dwelling space in India is imbued with religious and sacred meanings. Section III considers the antithesis of home–homelessness. Threats to sustaining a sense of home are explored in chapters on political and social separation from home, estrangement from home associated with the immigrant experience, the poignant alienation from and ongoing quest to find home for the person with Alzheimer’s disease, and the notion of homelessness considered from a life course perspective. Emphasizing a more explicitly dynamic perspective, Section IV focuses on processes of creating and recreating home in chapters that explore expressions of this theme in western Kenya, Sydney, Australia, and Quebec City, Canada. In section V, emphasis shifts to shared community perspectives on the meaning of home in chapters exploring the manner in which home is often equated with community in small towns in Kansas, ways in which elders’ sense of home identity and well being in selected English settlements is intimately tied to locality, and the manner in which neighborhood design and planning in Quebec City is linked to the ability to sustain an ongoing sense of home in suburban environments. A final section, Section VI, consists of essays by three eminent scholars who were asked to review the volume and provide critical commentary. Each adds his or her unique perspective on the significance of home in old age.

This volume is designed for students, scholars, service professionals and policy-makers in gerontology, the social and behavioral sciences,
and the health sciences. A particularly important audience is design and planning educators and professionals with a concern for creating residential environments that are sensitive to the lived experience of their occupants. Overall, our goal is to provide stimulation and food-for-thought for anybody interested in the interrelationships among human aging, home, community, and identity.

Deepest thanks to our talented contributors for their unrelenting commitment to this venture and for their gracious tolerance of sometimes picky and occasionally insistent editorial demands. We especially appreciate the conscientious hard work of Elizabeth ‘Beth’ Hunter who coordinated project correspondence with authors and assembling the manuscripts. Our sincere gratitude to Helvi Gold at Springer Publishing Company for being extraordinarily patient with the ever-shifting submission timeline of the manuscript. Finally, we offer a big thank you to our respective spouses, Ruth and Atiya, for enduring our frequent absences from home as we worked at our offices on this project.

Graham D. Rowles, Lexington, Kentucky
Habib Chaudhury, Vancouver, British Columbia
Acknowledgments

We have found a home for Home and Identity in Late Life. The seeds of this volume were planted at the World Aging Congress in Vancouver in July of 2001 during a conversation between the editors. Following numerous e-mails and telephone conversations with potential contributors, the silhouette of our edited collection began to take shape. Springer Publishing committed to the project at an early date but an array of unforeseen and unpredictable circumstances delayed completion of the work. Thus, we are both glad and relieved to reach the end of an editorial tunnel and see the light of the print version of the book. We believe this volume presents readers with an insightful collection of original essays and findings from empirical studies on home, self, and human aging. Perspectives presented are myriad. They represent a diversity of geographical and philosophical contexts and reveal the depth and richness of the human experience of home.

Deepest thanks to our talented contributors for their unrelenting commitment to this venture and for their gracious tolerance of sometimes picky and occasionally insistent editorial demands. We especially appreciate the conscientious hard work of Elizabeth ‘Beth’ Hunter who coordinated project correspondence with authors and assembling the manuscripts. Our sincere gratitude to Helvi Gold at Springer Publishing Company for being extraordinarily patient with the ever-shifting submission timeline of the manuscript. Finally, we offer a big thank you to our respective spouses, Ruth and Atiya, for enduring our frequent absences as we worked at our offices on this project. Yes, we will now be coming home!

