Returning ‘home’?: Emotional geographies of the disaster-displaced in Brisbane and Christchurch

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Stephanie Jane Morrice, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

Date:

Abstract

To date, there remains a notable absence in geographic literature concerning the connection between disasters and the concept of 'home'. Similarly, disaster scholarship fails to fully explore the spatiality of emotions in the post-disaster context. This research aims to fill these voids, highlighting the importance of emotional geography for scholarship on nature-society interactions. Contributing to work on emotional geography, the critical geographies of 'home' and disaster studies, this thesis explores the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment. Broadly, I aim to highlight the impact of crisis on domestic geographies of the familiar by exploring people's emotional responses to disasters.

Using Brisbane, Australia and Christchurch, New Zealand as case studies, this thesis employs a methodological agenda that provides a way of accessing the felt world. Through semi-structured interviews with those who were displaced by the 2011 Queensland floods and the 2011 Christchurch earthquake, I investigate how places become meaningful through emotions. Moving beyond a seemingly generic understanding that emotions matter, this thesis critically examines the emotions of traumatized people and their relationship to place. More specifically, I provide a deeper understanding of the emotive nature of the post-disaster 'home', exploring how feelings of loss, nostalgia, love, anxiety and comfort influence how disaster-affected individuals relate to this specific place. This thesis also contributes to work on material culture, considering the materiality of the post-disaster 'home' and how objects play a key role in post-disaster homemaking. Finally, this thesis engages in methodological debates within geography concerning how to research emotion, drawing specifically from my own experiences of conducting work in the post-disaster context.

This thesis highlights the complexities of people's emotional response to disasters. Acknowledging that people negotiate their emotions in different ways, I demonstrate the complex ways that emotions influence how displaced residents

relate to ‘home’ in the aftermath of disaster. Displaced individuals all express the extent to which their conception of ‘home’ after disaster is dictated by the emotions they experience through their absence from this domestic space. For displaced residents, home is positioned as a familiar refuge or haven from the threatening problems of the world. Narratives, however, remind us that places must be *felt* to make sense. This thesis therefore demonstrates how disasters can disrupt and alter one’s conception of ‘home’. In the post-disaster landscape, ‘home’ has the potential to be rendered ‘uncanny’. Feelings of anxiety and discomfort are often attached to distorted visions of ‘home’ in this environment. In this context, ‘home’ is dynamic and ever changing. Material objects play a vital role in post-disaster homemaking, as domestic spaces are recreated and reestablished in a variety of different ways.

A greater knowledge of the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment and continued investigation into how the concept of ‘home’ can be (re)conceptulized following disaster is crucial in planning for future catastrophic events. Understanding the emotional impacts of disasters is beneficial not only to those affected by catastrophic events, but also to planners and policy makers who are dealing with the practical implications of disasters in terms of both recovery and resilience.

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Chapter 1

Introducing the disaster displaced

When a major flood is described as a 'once in 100 years' event, then by definition it is something extraordinary. In reality, it was much less than 100 years after 1974 that the next big flood came to Queensland's capital city. On January 13th 2011, the Brisbane River peaked at 4.46 metres, flooding approximately 22,000 homes across the city (van den Hornet and McAneney 2011). These floods wreaked untold devastation in Queensland, with three quarters of the state declared a disaster zone. For those affected, this date marked the moment when their lives changed forever.

During fieldwork conducted in Brisbane in July 2011, I volunteered with Habitat for Humanity Australia. Throughout this time, I stayed with Carolyn Ehrlich, the Chairwoman of the Ipswich Chapter. Volunteering allowed me to engage with flood-damaged communities and individuals, as I began to understand the challenges associated with long-term disaster recovery. During my first week in the city, I met Jane. Jane was a forty-year-old mother of two, who had been living with her husband Phil in Ipswich at the time of the floods. After a number of informal meetings, Jane agreed to participate in my research project. She was keen to share her story and experiences with the floods. Our interview took place in the community centre on Thursday morning. Jane stood up as I arrived, greeting me with a gentle smile. She sipped a coffee and offered me one as well. The following is her story.

> *"Ours was one of the last homes to have the flood water recede. Our house lay far from the river, so no-one thought it would have been under threat from the deluge* [Sighs]*".*

The day before the Brisbane River peaked, Jane had been working in her office on Elizabeth Street in the city centre. With heavy rain falling and forecasts for a worsening situation, Jane decided to get a train home late morning. Just before 11am, she followed the long procession towards the Roma Street Station, battling umbrellas along her journey. On the train home, she sensed *"nervous excitement"* as fellow passengers chatted about the weather and the possibility of flooding. As the

train stopped, she measured the gravity of the situation, watching passengers take off in aggravated sprints towards their homes.

As Jane reached her own street, she was met with a convoy of cars, trucks and horse trailers: *"It was the first of many surreal moments I would face during the coming week"*. Inside the house, Jane's husband and friends had begun to move some of their possessions upstairs:

> *"I walked to the sight of my family moving books and items to top shelves, against a backdrop of TV coverage of rising floodwater. It was very surreal. I helped for a while and then trekked down the street to meet with two of our neighbours. We all gazed upon the slowly rising brown expanse of water. The rain was still falling"*

Initially, Jane's husband did not want to leave their house: *"I base this on the collective ignorance of other males in the neighbourhood* [laughs]. *They all thought it wasn't necessary".* Despite his reservations, however, the couple did eventually evacuate. This was prompted by text message from their pastor with revised higher water limits:

> *"Once we had cleaned out the majority of our belongings, and as it began to get dark, we went to our friends house a few streets over. I went to sleep that night with a mixed calm of uncertainty and inevitability, like being strapped into a rollercoaster. When we woke, there was no power. We suddenly found ourselves with a driving desire to see the unknown".*

Two days later, Jane and Phil returned to view the flood damage to their Ipswich home. Viewing this damage was *"a very traumatic experience",* as the couple struggled to come to terms with their loss:

> *"The waters went to the top of the second storey – not much was untouched. Neither of us thought it would get that bad. I knew immediately the home would have to be gutted. Its sodden fibro walls were so easy to push away from the framework. There was a never-ending mass of sludge and everything was so monochrome brown with that lingering smell. That horrible smell. It was so bleak. Traces of the flood were everywhere. There were clumps of washed up vegetation in trees and fences and piles of spoiled possessions in parks waiting for collection. The river itself was calm, and I remember being constantly amazed at every image I saw of my city under water. It was like it happened to another city,*

> *yet I knew it was my own Brisbane that had been hurt in this way".*

As our interview progressed, Jane became visibly emotional as she discussed the days immediately following the flood peak. Clutching a tissue, she spoke of the feelings she experienced during this initial aftermath:

> *"The days that followed ran together in a rush of adrenaline. Our street looked like a warzone with people's lives lying helpless on the sidelines. There were volunteers and tradesmen as far as I could see, helping with the recovery process. It was as if everyone had decided to do a major remodel at the same time, with copious amounts of depression and anxiety. It's hard to describe how you feel because you don't really feel anything. For days I felt like I was just floating around, powerless against my own body. I just wanted to scream, or cry, but I couldn't. It wasn't until later that the reality of the tragedy hit me. And then I couldn't stop crying".*

For five months, Jane and Phil lived in temporary accommodation in a nearby suburb, as they waited for their home to be renovated. Unlike so many others affected, the couple did receive an insurance pay out, which helped cover their rebuild costs: *"It makes me sick to think of all those people who didn't receive a pay out because of the wording of insurance contracts. It's like a double blow directly to your heart".* Two weeks before our interview, Jane and Phil were finally able to return to their Ipswich home. When I asked about this, Jane told me:

> *"Well, we were of course lucky to have help from insurance. But it was just a feeling. I wanted to wake up in MY house. Nowhere else. I couldn't imagine leaving. We feel comfortable there and in the community…So, as we recovered and grew over the months, so did our home. Walls went in, furniture was collected and paint was applied. And now we're back. Our lives had been put in a holding pattern. Our every thought was put into getting back home. And now* [smiling] *we've done it. And we are so happy".*

While the initial aftermath of the floods was an emotionally difficult time for Jane, Phil and their family, Jane explained that the recovery process has been long and challenging. This process has led some people in the community to isolate themselves as a coping mechanism, reflecting the trauma associated with disaster displacement and loss:

> *"I can still drive through parts of Ipswich on a rainy day and that pungent smell of foliage can take me back to those early days in January. It still makes me shiver….The flood has brought me closer to some friends but then there are those who have, for some reason or another, tried to isolate themselves. I want to help. When they are ready to talk, I'll be here".*

Jane did, however, make an explicit point about community resilience during her interview:

> *"After the flood waters subsided the one stunningly, wonderful thing that came from it was the way in which unaffected areas of Brisbane rallied to support and help. Tens of thousands of volunteers came out of the woodwork to help clean up the stinking, slimy muck that had covered roads and seeped into every crevice of people's homes and lives. The community spirit and good will to help those less fortunate was stunning to witness. It gave me hope".*

Jane's final reflection stressed the instability of her post-flood life. She explained, anxiously, that her journey in the aftermath of the floods is one where boundaries become infinitely porous: *"Everything is constantly changing. Things merge together*". Having returned to her Ipswich home, Jane's physical journey has reached its finale. Emotionally, however, she remains tired and drained, having witnessed an unnatural shift in the landscape. While of course her story is unique, her narrative provides an excellent introduction into people's emotional response to disaster. These emotions will be the subject of my enquiry, as I explore their spatiality and influence within the post-disaster environment.

1.1 Research agenda

We live at a time when the threat of natural disasters is enormously high. Across the world, catastrophic events continue to impact the lives and livelihoods of individuals and societies on insurmountable scales. In 2012, the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) and the Institute of Health and Society (IRSS) produced a collaborative report documenting this rising trend, both in terms of the number of natural disasters occurring and the economic cost of their destruction. In 2012, 357 natural disasters were registered worldwide. These caused

an estimated US$157 billion damage worldwide, and approximately 9,500 fatalities (Guha-Sapir et al. 2013). Of course, disasters come in varying forms and scales. In addition to the events in Australasia (on which this thesis is based), we have watched disasters such as the 2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami, the 2013 Oklahoma tornado, and 2012's Hurricane Sandy wreak havoc on individuals and communities across the world. This thesis, then, is well timed to focus its enquiry on understanding the emotional dynamics of natural disasters.

While a widespread definition of disaster remains disputable, in 1992 the United Nation's International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction committee issued this widely acknowledged definition:

> "A disaster is a serious disruption of the functioning of a society, causing widespread human, material or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using only its own resources. Disasters are often classified according to their speed of onset (sudden or slow), or according to their cause (natural or man-made)" (IDNDR 1992).

I recognise disasters as being caused by the interaction of social processes and the physical environment (Varley 1994). For the purpose of this thesis I therefore understand disaster as an overwhelming and distressing catastrophic event that impacts a community or society. This type of event is particularly devastating, as it tends to impact large numbers of people.

My research deals explicitly with those people who have lost their home to disaster and the emotions surrounding their displacement experience. As a consequence of disaster, the loss of 'home' becomes deeply challenging to reconcile because it is embedded in memories and emotional attachments. This research aims to bridge the gap between emotional geography, the critical geographies of 'home' and disaster studies to explore the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment. Specifically, I aim to consider the impact of crisis on domestic geographies of the familiar. I also intend to contribute to psychological research on post-disaster trauma by exploring people's emotional responses to disasters. In

order to do this, I produce in-depth empirical material on the everyday nature of emotions within the post-disaster environment.

This thesis uses a geographic perspective to understand how places become meaningful through emotions. By exploring the spatiality of emotion in the post-disaster context, I provide a deeper understanding of the dynamic, emotive nature of the post-disaster 'home'. This thesis also engages in methodological debates within geography concerning how to research emotion, drawing specifically from my own experiences of conducting work in the post-disaster context.

The following sections will introduce emotion and 'home' as the two geographical concepts that are central to this thesis. As I will demonstrate, these two concepts are intricately linked. These introductions will usefully foreground the chapters that follow and introduce the specific intentions of this research.

1.1.1 Introducing emotion

Over the past decade, emotion has become a key theme within our geographical research agenda. In print, this growing emotional engagement is reflected in journal special issues, articles, introductory texts and edited collections, which have brought emotion to the forefront of our geographical enquiries. The interdisciplinary journal *Emotion, Space and Society,* for example, was established in 2008 as a forum for theoretically informed research projects that investigate the emotional intersections between society and space. Geography conference sessions also reflect this growing interest in emotion. International annual Geography conferences now dedicate special sessions to work within emotional geography and the *International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Emotional Geographies* offers an entire conference on the topic.

Today, there is, then, a broad spectrum of work that investigates the multiplicity of spaces and places that are produced by emotional and affective life, representing an inclusive range of theoretical and methodological engagements of emotion as a social, cultural and spatial phenomenon. Contributing to emotional

geography literature, this thesis engages with grounded research and a methodological agenda that provides a way of accessing the felt world.

While bodies undeniably mediate emotions, I acknowledge that emotions are socially constructed and understood in their relationships with others. Geographers have, over the past decade, described a wide range of emotions in a variety of different contexts. These include: anxiety, (dis)comfort, disgust, fear, (un)happiness, joy, loneliness, longing, love, pain, loss, (dis)stress and excitement. Similarly to Anderson and Smith (2001), throughout my research I privilege a concern for lived experience as a way to understand the capacity of places to evoke such emotions (Bondi 2005).

Davidson and Milligan (2004) usefully suggest that emotions are only understandable in the context of certain spaces. At the same time, they argue that places must be ‘felt’ to make sense. In an attempt to explore this contention in more depth, this thesis aims to investigate how movements between people and places in the post-disaster environment create meaningful senses of certain spaces.

Disasters are commonly associated with a great sense of loss. They are often characterized by the loss of home, identity, independence and safety. The post-disaster setting is unique because it is distinguished by a sudden flip in emotion. While the severity of this suddenness varies depending on each disaster (for example an earthquake vs. a flood) all disasters have the ability to suddenly disrupt the social and temporal ordering of everyday life. While there are a number of different emotions circulating the post-disaster displacement experience, this thesis attempts to demonstrate which emotions matter and why. Moving beyond a seemingly generic understanding that emotions are important phenomena, this thesis critically examines the overriding emotions of traumatized people and their relationship to place, in order to more fully explore the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster ‘home’.

1.1.2 Introducing 'home'

'Home' is a complex and powerful geographical concept, defined by intricate socio-spatial relationships and emotions (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Blunt and Varley 2004; Easthope 2004). For the purpose of this thesis, I understand home as both a place in which we live, but also a concept that is imbued with feelings and emotions. As recognised by a number of scholars (see Brickell 2012; Blunt and Dowling 2006; Blunt and Varley 2004; Manzo 2003) homes are dynamic, affective places that encompass a broad range of theoretical settings and emotions.

Current geographical research on 'home' understands the way in which the concept can evoke feelings of both belonging and/or alienation (Brickell 2012). This literature demonstrates the complexity and malleability of people's relationships to domestic spaces. This thesis furthers work on the critical geographies of 'home' and bridges the detrimental gap between this body of work and disaster studies. Through an engagement with those who have experienced disaster, this thesis ultimately demonstrates how the post-disaster 'home' is an emotional space.

Understanding 'home' as a sense of belonging or attachment is clearly understood through the post-disaster displacement experience. This experience is precipitated by a disruption to one's sense of home, as people are forced to leave one home for another. A process of establishing home characterizes this movement, as senses of belonging and identity move across space and are established in new places. Recent geographic research on home has, however, begun to expose large-scale disruptions of home, for example through the impact of catastrophic events (Brun and Lund 2008). This research has identified the need for further research into the ways in which homes can be negatively experienced. As a result, this thesis aims to explore the domestic 'uncanny' and the times at which we may not feel at home, understanding more critically how the meaning of 'home' can be altered by disaster. Ultimately, I aim to present a more critical understanding of the concept, using empirical material to demonstrate how the post-disaster 'home' can disappoint us, as well as provide us with comfort and support.

This thesis also intends to deepen our understanding of how homes are in process, by engaging with ideas of materiality. Current debates within literature on domestic materiality (see Miller 2010) fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of the importance of material objects in the post-disaster environment. This thesis utilizes object elicitation as a method to consider whether an emotional attachment to lost possessions plays a part in post-disaster home-making practices. More specifically, I investigate how homes are rebuilt with or without familiar salvaged possessions. Recognizing that it is not just objects that constitute a home, I also consider the relationships (and the activities that accompany them) that create a sense of 'home' in the aftermath of disaster.

Ultimately, this thesis has wide relevance to planners and policy makers who are actively involved in post-disaster recovery and resilience strategies. To date, there is limited geographic work that explores the concept of 'return' in the context of disaster displacement. This limited literature is problematic, considering the 32.4 million people who were displaced as a result of disasters in 2012 (IDMC 2013) As a way to deepen our knowledge of the contested relationship between return and 'home' and in an effort to move beyond an understanding of 'return' as something that is natural and straightforward, I intend to explore how individuals relate to 'home' in the aftermath of disaster. While there is much contemporary research debating the concept of return and, more specifically, what it means to return somewhere that is expected to be familiar and safe, I see value in continuing to assess how disasters can disrupt and alter one's conception of 'home'. This understanding is crucial for policy makers and disaster scholars, who at present lack an understanding of the emotional complexities of the post-disaster environment.

1.2 Introducing the post-disaster context

This thesis is based largely on the city of Brisbane as a case study of a post-disaster setting. To clarify this term in more detail, I draw from theories of disasters that understand the cyclical nature of catastrophic events (see for example

Alexander 2006). In the 'disaster cycle', the response phase immediately follows the catastrophic event. This phase may be aided substantially by any preparedness/mitigation actions put in place prior to when the disaster occurred. Following the disaster impact, relief activities occur in the emergency phase, which transitions into the recovery and rehabilitation phases. Lessons learned from each disaster are typically then applied to mitigation strategies or practical planning for future disaster events (Alexander 2006). Essentially, the lessons from this thesis are intended to contribute to this process.

Within this thesis, I use the term post-disaster as a way to identify Brisbane as a location currently within response, recovery, rehabilitation and preparedness phases of this cycle. The most important time for learning from a disaster response is while the events are fresh in the minds of those affected and those involved in the response. Brisbane is therefore an appropriate case study though which to investigate people's emotional responses to disaster.

While this thesis focuses mainly on the 2011 Brisbane floods, I arrived in Christchurch at the end of June 2012, to conduct two weeks of fieldwork in the aftermath of the 2011 Canterbury earthquake sequence. While this two-week time frame did not allow me to conduct a fully comparative PhD project, it did enable a deeper investigation into the emotional dynamics of different natural disasters. This investigation would not have been possible with only one case study.