Graham D. Rowles, Lexington, Kentucky
Habib Chaudhury, Vancouver, British Columbia
PART I

Coming Home
“Home” is where we belong. It is in our experience, recollections, imagination, and aspirations. Home provides the physical and social context of life experience, burrows itself into the material reality of memories, and provides an axial core for our imagination. The experience of home environments, the relationship of this experience with self-identity, and the evolving meaning of home over the life course have received increased attention from researchers in recent decades. During the 1980s and early 1990s, several books and anthologies focused on aspects of the topic (see for example, Altman & Low, 1992; Altman & Werner, 1985; Marcus, 1995). It is now widely accepted that home provides a sense of identity, a locus of security, and a point of centering and orientation in relation to a chaotic world beyond the threshold. It is also increasingly acknowledged that a sense of being “at home” is related to health status and well-being and that disruption of this sense, through in situ environmental change (for example, change in an established neighborhood), relocation (either forced or voluntary), or through disruption of a more existential sense of being at one with the world, can
result in significant changes in well-being. In many cases, involuntary relocation and separation from a sense of identity has been shown to have pathological consequences and to lead to increases in rates of morbidity and mortality.

As knowledge in this growing multi- and interdisciplinary field proliferates, and as increasingly sophisticated theory and practical insights develop, it is important to synthesize fragmentary findings from different fields within a coherent contemporary perspective on the phenomenon of home. This volume provides such a perspective—a second-generation synthesis and interpretation of the field. Our contributors focus on the meaning of home to elders and the manner in which this meaning may be sustained, threatened, reconstituted, or otherwise modified in association with both normal and pathological changes associated with the experience of growing old. Adopting an international perspective that emphasizes the contrasting but complementary perspectives of different cultures, we include original contributions from leading contemporary scholars who seek to take us beyond the ad hoc findings of the past century.

**OBJECTIVES**

We have commissioned and organized the chapters that follow to accomplish five distinct but overlapping objectives. First, this volume seeks to provide a contemporary summary of recent conceptual scholarship and empirical research on the substance, meaning, and significance of the experience of home in later years. A second objective is to expand horizons of discourse by embracing international perspectives on home. Integral and parallel to such elaboration, is adoption of increasingly complex and nuanced perspectives that reflect the ongoing evolution of gerontology from a multidisciplinary to an interdisciplinary field (Bass & Ferraro, 2000). A third objective is to contribute novel theoretical perspectives on the meaning of home. By moving in these directions, the intent is to facilitate a fourth objective—creation and sharing of original perspectives that can guide future theoretical, substantive, and methodological inquiries. A final important objective is to explore practical implications of a deeper understanding of the meaning of home for improving the quality of life of our elders.
The book is comprised of six sections. In this chapter, which constitutes Part I of the volume, *Coming Home*, we establish a framework for the chapters that follow by providing an in-depth review and overall perspective on complex interrelationships among place (environmental context), life history, and evolving personal identity that characterize the meaning of home. The chapter incorporates insights that have emerged during the past decade within the framework of a general model of “being at home” or “being in place” that we argue represents a fundamental human need. In addition, the chapter explores and summarizes what is known about practical and applied implications of developing deeper understanding of the meanings of home. The stage is set for a series of thematically organized chapters that amplify different aspects of the phenomenon.

Part II comprises chapters on the phenomenological *The Essence of Home*. A primary focus here is on presenting alternative conceptions of the meaning of home and identifying and distinguishing those themes that are universal and those that may be culturally or environmentally specific. Emphasis is placed on highlighting contrasting views of home in the context of the life course and as experienced by the elders of different cultures. The section begins with a review and synthesis of Western conceptualizations of meaning of home in old age, which have been suggested in environmental psychology and environmental gerontology, and presents empirical findings from Germany identifying a typology of dimensions of the meaning of home (Oswald and Wahl, Chapter 2). A particular focus is on comparative assessment of home in the former East Germany and West Germany in the context of reunification. The remainder of the section comprises contributions that focus in more detail on specific aspects of the meaning of home. In Chapter 3, Rubinstein and Medeiros contribute a philosophical interpretation of the relationship of a sense of home to self and identity. Sherman and Dacher (Chapter 4) consider the role of cherished possessions and memorabilia as elements of the creation and maintenance of home. Finally, in a detailed analysis of the arrangement and use of space in the residences of elderly Hindus in India and the manner in which the residence becomes the site of shrines that are integral to the conduct...
of daily life, Mazumdar and Mazumdar (Chapter 5) provide an exemplar of the deep religious meanings that may pervade a dwelling, making home a sacred place.