Similarly to my work in Brisbane, the purpose of my fieldwork in Christchurch is to explore how emotions influence how earthquake-affected individuals relate to specific places in the aftermath of the February 22nd earthquake. More specifically, I intend to explore the emotional dynamics of the post-earthquake 'home', considering how 'home' is understood in the post-disaster environment. This second research setting also provides an interesting point of comparison with Brisbane because the types of disaster and levels of damage are different. Including Christchurch in this thesis therefore allows me to explore whether emotion differs in different disaster contexts. Furthermore, comparing these two settings enables me

to consider the materiality of damage in different contexts. In other words, whether there a difference between floodwater vs. dust/liquefaction and how this might impact return decisions and the recreation of ‘home’ following disaster. Ultimately, utilizing a second case study allows for a deeper, more critical investigation the influence of emotion in post-disaster environments.

1.2.1 Brisbane and the 2011 Queensland floods.

The Brisbane River is the longest river in southeast Queensland. From its source in the Brisbane Range, the river flows south towards the Stanley River, before reaching Lake Wivenhoe (Brisbane’s major water supply). Lake Wivenhoe was created by the Wivenhoe Dam, which was completed in 1984 in response to the 1974 flooding. Its principal aim was to protect the city from future floods. Downstream from the Wivenhoe Dam, the river flows eastwards, meeting the Bremer River near Ipswich. From there, the river meanders around Brisbane’s western suburbs, before reaching the Pacific Ocean (van den Hornet and McAneney 2011).

Figure 1.1 Creek Street, Brisbane. 1893 flood. (© Frozen in Time Gallery 2013)

While much of the Brisbane River catchment is rural, it also includes the major metropolitan areas of Brisbane and Ipswich. The city of Brisbane is therefore located on a flood plain, making it extremely vulnerable to flooding events. It is perhaps no surprise then, that historical flood events have been recorded in the city in the 1840s, almost as far back as when the city was established in 1823 (van den Hornet and McAneney 2011) (Figure 1.1).

Between December 2010 and January 2011, widespread flooding occurred across many areas of the state of Queensland. This relates to a strong La Niña effect in the region. An uncharacteristically wet spring also meant that catchments were already saturated before the December 2010/January 2011 rains. A following low-pressure system situated off the mid and south Queensland coasts contributed to further flooding in southeast Queensland during the second week of January. Between January 9th-13th 2011, direct rainfall into Wivenhoe Dam was extremely heavy, with totals reaching 480mm. Areas of the lower Brisbane river catchment also experienced significant rainfall (van den Hornet and McAneney 2011).

The Wivenhoe Dam serves two main functions. Firstly, it acts as a buffer against drought. In this sense, it is desirable to keep the dam as full as possible, in case future rainfall is low. The dam is also, however, specifically built as a defence against floods. To fulfill this objective, it is ideal to keep the dam as empty as possible in order to maximize the retention capacity of floodwater (van den Hornet and McAneney 2011). Essentially then, the dam serves two contradictory functions, making it extremely difficult to balance these conflicting objectives successfully.

In January 2011, Wivenhoe Dam was called upon to accommodate massive inflows of surface runoff from the upstream catchment area. The greater the rate and volume of inflow, the less effective dams are in mitigating flood flows. The balancing act between retaining as much water as possible and releasing water to make room for further significant inflows was monitored closely by Wivenhoe engineers. Water releases commenced only at 3pm on January 7th (van den Hornet and McAneney 2011).

On January 13th, dam releases from Wivenhoe Dam flooded the city of Brisbane and surrounding areas. While this might suggest residents knew the city would flood, there is widespread criticism relating to the communication of this information to local suburbs. Many of the residents I spoke to seemed unaware there was any potential danger. At 3pm, the river peaked at 4.46 metres as recorded at the city gauge (Brisbane City Council 2013). In the aftermath of these 2011 floods, the Insurance Council of Australia employed specialist hydrologists to investigate the events leading to damage claims in Brisbane, Toowoomba, Ipswich and the Lockyer Valley. This investigation deemed the Brisbane event to be a 'dam release flood', with the release of water from the Wivenhoe Dam acknowledged as a key contributor to the flooding downstream between 11th-12th January 2011.

As a result of the 2011 Brisbane floods, 22,000 properties were inundated across 94 of Brisbane's suburbs. Figure's 1.2-1.9 show aerial images (Nearmap 2013) of some affected areas of the city. To allow comparison, these images show areas of Brisbane before and after the flood.

Across the state, over 200,000 people were affected. Business premises were inundated, Queensland rail network was damaged and three major ports were significantly impacted. An estimated 18,000 homes required total rebuilding, while a vast number of dwellings also needed extensive repairs. According to the Insurers Council of Australia, over 56,000 claims were received by insurers, with an estimated insurance cost of AUS$2.55 billion (approximately GBR£1.47 bullion) (The Australian Government the Treasury 2011).

The community response to the flooding was tremendous. Over 55,000 volunteers worked tirelessly to help thousands of residents to recover following the devastating 2011 floods. Among other tasks, Brisbane's "Mud Army" helped people evacuate, cleaned and swept mud from homes, cooked food for communities and carefully pulled strangers' possessions from flood-damaged houses. These kind hearted, dedicated individuals served the flood-affected with enthusiasm and respect at a time where they needed help the most.

Figure 1.2 Brisbane River (Before) (©Nearmap 2013)

Figure 1.3 Brisbane River (After) (©Nearmap 2013)

Figure 1.4 Ipswich (Before) (©Nearmap 2013)

Figure 1.5 Ipswich (After) (©Nearmap 2013)

Figure 1.6 Chelmer (Before) (©Nearmap 2013)

Figure 1.7 Chelmer (After) (©Nearmap 2013)

Figure 1.8 Graceville (Before) (©Nearmap 2013)

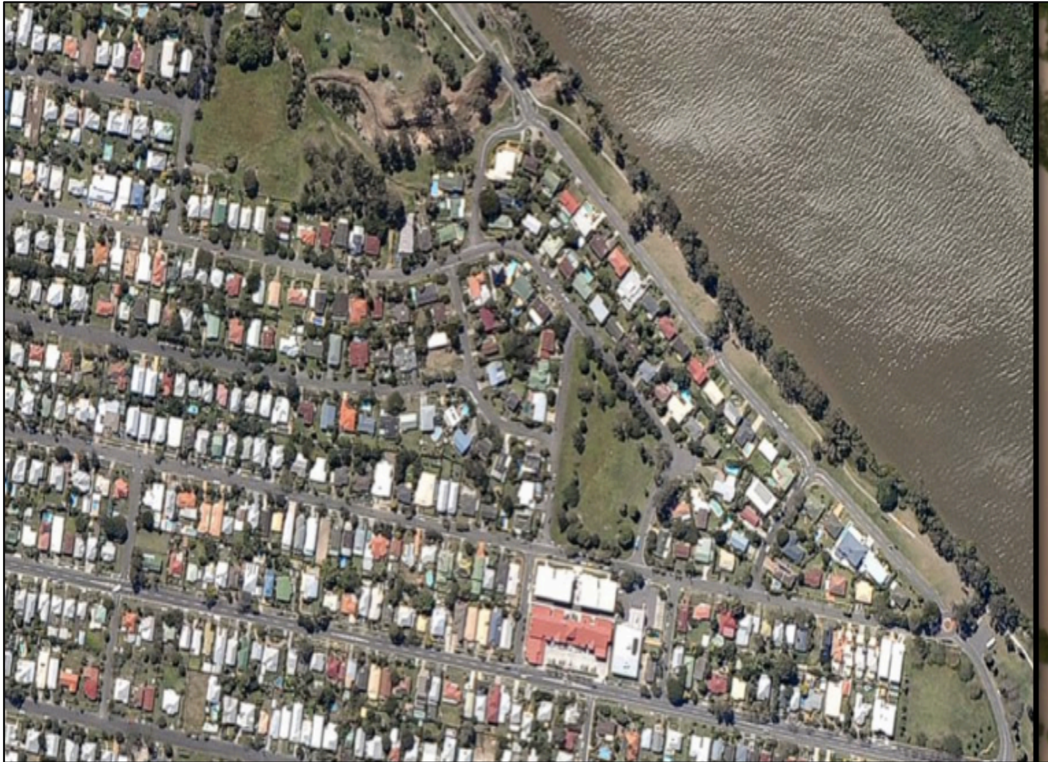


Figure 1.9 Graceville (After) (©Nearmap 2013)

Communities also came together, with many community centres offering residents a place to find information, guidance and support. Across the state, fundraising schemes raised aid money for those who had been affected. In January 2011, the Lord Mayor established the Community Disaster Relief Appeal Fund. This fund raised a total of AUS$1,125,826 (GBR£649,656) for local community organizations in the aftermath of the floods. This not only highlights the generosity of Australian people, but also the importance of local community associations in the post-disaster environment (van den Hornet and McAneney 2011).

In January 2013, Brisbane's City Council issued a report documenting the progress of post-flood recovery work. This document acknowledges recovery costs in excess of AUS$400 billion (GBR£230 billion), with money being used to restore and renovate Brisbane's infrastructure, community and environment. In the immediate aftermath of the floods, a number of community recovery centres were set up across the city. Non-profit organizations such as The Red Cross, Lifeline and Ozcare coordinated relief in terms of both practical and emotional support. A number of organizations were, in fact, established during this aftermath, reflecting the need for localized disaster support and the level of damage in the city. As of September 2013, support for flood-affected individuals continues, both in terms of practical support for financial hardship, and emotional support for ongoing emotional trauma (Brisbane City Council 2013).

During my fieldwork in 2011 and 2012, I saw extensive evidence of flood recovery progress. Many suburbs, in fact, appeared almost totally restored, with much of the superficial evidence of the floods erased. Some suburbs, however, offered quite a different story. These showed the reality of a longer-term recovery process. In July 2011, I walked around the streets of Chelmer, Graceville and Goodna. In particular, I was struck by an engulfing feeling of eeriness. A significant number of roads remained deserted, with empty plots and rubbish skips visible amidst the landscape (Figure 1.10).

Figure 1.10 Damaged, abandoned home, Chelmer (©Stephanie Morrice 2011)

Figure 1.11 "For Sale" sign (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

Figure 1.12 Post-flood reconstruction, Graceville (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

I was also shocked at the number of "For Sale" and "To Let" signs present along the streets. To me, these represented lost hope and permanent relocations after the flood (Figure 1.11).

When I returned to Brisbane in January 2012, I continued to see evidence of ongoing struggles in the city. In Graceville and Ipswich I saw construction companies working to rebuild homes (Figure 1.12). I also acknowledged the number of flood support groups still active in affected communities. These groups played an important role in offering continued emotional support for flood-affected individuals.

In 2012, I met Mavis at Sherwood Flood Support Group. At the time of the floods, Mavis was living with her husband and three children in Graceville. After one of our group meetings, Mavis asked whether I would be interested in visiting her flood-damaged home. Her house was situated on low land in the suburb and remained badly damaged. Despite substantial structural issues, Mavis and her family

were living back in this house. This, she had previously explained, related to her financial situation. It seemed she had little alternative.

1.13 Mavis' flood damaged home in Sherwood (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

When I arrived at Mavis' flood damaged home (Figure 1.13), I was speechless at the level of devastation still present. I was further shocked that this family were living in such horrible conditions. Rubbish bags littered every room. An ominous line marked the water level on the second storey of the house, acting as a permanent reminder of the floods. The walls and floors were cracked and the kitchen stood in disorganized chaos, with piles of kitchenware and clothes occupying damaged countertops. A fan stood in their living room, blowing hot air and a sour smell of rotting wood around the confined space. Viewing Mavis' flood damaged home was deeply upsetting to me. At the same time, I was fascinated. It provided a unique insight into the struggles facing flood-affected individuals in the city, highlighting many of the aspects of the post-disaster recovery story that this thesis will explore.

1.2.2 Christchurch and the 2011 Canterbury earthquakes

The second case study on which this thesis is based is Christchurch, New Zealand. As mentioned above, the much shorter duration of my fieldwork in Christchurch means that a full comparison between my two case studies is not possible. Still, this second setting offers a useful addition to this thesis, allowing me the opportunity to consider the emotional dynamics of different natural disasters.

The recent Canterbury earthquake sequence began on September 4th, 2010, with a 7.1 magnitude event. This earthquake occurred on the Glendale fault line which runs across New Zealand's South Island approximately 40km from the city of Christchurch. This event caused liquefaction, building damage and infrastructure damage across the city and surrounding suburbs. Miraculously, the earthquake did not cause any direct fatalities, due to its rural location and time of impact (just after 4am in the morning). In the months that followed, Cantabrians experienced continuing aftershocks, most notably on Boxing Day 2010 when a 4.9 earthquake ripped through the city again (CERA 2013a).

On February 22nd 2011, two extremely shallow and locally intense quakes (6.1 and 6.3 magnitude) occurred on a previously unknown fault line that has since been revealed to run along the foot of the hills across the south part of Christchurch. This event occurred close to the central city, causing widespread devastation. The city centre felt the impact of this event intensely, with major building collapses including both modern structures and heritage buildings. Markedly, the earthquake caused a massive devastation to the Christchurch Cathedral, a symbol of the city that stands in the central square. To the south and south east of the city, coastal hill suburbs experienced major rock falls and widespread and devastating liquefaction along the river corridors towards the estuary and along the coast casing building subsidence and extensive infrastructure damage. The February 22nd earthquake caused 185 fatalities, most in the central city (CERA 2013a).

During my time in the city, I made observations and chatted informally to residents. It was clear that every person had a unique and harrowing earthquake

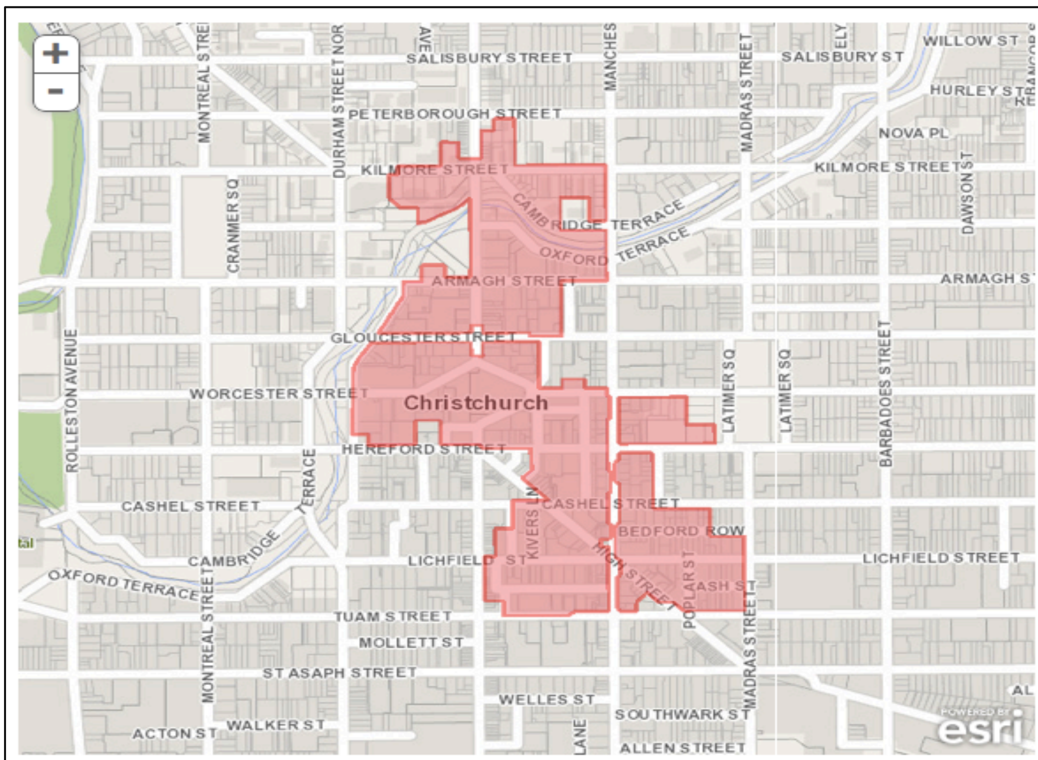
story to tell. For some, the memories of the February 22nd earthquake were direct and tragic. For others, stories involved heroic actions on the day and subsequent hard work helping the city to reestablish itself in the weeks and months that followed the event. For many, however, their stories portrayed a period of worry, anxiety and uncertainty. They depicted frantic searches for family and friends caught in the worst hit areas.

The continuing aftershocks and the uncertainty and disruption they create has prolonged the post-quake recovery phase in the city of Christchurch. In this sense, the Christchurch earthquakes offer a situation that is considerably different to my Brisbane case study. Since 2010, there have been close to 12,000 aftershocks (CERA 2013a). These earthquakes force residents to re-live the disaster both emotionally and physically, disrupting their recovery from trauma. As a result of these aftershocks, the Christchurch earthquakes have also become one of the world's most financially expensive natural disasters with rebuild costs estimated at NZ$30 billion (approximately £16 billion).

Following the February 22nd Christchurch earthquake, cordons and checkpoints were established within the Four Avenues and central city south (Figure 1.14). Basic safety assessments were carried out on Central Business District properties and many buildings received a red, green or yellow Civil Defense placard. In the weeks that followed, the cordon underwent a number of changes and by mid-July 2011 the CBD red zone (inaccessible to the general public) was one-half of its original size (CERA 2013b). Currently in Christchurch, the majority of buildings in the CBD have been condemned due to structural damage. These building are now being demolished (Figure 1.15). This process is ongoing, with the CBD continuing to resemble an extensive demolition site. In suburban areas, the government has condemned large areas of residential land affected by liquefaction and/or as a result of extensive rock fall.

Figure 1.14 CBD cordon's outer perimeter (February 22nd-9th March 2011. Areas shown in RED are inaccessible to the general public (CERA 2013b)

Figure 1.15 Current (as of 9am 20th April 2013) status of CBD cordon's outer perimeter. Areas shown in RED are inaccessible to the general public (CERA 2013b)



The two case studies presented in this introduction differ substantially from each other. To an extent, the catastrophic floods that inundated Queensland's capital city were predicted. Residents were aware of the intense rainfall levels between December 2010 and January 2011. While there was some discrepancy as to the clarity of information residents in Brisbane received, water releases from the Wivenhoe Dam commenced on January 7th (6 days before the river peaked). In this sense, residents in the Brisbane River catchment had the opportunity to evacuate. When the earthquake struck Christchurch, it was not anticipated. In one earth-shattering moment, the lives of those affected changed forever. Unlike in Brisbane, residents were not given the opportunity to pack away their belongings. Instead, they were suddenly thrust into an unstable post-disaster environment. Furthermore, post-earthquake zoning of affected residential properties left some residents unable to even salvage possessions in the aftermath of the event.

The materiality of damage also differs between my case studies. While Brisbane residents dealt with damage from floodwater, residents in Christchurch were left with structural damage, dust and the effects of liquefaction. The empirical chapters of this thesis therefore deconstruct the different emotions associated with floodwater and earthquake damage. Finally, while both Brisbane and Christchurch have made significant recovery progress, Christchurch continues to face earthquake events. The ongoingness of these seismic events differs from the 2011 flooding event in Brisbane, as the floodwaters receded a few days after the Brisbane River peaked. In contrast, Christchurch residents are subjected to consistent reminders and an ongoing experience with disaster. The differences briefly outlined here (and expanded on in chapter 7) highlight the usefulness of including Christchurch as a case study in my project. As I will demonstrate, these two settings highlight not only the complexity of a post-disaster return decision, but also different emotions present in different disaster contexts.