Having introduced the reader to different dimensions of the phenomenon, Part III, **Disruptions of Home**, focuses on antitheses of home. We explore threats to home as well as the absence or apparent absence of home. Rubinstein (Chapter 6) vividly captures our imagination of the experience of severance of home as a political, social and personal reality. The many facets of meaning of home for the diaspora come to light in this chapter. Issues of separation are exemplified in Lewin’s exposition on the immigrant experience of home (Chapter 7). Lewin provides theoretical perspectives on the meaning of home for elderly immigrants and explores issues of habitation and integration of Turkish and Iranian immigrants in Sweden. A different form of alienation from home that frequently accompanies dementing illness and the potential for reconstruction of home are considered by Frank (Chapter 8) as she explores the relationships among the meaning of home, sense of self, and unsolicited outbursts involving the word “home” among people with Alzheimer’s disease. Finally, Watkins and Hosier (Chapter 9) present and illustrate a theoretical perspective on the global phenomenon of homelessness that advocates moving beyond the limitations of an overly simplistic home/homeless dichotomy. Each chapter in this section focuses on the manner in which often-enforced modifications or variants of “mainstream” living result in the need for consideration of fundamentally different conceptions of home.

In Part IV we consider home in temporal context through explorations of the dynamic theme of **Creating and Recreating Home**. Cattell (Chapter 10) provides insightful perspective on the ways in which she gradually developed a sense of being at home as, over several decades of sojourns to western Kenya, she became assimilated within the perspective on home of the Samia. She demonstrates how the cultural expression of home and community and its link to places of origin is embedded in the cultural landscape of sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, she illustrates ways in which traditional conceptions of home are being challenged by the increasing mobility and growing global perspective of younger generations in Kenyan society who are creating continuous rural–urban social fields and translocal communities. Considerations of home, identity, and be-
longing in later life for inner-city men are explored by Russell (Chapter 11). Picking up on the theme of homelessness, she presents data revealing how, over their life course, elderly men in urban Australian communities develop senses of home that reflect the characteristics of their life histories and affinity with a neighborhood or familiar area rather than a specific dwelling. Adopting an architectural perspective, the manner in which the meaning of home, following relocation from a community to a specialized communal residential environment, evolves in parallel with a lifelong residential trajectory is explored by Caouette (Chapter 12). Her in-depth multimethod study of 25 elders not only identifies themes in modifications of perceptions of home following relocation but also provides important insight into her participants’ perceptions of potential future relocation to a nursing facility and their preferences regarding the design of such facilities.

Part V focuses on the relatively overlooked area of Community Perspectives on the Meaning of Home. Here, we move beyond the dwelling. Chapters are included on the manner in which sociological, historical, and anthropological aspects of community life, social conditioning, and shared expectations influence the formation and evolution of group identity and shared understandings of home in particular communities. The section considers ways in which shared aspects of community experience contribute to an emergent sense of communal territory and architecture and willingness to identify with, become attached to, and defend shared community space as a manifestation of home. Norris-Baker and Scheidt (Chapter 13) examine the interrelated concepts of place identity, place attachment, and place dependence in a discussion equating home with community. Their discussion of sustaining community, protecting community identity, reframing community, accepting a dying community, and letting go of community as manifest in the small towns of Kansas provides us with insight on home viewed on a larger scale. The meaning of home on the neighborhood and community level and its impact on identity and well-being of older adults is also explored by Peace, Holland, and Kellaher (Chapter 14) in their study of three English communities: one metropolitan, one small town/suburban, and one rural/village. Through focus groups and in-depth personal interviews with elders they are able to show how themes of belonging, insecurity, connectivity, and movement pervade appraisals of
community as home. Important questions are raised in their concluding comments regarding housing policy, community planning, and supportive service delivery for older adults. In the final chapter of this section, Despré's and Lord (Chapter 15), describing an extended program of research in Quebec City, Canada, look into the topical issue of aging suburbanites and planning of the suburbs. There is plenty of food for thought, debate, and action in this chapter for city planners, architects, and regional health care authorities concerned with responding to the needs of older adults who would like to continue to live in neighborhoods originally built with less environmentally vulnerable middle-aged populations in mind.