1.3 Thesis structure

In order to address my research agenda, this thesis is broken into a number of theoretical, methodological and empirical chapters. Chapter two is the theoretical context, which expands in more detail on the two geographical themes of emotion and 'home' that are central to this thesis. Exploring literature from within emotional geography, this chapter provides a theoretical base for investigation into the relationship between emotion, nature and society. In particular, I will draw attention to work that has explored loss and nostalgia, fear and love in more depth, acknowledging the importance of these emotions in the post-disaster context. Following this section on emotion, chapter 2 will then move on to consider literature on the critical geographies of 'home', engaging with recent debates that present home as a space of both comfort and anxiety. The final section of this chapter will consider work on material culture, exploring how objects contribute to homemaking practices.

Chapter three is the methodology. Here, I describe my approach to this study and highlight the challenges associated with researching emotion in geography. In this chapter, I also present a detailed reflection on my own emotions and experiences as a researcher. I include this section to acknowledge the key importance of these emotions, which undoubtedly impacted the course of my research in the field and during my writing up.

Three empirical chapters follow from here (chapters four, five and six). This thesis is grounded in empirical material, which is indeed context specific. In this sense, I do not offer a conceptualisation of the emotions of the disaster displaced that is rigid, but instead I offer a understanding of these emotions that has the potential for wider application well beyond my own case studies.

My empirical chapters are broken into themes concerning 'home' in particular, exploring connection to 'home', loss of 'home' and materiality of 'home'. These chapters offer detailed analysis of the rich and extensive empirical material produced by this research, presenting participants' in-depth narratives. As with the

opening of this thesis, I open each of these chapters with a detailed in-depth narrative taken from a research interview. My intention here is to foreground the themes of the chapter, but also provide a sense of what it is like to *experience* disaster. By documenting their story in full, it is my intention that readers will be able to get a sense of who these participants are and the struggles they have endured. While I refer to each interviewee by a particular name, these are all pseudonyms used entirely to protect the anonymity of my participants. I made the choice to name each interviewee in order to give each story the personality it deserves and to recognise that the voices of the disaster displaced are the best example of the emotions present in the post-disaster environment.

My empirical chapters are by no means exhaustive. Throughout this thesis I acknowledge that every experience with disaster is unique and each participant shares a unique set of emotions. The three chapters should complement each other, offering a deep understanding of the impact of emotions for the disaster-displaced, and a contribution to critical understandings of the geographies of the post-disaster 'home'.

In chapter seven, I focus specifically on my second case study of Christchurch, New Zealand. This chapter usefully begins to demonstrate the emotional dynamics of different natural disasters, exploring, in particular, the impact of fear. This chapter also considers the consequences of post-quake zoning, which can restrict access to residential homes.

Chapter eight offers conclusions to this thesis and summarises the key arguments that it makes. Bringing together the three empirical Brisbane-based chapters, with my Christchurch-based chapter, it emphasizes the value of each chapter individually, but also draws parallels between them. Chapter eight also highlights the academic contributions of this thesis and the practical implications of this project for disaster planners and policy makers. In closing, I recommend the need for continued research into the emotions of those affected by disasters and suggest potential routes for further enquiry.

Chapter 2

Theoretical context:
Disasters, emotion and 'home'

2.1 Introduction

Emotions are, as Smith et al. (2009, 3), suggest, “intimately and inescapably caught up in the current re-writing of the earth, the production of new, transformed geographies and New World Orders, that affect us all, albeit in very different ways.” While historically often purposefully excluded from geographic enquiries, emotions have now gained critical importance in our understanding of people, places and the interconnections between them. Growing research in this field attempts to understand the ways emotions are embodied and serve to influence the experiential world. In contrast, the concept of ‘home’ has long been at the forefront of our geographical enquires. This focus has seen a shift from ‘house as haven’ understandings of home as a safe and familiar space to more critical accounts that explore home as a space of anxiety and alienation.

This chapter reflects on geographic discussions of emotion and home respectively. This is to recognise the centrality of these themes in this thesis, and to foreground the empirical chapters that follow. The second section of this chapter draws on discussions from within emotional geography to explore the understudied emotional motivations that impact those who are forcibly displaced by disaster. In particular, this section focuses and engages with literature on loss, nostalgia, fear, and love, which all influence how people relate to the spaces and places that constitute the post-disaster landscape. Contributing to geographic literature on trauma, disasters and the concept of ‘home’, as well emotional geography literature, this project specifies the emotional intensity of the post-disaster situation.

The third section of this chapter will lead into a discussion of the ‘critical geographies of home’. It has been widely acknowledged that ‘home’ is notoriously difficult to define. The multi-scalar notions of home are particularly important to understand within the post-disaster context, as those affected are often forced into a temporary situation where they are forced to move again and again. This chapter reflects on understandings of ‘home’ as both a physical structure and an emotive space. Drawing on literature from within emotional geography, this discussion also

considers the emotive capacity of 'home', exploring how 'home' has the potential to be rendered 'uncanny' through the impact of disaster.

As this thesis places heavy focus on the loss of home as a result of a natural disaster, the fourth section of this chapter moves on to consider debates from within geographic literature on material culture. Here, I explore the importance of objects in home-making practices, demonstrating how homes can be made and re-made, and, in turn, the way in which identity and place making are negotiated through objects. Understanding the value of 'taken-for-granted' elements of 'home' allows for a deeper understanding of the complexities of post-disaster homemaking.

I preface the following section by acknowledging that this thesis deals specifically with forced displacement and the emotions attached to an involuntary loss of home. I mean forced in the sense that my participants all left 'home' as a result of a catastrophic event (either the floods or earthquake). A range of literature in geography and related disciplines explores the emotions associated with leaving home in a voluntary sense, for example to travel, go to university, relocate for work and so on. These studies recognise the sadness experienced when people leave 'home' in this circumstance and the positive way 'home' is seen as an idealised, nurturing environment by those who are distant from it (see for example, Jones 1995). Still, literature that explores the emotions of sudden and forced displacement, as in the context of this thesis, highlights the greater degree to which peoples lives are disrupted when they are forced to leave 'home' in this way (Porter and Haslam 2001). In this thesis, I therefore argue that the journeys beyond and away from 'home' all inevitably impact on how those forcibly displaced understand 'home' in the aftermath of disaster.

2.2 Emotional geographies and disaster displacement

Research in understanding human emotions has long been carried out in psychology and linguistics. In the 1970s, some humanistic geographers also began to explore people's rich experiences with place and emotion. Despite this work,

however, geographers remained tentative in their engagement with the subject until the early part of the 21st century. This is unfortunate, however, as we have much to add to the study of human emotion. Geography, for example, focuses on the spatiality and temporality of emotions, in a way that other disciplines do not. By acknowledging the spatial relationships and place-based processes that underpin emotions in everyday life, the discipline enables a deeper understanding of the way that emotions unite in and around certain places. Emotions, therefore, have the ability to inform our geographic understanding of places.

In geography, our attempts to understand emotion or make sense of spaces are somewhat circular in nature. Davidson and Milligan (2004, 524) consider an emotio-spatial hermeneutic: "emotions are understandable – 'sensible' – only in the context of particular spaces. Likewise, place must be *felt* to make sense". In other words, meaningful senses of space emerge only via movements between people and places.

Recent geographical work has recognised the significance of emotion at a range of spatial scales, including home (see Monash and Seagar 2001; Milligan 2000), community (Valentine and Skelton 2003), schools (Fielding 2000) and places of work (Bondi 2004). This work understands emotion as a connective tissue that links experiential geographies of the human psyche and physique within broader social geographies of place (Davidson and Milligan 2004). John Urry (2007) brings this acknowledgement further into focus, highlighting how emotions are located in the constitution of places. He argues that specific sites are constructed in ways saturated with emotion, including those that are frightening, pleasing and rooted in ideas about belonging.

Together, the work discussed above focuses on the emotions experienced by embodied individuals and attaching to particular places, pointing to the interconnectedness of people and their environments. Ultimately, this work usefully shows how emotions are integral to how places are imagined and portrayed. This has profound implications for understanding the embodied experiences of the post-

disaster environment. Despite an initial reluctance to engage with emotion, therefore, geographers are well placed to appreciate the emotionally dynamic spatiality of contemporary social life.

Part of the reason why geography has shied away from debates within the subject is because emotions are not always easily identified and understood (Smith et al 2009; Bennett 2004). While emotions inform everyday life, they are difficult to observe and distinguish and are therefore even more challenging to measure. As a result, geographers have long struggled with how to handle, work with and write about emotion in their research (Laurier and Parr 2000). Psychologists argue that emotions should be understood as an extension of the human body; innate feelings (happiness, anger, sadness, joy, fear and so on) that present themselves in response to certain situations (see for example, Scherer 2005; Savage 2004). More recently, however, geographers, anthropologists and sociologists have begun to explore emotions in human experiences (Pile 2011; 2010a; Smith et al. 2009; Davidson et al. 2007). These social scientists tend to view emotions as socially constructed: "always experienced, understood and named via social and cultural processes" (Lupton 1998, 15 in Bennett 2004). I see value in both definitions, although would suggest that neither is solely plausible. In other words, while I privilege a social constructivist approach that views emotions as socially constructed and understood in their relationships with others, I recognise that we cannot (and should not) ignore how bodies mediate emotion. As Pile (2010a, 11) recognises, "in all this, the body becomes key". In short, I see emotions as prominent and influential in everyday life, grounding the things we do and the choices we make.