In the final section, Part VI, Leaving Home: Commentaries, we have invited three eminent scholars to provide critical commentary on the volume. Each commentator adds a unique perspective on the topic. Amos Rapoport, a leading critic of the lexicon of terms employed in existing research on home (Rapoport, 1995), provides a challenging critique of basic underlying assumptions and emphasizes the continuing ambiguity of the concept. He contextualizes his critique of the words “home” and “place” in terms of their value in achieving the goals of this volume and asks if use of alternative words might have been more effective. Kim Dovey, author of a seminal early contribution to the literature on home (Dovey, 1985), provides a counterpoint to Rapoport as he celebrates the paradox of home in its potency and mystery in representing an experience of stability and of a dynamic evolution over time. He also identifies common themes in the various chapters of this volume. Maria Vesperi, an anthropologist, journalist, and prolific writer, contributes a unique interpretation of home against the backdrop of current demographic transitions and social change that represents a look forward to the need for an expanded view of home that will become increasingly pertinent within the political economy of the future. In a concluding reflection on the path we travel, we identify recurrent themes in the book and suggest useful future research directions in an invitation to continue probing ever more deeply into what it means to be coming home.

WHY COMING HOME?

The title of this opening section, Coming Home, reflects two levels of inspiration, one historical, the other substantive. Historically, it
connotes our editorial aspiration to present a second-generation collection of essays in the domain of home and aging research. It refers to the basic intention in assembling this volume of returning, coming home once more—collectively—to a topic that has been receiving attention from various disciplines as well as philosophical orientations but which in recent years has been characterized by diffuseness and divergence of perspectives. On a substantive level, “coming home” alludes to both the process and product of a fundamental human experience. *Coming Home* is about the experience of home within the context of aging and in relationship to what we believe to be a primary human aspiration—to seek and to find a place where we may feel at one with our self and our world. On this level, coming home refers to acknowledging the multiple levels of salience of the concept in our lives; from its role in facilitating physical and emotional well-being, through its contribution to maintaining the continuity of our self-identity, to resonance in a higher level of self-awareness and comfort that stems from having sought and found our place in the cosmos. As Maria Cattell (chapter 10) eloquently expresses this, coming home is an existential process of returning, both literally and figuratively to where we belong.

Home has physical, social, political, economic, and philosophical dimensions. The inherent richness of the topic has led to a burgeoning of scholarship in multiple disciplines. In recent years there have been efforts to reconceptualize emotional relationships with dwellings and places (e.g., Anthony, 1997; Fried, 2000; Hay, 1998; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Low, 2000; Manzo, 2003; Moore, 2000; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). These attempts have added two somewhat neglected aspects of home or place experience to the discourse. There has been growing recognition of the diversity of places that may evoke a sense of home or belonging—the experience of identifying with community environments from an individual and group perspective, the self-identity associated with workplaces, and the meaning and experience of landscapes that can nurture emotional relationships. There is also increasing acknowledgment that the context of home may provoke a range of emotional experiences. In contrast with traditionally positive conceptualizations, home may evoke ambivalent or negative emotions; for example, when family abuse takes place in the privacy of home. Home may also become a contested territory in terms of a public–private dichotomy when it is also the place of work; for example, in the context of an increasing volume of telecommuting.
Although the literature is becoming more sophisticated and multifaceted, ambiguity in the meaning of home persists. Is the expression “meaning of home” redundant in its approach when the word “home” already refers to the “meaning” of “house” or “dwelling”? Rapoport (1995), in a thought-provoking critique, raises fundamental questions about the usefulness of the term “home” and the phrase “meaning of home” in environment–behavior research. His arguments, reinforced in his commentary (Chapter 16), point out, among other concerns, the lack of consistency among researchers in use of the term “home” with a tendency toward variation based on disciplinary orientation and personal preference, the inherent difficulty of construing “home” as referring to both an object and a subject–object relationship, and limitations in the use of the term “home” in cross-cultural research.

Although we do not intend to directly “counter” Rapoport’s (1995) critical perspective, we present three observations on the inchoate concept of “home.” First, we believe that the emergence of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives on “home” expresses one of the strengths of the concept. Although it is true that “home” can be construed as having a fairly diverse range of meanings, this diversity of expressed meanings can help us better appreciate the unique contributions of particular disciplinary or scholarly orientations in amplifying the construct. Second, there have been attempts to conceptualize emotional relationships with home environments from various perspectives (e.g., Rowles, 1983; Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992). Given the complexity and diversity of experience and meaning of home, we need to embrace this plurality of theoretical frameworks, and at the same time strive toward creating bridges across these frameworks to attain a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Third, the experiential foundation of the concept “home” makes it a highly potent concept from both a substantive and methodological perspective. The semantic core of the term immediately captures the popular imagination (it transcends such mundane terms as “setting,” “house,” “residence,” “apartment,” and “accommodation”). People relate to “home” because of its close relevance to their own life experiences and everyday usage on a level far transcending merely a physical structure. Precisely because of this emotional resonance, “home” captures the diversity, complexity, and richness of an essen-
tial aspect of being in the world. Notwithstanding the ambiguity of its plural meanings, the notion of home provides a rich potential for experiential understanding of human behavior and affect in environmental context. In seeking to build on this potential, we present four conceptual positions.

**TRANSCENDING TEMPORALITY THROUGH MEMORIES OF HOME**

This position explores parallels between “memory” and “home” in their function of bringing unity in diversity. In the landscape of memories of home, recollection and imagination are intertwined like land and water. Here the term “recollection” refers to recall of the perceived objective experience of a given individual, whereas “imagination” refers to the subjective interpretation of that “objective” experience. Recollection of meaningful homes as a personally reflexive or as a socially shared reminiscence activity is common among elders. In the process of remembering, we selectively recall events, locations, emotions, and people in a manner that provides continuity in our sense of self (Burr & Butt, 2000). The elements of “recollection” and “imagination” have temporal dimensions. At the time of the original occurrence of an event, the historical reality (somewhat akin to what might be captured on a video camera) serves as the reference frame for “recollection.” On the other hand, each individual’s experience is laden with subjective valence or “imagination.” Let us fast forward to a time subsequent to the original event. As the individual remembers the event, recollection and imagination are once again at interplay in recreating the original experience. This recreation of the experience is filtered through physical, psychological, and social changes that may have occurred in the person’s life during the intervening time. Especially with the loss of social roles, retirement, physical frailty, and environmental changes, for many older adults the past experience of home may hold different meanings. For example, a 10-year-old boy’s play in the family home’s backyard with his sister would be remembered in a particular way a day after, in another way when he is a young man in college away from home, and again in a very different way when he is 85 years old and living in a nursing facility. In one sense, memory performs
not only the feat of interdependent fusion of recollection and imagination, but also allows a dynamic evolution over time based on the subjective experience and idiosyncratic life circumstance transitions that occur over the life span. The evolution of memory over time is by nature a product of the individual’s own evolution.