Driven by the humanistic geographies of the 1970s and 1980s, and the psychoanalytical geographies of the 1990s, as well as other theoretical sources (including feminism, phenomenology and non-representational theories) there is now a broad spectrum of geographic work that emphasizes the emotional (and, simultaneously, affective) elements of both personal and social life (Pile 2010). Humanistic geographers, for example, researched the presence of human feelings

within scholarly research in geography (Ley and Samuels 1978; Buttimer 1974). Geographers have also started to develop innovative methodological perspectives on doing geographical research on emotions. For example, geographic writing on methodology and positionality (Cook and Crang 1995) and writing that applies psychoanalytical principles to interview techniques (Pile 1991). This work emphasizes that emotion is a fundamental component in "our orientation with the subjects of our research" (Laurier and Parr 2000, 99). The upsurge of publications dedicated to the subject, increase in journals and plethora of conferences (and indeed conference sessions) that focus on the geographies of emotion, all critique work that downplays emotions as not materially important, and demonstrates how geographers have begun to use emotion as an analytical frame in their research (Smith et al. 2009; Bondi et al. 2007; Laurier and Parr 2000). This points to the relevance and timeliness of this thesis topic, during a time of lively debate in the field.

Geography's 'emotional turn' can be marked with Anderson and Smith's 2001 editorial paper in *Transactions*. In this powerful and influential piece, the authors made a universal plea for thinking critically about how the human world is "constructed and lived through emotions" (Anderson and Smith 2001, 7). As these authors quite correctly understand, emotions are ways of knowing, being and doing (Anderson and Smith 2001). Recognizing that emotional relations shape society and space, Anderson and Smith (2001) value research that involves direct experience; research that deals not just in feelings but also privileges an emotional involvement with people and places. As a result, the authors direct geographic research at the turn of the century, suggesting that, "judgments about the nature of proper research and the scope of 'real' geography be made *with* feelings (rather than *without* them)" (Anderson and Smith 2001, 8, my emphasis).

Emotional geography, therefore, commonly concerns itself with the emotions that people feel for one another and, more comprehensively, for places, landscapes (and the objects within them) and specific situations (Pile 2010a; Thien

2005). Perhaps more importantly though, there is a common concern with the spatiality and temporality of emotions, “with the way they coalesce in and around certain places” (Bondi et al. 2007, 3). Emotional geography attempts to understand emotion both experientially and conceptually, in terms of the way it articulates itself in different contexts.

Recent debates in emotional geographies (Bondi and Davidson 2011; Curti et al. 2011; Pile 2011; 2010a; Smith et al. 2009) highlight ongoing discussions of the relevance of emotion for geographical concerns. Reflecting an ‘emotionalization of culture’ (Berlant 2004), recent published work increasingly critically investigates emotions in various spatial and social contexts, environments and landscapes. This includes (but is of course not limited to) work that focuses on the emotional aspects of ecology (Brugger et al. 2013; Drew 2013; Dallman et al. 2013), spaces of consumption (Healey 2014; Stepney 2014) and place promotion (Bennett 2013). The field of emotional geographies also continues to raise challenging methodological questions about how researchers produce knowledge about the feelings of others (Bondi 2014) as scholars continue to debate the most effective way to research emotion in geography. This growing research in emotional geography reflects academia’s current opportunity to explore exciting new ways to think about natures, cultures and histories of emotional life.

It has long been acknowledged that natural disasters have the ability to cause widespread disruption to both people and places. As Hannam et al. (2006: 7) suggest, they “bring to the fore the outstanding fragility of complex mobility systems”. They disturb not only the physical structures of a locality, but also the emotional attachments people feel to places. Those who are displaced by catastrophic events are forced to leave behind the familiar, and head towards the unknown in a journey that is consumed with varying types and levels of emotion.

Within the growing body of emotional geography literature, there remains little work that explores the connection between disasters, emotion and forced displacement. Emotions are a fundamental part of the post-disaster migration

experience (Skrabis 2008). Migrant stories are characterized and coupled with the experiences of adjustment, settlement, nostalgia, renewal, loss, abrupt endings and new beginnings – all which are influential sources of emotions. Of course the severity of these emotions differs individually, and depends on the migration context. Displacement is invariably a process that dissociates individuals from their family and friendship networks, as well as from other socially significant referents that have strong emotional connotations. These may include familiar surroundings, such as landscapes, buildings, objects or sacred spaces, everyday routines and practices, and language. In terms of return, a migrant's drama and/or joy of homecoming becomes a deeply emotional event (Skrabis 2008). As part of the migration experience, a return journey also allows us to keep track of the accompanying emotional dynamic through the privilege of longitudinal lenses, giving us the opportunity to take notice of the emotional capital generated in such significant points of the migration journey as settlement, first return visit and a plethora of other life-course events.

There is, as well, a growing body of work committed to bridging the gap between emotional geography and nature-society studies (Brugger et al. 2013; Greybill 2013; Smith 2013; Gibson et al. 2011; Kaika 2004). This work aims to understand critically how emotions inform human (re)actions in actual ecological places. By demonstrating how actual or perceived changes to ecology and environmental resources inform participants' individual perceptions of a specific place, this work is of vital importance in our current era of climate change. As Greybill (2013, 40) suggests:

> "Becoming sensitive to the multiple emotions expressed in and about ecological settings, particularly regarding critical resources, places emotions at the center of understanding people's motivations to think about and use nature and resources in particular ways…As ecological places themselves change…and as people move between old and new landscape, perceptions of place transform, potentially creating new perceptions and emotions attached to places, ecological systems and natural resources".

As emotions motivate the actions of individuals, they simultaneously shape ecological topographies comprised of places and people (Greybill 2013). Understanding these emotional geographies is useful for my research, which aims to explore the affective aspects of two socially transformative disasters. Through emotions, place becomes a practical and useful means of connecting social and natural realms (Cresswell 2004). My research, therefore, continues to illuminate the importance of emotional geography for scholarship on nature-society interactions.

Despite limited literature in geographic studies, psychologists have long discussed the mental health effects of natural disasters (Davidson and MacFarlane 2006; Foa et al. 2006; Norris et al. 2001). In truth, they argue, that surviving a disaster is the third most common type of traumatic experience (Creamer et al. 2001). Catastrophic events affect millions of people worldwide and often lead to psychological disorders associated with mass trauma. Disaster-related deaths, which are often sudden and violent, are a common source of this trauma (Creamer et al. 2001). While post-traumatic stress disorder is the most commonly discussed psychological outcome, depression, anxiety and grief also arise in the aftermath of a sudden-onset disaster (Davidson and MacFarlane 2006; Foa et al. 2006; Norris et al. 2002). There are, as well, numerous different understandings of the word, 'trauma'. Historically, the term trauma comes from the Latin word for 'wound' (Walsh, 2007). This thesis dwells specifically on the emotional experience of catastrophic events. I therefore use trauma in a broad sense, to refer to the painful and intensely emotional experience of a disaster.

Mental health studies are helpful in highlighting the very real emotional consequence of disasters, which might otherwise be hidden from researchers. Still, as Whittle et al. (2011) suggest, the danger with these analyses is that they focus solely on the mental health issues and may therefore miss the complexities of people's emotional response to disaster and the way in which these responses are interwoven with the environmental, social and economic changes that take place during disaster recovery. Norris et al. (2001) suggest that victims of disaster may

experience a number of devastating problems, including financial stress, obligations to help others and strained family and community relationships. While these issues undoubtedly hold a strong emotional component to them, and likewise play a significant role within disaster recovery (Whittle at al. 2011), they tend to be neglected by mental health literature, which favours discussions of post-traumatic stress, depression and anxiety levels following disaster.

In the disaster context, the pile-up effect of multiple losses, dislocations, adaptational challenges is overwhelming to those who suffer catastrophic events (Walsh 2007). Mental health literature has acknowledged that every survivor story is unique in suffering and resilience. These studies discuss pathways in recovery and resilience for disaster victims, dwelling, in particular, on the need for psychological, family and community support (Walsh 2007). Still, there remains room to build on the limited geographic knowledge that explores the spatiality of this trauma in the post-disaster context.

Literature from within disaster studies suggests that in this context, trauma is not necessarily contained in an event but also in the way this event and its aftermath is experienced. Tumarkin (2005, 12) usefully argues that trauma can effect changes in perception of time:

> "Because trauma is not contained in an event as such but in the way this event is experienced, traumascapes become much more than physical settings of tragedies: they emerge as spaces, where events are experienced and re-experienced across time. Full of visual and sensory triggers, capable of eliciting a whole palette of emotions, traumascapes catalyze and shape remembering and reliving of traumatic events. It is through these places that the past, whether buried or laid bare for all to see, continues to inhabit and refashion the present".

As a result, victims of disasters are commonly left living in the shadow of the past. This discussion is useful when considering the emotional bond that exists between the displaced and the site where disaster occurred and how this emotional bond might influence post-disaster return decisions.

2.2.1 Loss and nostalgia

Literature that has emerged over the past fifty years documents the human suffering engendered by catastrophic events and has much to contribute to the way in which individuals respond to natural disasters. Loss is central to this experience of disaster - loss of home, identity, independence and identity, as well as a loss of a sense of the world as a safe place. Drawing from Hobfoll's (1988) conservation of resources theory, many academics (see for example, Caruana 2010; Zemani et al. 2006) have suggested the connection between post-disaster stress and loss. Hobfoll (1988) theorized that an individual's resources and personal possessions are important in defining one's 'self'. As a result of losing one's possessions, a stress response occurs (Hobfoll 1988). As is evident from the literature, when this loss is acute, and the stress response continues, there can be serious implications for both mental and physical health (Caruana 2010).