Similar to the integrating function of memory, “home” ties together diverse life experiences occurring in a given time as well as at different times. Home provides the cognitive–affective structure that shapes and anchors life events spanning temporal boundaries. Resilience to temporal influences is aided by the reality of the physical environment. As self is arguably tied to bodily reality, so, too, is our life experience anchored in the physical reality of places. And home serves as a central place in most life experiences. Home represents a physical setting that remains a witness over time to changing social interaction patterns, personal triumphs and tragedies, lifestyle adjustments, beliefs, and preferences. The diversity in these aspects in a given time, as well as their changing nature over time, permeates the experience of home. The centrality of home in life experience provides a fulcrum, a vantage point—physically, cognitively, and emotionally—from which to view life experiences in different places that are not home. The power of home as a reference point extends into the territory of memory, where home has the potential of acting as the mnemonic anchor for life experiences. From this perspective, memory and home are both vehicles for transcending the flux of time and becoming grounded in temporal unity. To remember particular places from our past or to remember by means of place, we can intensify our power of remembering as a journey that passes through and transcends time and space. The promise of temporal synthesis in memories of homes is multiplied by the process of imagination of home that allows the creation of a reality beyond the present temporal reality, and at the same time the temporal context of the particular remembered or imagined geographic/spatial home reinforces the reference of the present time.

**HOME AND AN ENDURING-EVOLVING SELF**

Based on the work of James (1890) and Mead (1934) on dual aspects of the self—“I” and “Me,” this position looks at the enduring and
evolving nature of the self in the context of the experience and meanings of home. The object of self, as signified by “Me,” primarily relates to historical experiences associated with home, whereas the subject of self, as signified by “I,” relates to creative endeavors of the self. Such endeavors are grounded in “as experienced” reality but they also reach out toward the horizons of imagination. This process provides maintenance of the self and, at the same time, opportunities for rediscovering and recreating the self. Although it is acknowledged that home contributes to the formation and preservation of identity (e.g., Lalli, 1992; Marcus, 1995; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983), understanding of the processes through which the self becomes integrally associated with home remains limited.

One useful approach in understanding the process is considering “social identification” (Hogg & Abrams, 1988) and “place identification.” Hogg and Abrams (1988) refer to “social identification” as identity dependent on social categories such as nationality, gender, and occupation. Traditionally, this conceptual approach does not take into account environmental contexts, such as residences, in processes of identity construction. On the other hand, a few approaches (e.g., Marcus, 1995; Rowles, 1983, Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992) focusing specifically on place or, in some instances, home, recognize the significance of social identification in the construction and maintenance of place or home-oriented identities. In fact, “home” and “place” are fundamentally sociophysical concepts. The transformation of spaces in home and community into personally meaningful places occurs, for the most part, through socialization of the spaces over time. The physical environment is given meaning through personal engagement. We argue that identity formation in relationship with home experience is a social process irrespective of the level of involvement of “others.” Life experience of the self is strongly influenced by interaction with an “other,” whether that other is one’s fellow human beings or the residential environment.

Home experience provides the tools for both enduring and evolving possibilities for the self. Homes serve as referents for past life experience. They remind us, both as individuals and groups, of our past. This continuous reminding feeds into the enduring nature of our selves, preserves self-identity, and provides the critical thread for continuity into the future. The process is signified by the “Me”
aspect of the self being nourished, validated, and strengthened. The other aspect of home experience relates to the evolving nature of the self. In addition to being sustained, aspects of the self may discontinue as a result of changes in life circumstances, e.g., moving into a care facility symbolizes loss of home for an elder. However, the perceived and real effect of such external change in life circumstances is mediated through the “I” of the self. It is contingent on the creative power of the “I” that may consider a change in residential environments as catastrophic, manageable, and liberating or somewhere in between. There is a dynamic dialogue between the “I” and “Me” in which these two aspects of the self are preserved, discontinued, or recreated. Self-reflexivity is fundamental in this interplay of “I” and “Me” in maintenance of the identity, and at the same time is open to possibilities of self-adaptation and self-recreation. The process characterizes potential adaptation to new environments through recreation or redefinition of one’s preferences, beliefs, or values.

**CONTEXTUALIZING HOME**

In order to understand the fuller and richer meanings of home, there is a great need for acknowledging the interrelationship of home with other places. The meaning of home is not only a product of individual, social, and cultural experience, but also of the experience of macro environments and “places” beyond home. Sociocultural issues and their implications for the experience of diverse places that are “not home” affect the meaning of home. In general, public and institutional environments have been studied with focus on the activities or behaviors, ignoring their sociocultural “meaning” aspects (Groat, 1995). On the other hand, macro-level environments have been addressed from sociopolitical perspectives that have, in general, overlooked the interconnective nature of home as a place with other places and the larger cultural landscape (e.g., Agnew & Duncan, 1989). Experiences of place at the scale of neighborhoods/communities, cities, regions, and countries are varied and multifaceted. Social, cultural, and political dimensions of these experiences vary at each level in relation to the level of engagement and interaction. More important, these experiences are interlocked with the meanings as-
cribed to an individual’s home. For example, aspects of emotional attachment to one’s neighborhood (or lack thereof) are likely to mediate one’s attachment to home. On the flip side of this argument, the meaning of home affects the meaning of other places. In sum, juxtaposition of the experience of home with experience of a range of other places creates a symbiotic relationship between the meanings of home and other places.

This position could be couched in the dialectic of private versus public, homelike versus institutional, or self versus other. For many older adults, the dialectic can be experienced first hand in care environments that are “homes” for the balance of their lives. Residential care environments such as assisted living and long-term care facilities strive to create a homelike physical and social environment within an organizational/institutional framework. To what extent are these places institutional or homelike for the individuals living there? In what ways do they symbolize or deny the homes or communities the elders have left behind? Can we really recreate the personal homes left behind in the collective or communal homes into which many elders move? These are questions that relate back to the issue of the interrelationship of the meanings of diverse places.

THE DEEPER CALL

Among the various dimensions of meanings of home identified by scholars, the relationship of home experience and self is the most theoretically challenging. Experience of home is associated with defining, maintaining, and recreating self-identity. We need to explore beyond this approach and consider more symbolic and elusive possibilities in meanings of home. If the experience of and emotional relationship with home shapes the evolution of self, the process raises a number of questions. Is the human relationship with home an intrinsic experience finding expression in a multitude of shapes and forms across various cultural contexts? Is home necessarily and invariably place-based? What is the deeper nature of making home or being “at home”? Do the positive or negative valences of home experience help or hinder self-evolution? We pose these questions not as a preface to presenting answers, but rather as directions for ongoing discussion and debate. Questions like these require
thoughtful consideration of intersections among complex philosophical issues and diverse levels of experience. They require us to revisit our ontological and epistemological presuppositions of the human condition and experiential reality.

In order to understand the deeper meaning of home, it is important to explore the nature of our understanding of the self and more specifically, the self in aging (Kaufman, 1986). The resilience and transformation of the self is a contested terrain (Cartensen & Freund, 1994; McHugh, 2000), and a discussion on that topic is beyond the scope of this chapter. If we shift the focus toward an individual level and consider the personal experience of aging, we can acknowledge the diversity among individuals in the enduring qualities and evolving nature of the self. A person’s consciousness of his or her life experiences in the light of growing older enhances awareness of autobiographical aging. The process is inherently self-reflective and potentially self-evaluative. It involves allusion to a self that is beyond the self as we know it. There is a longing for a spiritual home. Remembrance at a deeper level prompts us to exploration of a level of home that is beyond that which is solely experientially based. This exploration characterizes what we believe to be an innate urge for transcending the ego-self and reaching out to the higher-self or soul—that is at the essence of being human. The homes we create are reflections of that recollection and transcendence. The self has been conceptualized as embodied and emplaced and the close relationship of self with the body and place has been the subject of discussion (e.g., McHugh, 2000). We argue that it is useful to consider the self in parallel to the integrated continua of embodied and disembodied, and emplaced and displaced. The disembodied and displaced aspects do not implicate a disconnect between the self with body and place, but rather a self that evolves to a realization that becomes aware of its connection with a spiritual home or transcendent higher-self. An evolving emotional relationship with home, with all its nuances, is a process that helps move the self toward self-realization. In effect, the process shapes our journey and our “coming home.”

REFERENCES