In response to loss through displacement, nostalgia often emerges "as individuals attempt to regain a sense of identity continuity through recognizing and redefining a shared past" (Milligan 2003, 381). In the late 1970s, Davis (1979, 18) defined nostalgia as a "positively toned evocation of a lived past in the context of some negative feeling towards present of impending circumstance". In displacement literature, this emotion is also acknowledged to incorporate a preference for an imagined past, as well as a lived past (Stranglemann 1999). As Davis (1979) contends, in the displacement context, nostalgia occurs in the context of current fears, disconnections, anxieties and uncertainties. These emotions contribute to and shape personal identities.

Identity continuity comes from the locations where identities are commonly enacted (Milligan 2003). When these locations are disrupted, so too are the identities from within them. In the post-disaster context, there is a corresponding nostalgia associated with the stability of past time and places; a sadness experienced by those who are distant from their home and want to return, and a desire that evacuees feel to return to a more stable lifestyle (essentially, a pre-disaster lifestyle).

In this sense, migrants are often left searching “for some cohesive sense of self in a life world which is increasingly fragmented, plural and shifting” (Basu 2007, 8).

The emotionalisation of absence tends to be discussed in geographic literature in two contexts: absence from a distance, and absence in-situ. Nostalgia from a distance is clearly exemplified in Skrabis’ research on migrant pilgrimages of Croatian-Australians (Skrabis 2008). Narratives reflected on absent places of significance and were clearly punctuated with an emotional longing for an imaginatively constructed ‘home’. This experience of absence can also, however, be found in the context of home – a place that migrants perceive, will ‘cure’ the pain of longing and nostalgia. Read’s (1996) work on lost Australian towns and suburbs (including those affected by natural disasters) is an excellent example of this. In this piece of work, Read considers the experiences of migrants who have nowhere to return to. Most notably, he dwells on a staircase that leads to nothing, which was left in a house destroyed by Australian bushfires (Read 1996). Read (1996) demonstrates how feelings about lost places stir our deepest and most intense emotions. Memory here is clearly bound up with the processes of place and emotional attachment (Jones 2007). It is, in other words, inherently spatial. Casey (2009, 183) explains:

> “Consider how often a memory is either of a place itself (e.g. one’s childhood home) or of an event or person in a place: and conversely, how unusual it is to remember a placeless person or an event not stationed in some specific locale”.

Remembering being in place, and perhaps remembering through emotions of remembered place, are, therefore, powerful elements in the emotional geographies of the self.

DeLyser (2001) also explores the emotions associated with absence from lost landscapes. Her is focus is on Bodie State historic park in North America. While once a booming gold mining town, the area is now preserved as a ghost town by the state of California. DeLyser’s work investigates the particular role of absence in Bodie’s landscape and in the construction of the past in this Californian ghost town (2001).

She acknowledges the way in which landscapes can be reinterpreted by different generations, giving them new meanings and associations (DeLyser 2001). Building on the work of Read and DeLyser, this thesis aims to explore how places lost to disaster are embedded in powerful emotions.

2.2.2 Fear

Along with the emotions of loss and nostalgia that have been discussed above, this thesis also requires an acknowledgment of the geographies of fear, which are particularly relevant in the disaster context. As Lawson (2007, 335) acknowledges, “we live in a world of growing fearfulness, one in which interrogating employments of both fear and hope become ever more necessary”. Fear is a powerful emotion that shapes human actions in political, social, economic and environmental realms (Lawson 2007). Our world is one of heightened concern of risk and safety, with an expansion of fear rising from many sources. These include threats of natural disasters, terrorism, global climate change, religious persecution, exile and so on. At the same time, hope appears across political spectrums as an anecdote to this fear. Mirroring this, geographers have, over recent years, showed a growing interest in the geographies of fear and hope, offering a critical and grounded geographic perspective on these emotions. Ongoing geographic research investigates the threats we face in the realm of environmental disasters, including fear associated with both physical and technological hazards (Cutter 1993; Kasperson et al. 1990) and the impacts of hurricanes, earthquakes and tornadoes (Palm 1990).

These discussions are of particular relevance within the post-disaster context, in an environment where fear is extremely prevalent; fear of further disasters, fear of the unknown and fear for one’s personal safety. This context is unique in that hostile forces such as natural disasters take a clearly visible and tangible form. Floods and earthquakes, for example, are active and commanding powers. Growing literature on the landscapes of fear, however, recognises that the

sensation of fear associated with a catastrophic event differs to that of the past because natural forces tend no longer to be viewed as malicious (Tuan 2013).

As England and Simon (2010) suggest, the geographies of fear are bound to differential notions of safety. Indeed, “generally speaking, every human made boundary on the earth’s surface – garden hedge, city wall, or radar ‘fence’ – is an attempt to keep inimical forces at bay” (Tuan 2013, 5). Boundaries acknowledge that threats are ubiquitous. Exploring what happens when disasters disrupt and alter the spaces that once provided protection and safety, this thesis investigates the feelings of fear that impact return decisions among the disaster-displaced.

2.2.3 Love

In the 1970s, Tuan argued that topophilia, or ‘love of place’, is a useful concept that allows for an understanding of the connection between humans and the natural world (Tuan 1974). This connection is a central issue for geography, and indeed the post-disaster environment. More generally, in geography there remains a strong resistance of engagement with the concept of love, spaces of love and bodies that love. Morrison et al. (2013) attempt to fill this void, offering a conceptualisation of love as something that is spatial, relational and political. These authors usefully present an understanding of the way in which love’s power is constructed through discourse, language and representation. Moving beyond a simple deconstruction of what love might be, they recognise how love works to shape people and places (Morrison et al. 2013).

These theories of love help to inform my understanding of multiple ways in which love presents itself in the post-disaster environment: love between family and friends, love between strangers, love of a particular object or activity and love of one’s ‘home’. Many have documented the levels of solidarity, fellowship and altruism that commonly emerge immediately after a disaster event, noting in particular, the outpourings of mutual helping at a time of crisis (see Kanaisty and Norris 1995). Work in psychology has explored how emotional support from fellow

victims can, in fact, mitigate adverse psychological consequences of disasters. This support is commonly understood to refer to the social interactions that provide individuals with assistance and embed them into a web of loving and caring social relationships (Sarason et al. 1992). As well as loss and anxiety, then, love is commonly experienced, performed, felt and shared by people during times of crisis.

While rooted in ideas about love, there remains little geographic work about love in home scholarship. Studies fail to fully appreciate that bodies that love do so in particular places (Johnston and Longhurst 2010). Love must be recognised as a spatial process because the body cannot be divorced from the place in which it is constituted (Nast and Pile 1998). It is through the body that we connect with and experience place. As previously mentioned, this thesis deals primarily with those who have lost their home through disaster. For those affected, this process is deeply traumatic, given the emotive capacity of home. As Valentine (2001, 71) suggests, "homes – perhaps more than any other geographic location, have strong claims on our time, resources and emotions". Home, in other words, is a spatially located emotional experience. Home is also, commonly understood to be one of the most intimate spaces of daily human inhabitance (Rubenstein 2001). Contributing to these debates in more detail, this thesis explores the way in which different relationships and places within the post-disaster landscape affect how, when and why people love.

2.3 Returning 'Home'

Home is both material and affective. Not merely a physical locality, home is a milieu of shifting cultural associations and 'ideal' meanings (Gorman-Murray 2007, Blunt and Dowling 2006; Easthope 2004; Young 1997). While the meaning of home is commonly associated with, and reflected in, the site of the house in contemporary western society, the affective capacity of home cannot be reduced to the physical space of a house. Indeed, as Gorman-Murray (2007, 229) suggests, "For a house to

become a home, it must be imbued with a range of meanings, feelings and emotions".

2.3.1 Critical geographies of 'home'

The domestic sphere has long been recognised as an important place in geographic and indeed interdisciplinary analysis. As Cieraad (1999, 11) suggests, 'home' tends to be considered as "the focal point of most people's lives". As a concept, 'home' has been connected with a number of universal or normative meanings in contemporary western society. Somerville (1992) provided a useful early conceptualisation of home that understands its physical characteristics (a location and material protection) as well as the social, emotional and ontological values of home. 'Hearth', he argues, refers to the creation of a comforting and welcoming atmosphere, while 'heart' emphasizes interpersonal relationships of mutual support and affection. He understands 'privacy' as the ability to control access to and surveillance of personal space, thus creating a safe and secure place, and uses 'roots' to define home as both a symbol and source of 'self', and key site of identity formation.

Other literature on the normative values of home has not deviated considerably from Somerville's definitions, offering a largely congruent meaning of home (see, for example, Dupuis and Thorns 1998). Young (1997), however, sought to build on the above conceptualisation, by uncovering universal normative meanings of home. In her essay, "House and home': Feminist variations on a theme" (1997), she argues that while the 'ideal of home' and women's association of home is, in numerous ways, oppressive to women, there are aspects of the ideal home that we ought to reclaim. In other words, the ideal of home should be understood as a locus of goods, which support personal and collective identity and should be accessible to everyone. In her work, Young addresses feminist theorists including Martin and Mohanty (1986) and Honig (1994) stressing the "regulative ideals by which society should be criticized" (1997, 161). Indeed, her essay helpfully highlights the values of

safety, individualisation, privacy and preservation, reminding us that home and identity are critical values that should indeed be accessible to all (Weir 2008; Young 1997).

In their seminal book, *'Home',* Blunt and Dowling (2006) proposed a critical geography of home that moves beyond a binary of exclusionary or idealised space to show the ambiguity of this politicized space. The three cross-cutting components of this critical geography of home inform the theoretical context in which my empirical analysis is based. Firstly, "home as simultaneously material and imaginative" (2006, 22). Home, in other words, should be understood not only as a physical location in which people reside, but also as an imaginative and metaphorical space of emotion and belonging (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Al-Ali and Koser 2002). Secondly, "the nexus between home, power and identity" (2006, 22). This coincides with debates concerning the home as a centre of personality, belonging and meaning, in relation to which people are differently positioned, and which they also experience differently according to age, gender, ethnicity and so on. Finally, "home as multi scalar" (2006, 22). This emphasizes the porosity of home and the way in which home plays host to personal relations that trace both public and political worlds. Indeed, as Massey suggested earlier, home "had always in one way or another, been open; constructed out of movement, communication, social relations which always stretched beyond it" (Massey 1992, 14).

In the late 20th century, a number of feminist theorists began to identify the problematic and misleading nature of an ideal and individual identity as bounded, unified and safe, as well as an ideal of a feminist politics emerging out of women-identified women (De Lauretis 1990; Pratt 1988). These studies recognised that secure homes were, in actuality, founded on repressions and exclusions, encouraging a theoretical shift in the way home was understood and conceptualised. In the last 15 years, these arguments have developed further, leading to an understanding of the contrasting connotations of 'home'. As Schroder (2006: 33) suggests:

> "It makes much more sense to view home as a site of and for ambiguity since its protective functions are interconnected with its limiting characteristics. Feelings of solidarity, safety, and protection are often achieved by severe acts of exclusion and regulation, which are in turn oppressive".

Early theorists also expressed concern for the ideal of home as a place of safety, comfort and protection (Pratt 1988). Pratt's (1988) description of her own identities in the places she has lived is constructed on a tension between two modalities: home and not home. In response, Martin and Mohanty (1986) suggest that we need to move on from the tension between home and not home, identity and nonidentity, safety and risk, oscillating between the two. These authors do, however, argue that the safety of home can only be brought about by the price of exclusion and oppression of others. While they acknowledge the desire for home, they argue that this desire must be repeatedly undercut by the recognition that yearned for safety is illusionary, a protection brought at the exclusion of others (Martin and Mohanty 1986). Still, Young (1997) argues that safety is a normative value: "Everyone needs a place where they can go to be safe. Ideally, home means a safe place, where one can retreat from the dangers and hassles of collective life".

2.3.2 Disruption to home

As suggested above, understanding home as a symbolic site of rootedness, belonging, memory and safety has been increasingly complicated by the role of negative and ambivalent feelings towards 'home'. As such, geographers have suggested a need to understand more critically how homes can disappoint us, as well as provide us with support and comfort (Brickell 2012; Moore 2000). Perhaps, as Weir (2008, 8) interestingly suggests, "we need also to move beyond the dichotomy of home/not home, of safety and risk, to imagine an alternative…an ideal of home as a space of mutuality and conflict, of love and its risks and struggles, of caring and conflictual connections to others".

Excluding social and natural processes has long been a prerequisite for the construction of the familiar space of home. As Kaika (2004, 272) reminds us, excluding natural elements outside the home relates largely to the underlying purpose of architecture:

> "The purpose of building a home through human history has been precisely that: to create a familiar environment by establishing a high level of control over the interaction between the edifice and its environment; to construct an inside in opposition to an existing outside. However, what distinguishes the modern home from earlier forms of `dwellings' is that never before has the level of control over the outside been so high or achieved so fully as in modern buildings". (Kaika 2004, 272).

Kaika reminds us, however, that the construction of the "familiar, safe, home" is predicated upon keeping the social and material threatening elements (the 'other'), invisible and outside. Nevertheless, this invisible 'other' is simultaneously required as an essential part of the familiarity of inside (Kaika 2004). In other words, although the modern home is ideologically constructed as independent and disconnected from natural processes, these processes also lie at the core of the production of the safety and familiarity of the home.

Historically, geographic literature fails to fully explore the undeniable connection between 'home' and disasters. This, to me, seems overtly problematic. Disasters have the ability to disrupt the complex infrastructure networks and systems that support our rapidly urbanizing planet (Graham 2010). They are also commonly grounded in ideas about home: loss of home, the challenge associated with the (re)making of home, yearning for home and so on. They are characterized by a loss of belonging, attachment, and physical structures, highlighting both the porosity of home and the formal and cultural politics of home. A notable exception to this absence appears in Bunt and Dowling's work (2006), which employs a critical geography of home to both the Indian-Ocean Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, as way to demonstrate how natural disasters have the ability to disrupt and alter one's conception of 'home'.

Kaika's work explores the impact of crisis on domestic geographies of the familiar. In this context, hidden elements can surface unexpectedly and familiar objects can behave in unusual ways:

> "For example, at times of water shortage, taps fail to provide water, and during black outs the flick of a switch no longer results in the instant provision of light. Such moments reveal the presence of the excluded `outside' as a constitutive part of the `inside'." (Kaika 2004, 276)

Such incidents produce a feeling of uneasiness, discomfort and anxiety, which threatens to tear down the security and familiarity of domestic spaces (Vidler 2001). This exposure to the limits of domestic bliss ultimately can lead to a feeling of, "not being at home in one's home" (Vidler 1992, 4).

In the early 20th century, Freud (1919) termed this unhomely feeling 'The Uncanny' or 'unheimlich'. Investigating situations where the familiar ('the heimlich') becomes something unfamiliar ('the unheimlich') he explored how it is precisely the familiar character of the heimlich which produces the unhelimlich effect when the former behaves in ways outside the ordinary (Freud 1919). In other words, when the predictable nature of the familiar acts in unpredictable ways, the uncanny effect is produced. The haunted house is perhaps the most cited spatial expression of the uncanny, characterized by manifestations of the unfamiliar in what is assumed to be a familiar, safe environment (see for example Bear 2008). These understandings are helpful in informing my later analysis on how disasters can render homes 'uncanny'.

One of the reasons why anxiety and discomfort is produced by a `domestic network' crisis is precisely because it forces the dweller to reflect on the existence of social and economic relations to which the home is connected and which, when disrupted, render the `normal' function of our lives anomalous (Kaika 2004). As Sibley reminds us, anxiety can be deepened by the creation of a false sense of security (1992). For example, anxiety can manifest itself when familiar environments act in unfamiliar ways.

In recent years, geographers have begun to make a significant commitment to exposing large-scale disruptions to home via the wrath of natural disasters (see

Brun and Lund 2008). As Brickell (2012) notes, these studies of 'extreme geography', focus on a concern to show how the intimate and personal spaces of home, and their loss, are closely bound up with, rather than separate from, wider power relations. Furthermore, they explore the disruption of domestic spaces, which are particularly important spaces in everyday life and have been imbued with personal, and indeed intimate, meanings and emotions (Tuan 1977). Growing research within disaster studies (Morrice 2013; Whittle et al. 2011) highlights, for example, the emotional anxiety and uncanny feelings experienced by disaster victims who experience an altered home following disaster. My previous work on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina explores how the place that once held emotional attachments and feelings of belonging and safety, has become unfamiliar through the impact of disaster. While displaced evacuees all expressed the extent to which they longed for and felt an emotional connection to 'home', many, upon returning, simply could not bear the reality of remaining in the places so altered by disaster. For these people, their expectation of 'home' did not match the uncanny feeling they experienced returning to a place they no longer recognised (Morrice 2013). Although this research offered a small insight into the complexities of the post-disaster home, this thesis aims to build on this limited knowledge by critically exploring how nature can disrupt and alter the emotive space of home.

Disappointment is also particularly addressed in diasporic studies of return migration (see, for example, Christou 2002). In this context, the time between migration and return can be quite lengthy. This means that memories of home are transformed by nostalgia, which means the 'home' is idealised and longed for. As Casey (2009) reminds us, memory makes a crucial difference to human experience. In other words, remembering transforms one kind of experience into another: "in being remembered, an experience becomes a different kind of experience" (Casey 2009). If this is true, the way in which the past is relived in memory will have a critical impact on how victims of disaster might deal with their present situation. Distorted memories can occur when people freeze the chosen image of their

homeland, which remains unaltered over time (Harper 2005). Returning can, in fact, be deeply disorientating, when this romanticized image of home is not met (Markowitz 2004; Christou, 2002). While these studies focus largely on transnational and refugee homecomings, the same might be said for disaster victims, who anticipate a home as a place of familiarity – and a place they associate with a period of time before the disaster.

Research on migration and 'home' has also played a significant role in overturning sedentary views of home as a fixed and bounded place (Morley 2000; Rapport and Dawson 1998). These studies are important in recognizing that one can be at home in less tangible ways than being in a specific location. As Morley (2000: 47) rightfully suggests, "At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation". Jansen and Lofving (2009) suggest that for those whose lives are characterized by movement and violence, "the home that has been lost has not simply been left behind in another place. Rather…it has also been left behind, in another time, and is therefore often experienced as a previous home, irrevocably lost both spatially and temporally" (Jansen and Lofving 2009, 15).

Ahmed (1999) explores the above contention further, examining how we define home in the context of migrancy. The work of Chambers (1994) and Brandotti (1994) defines home only through reference to what it is not, in reference to exile, migrancy and homelessness. Here, home and away are divided, "not only as different spaces, but as different modes of being in the world" (Ahmed 1999, 335). For Chambers (1994), 'home' is defined as a familiar space, while away is understood as strange land. Ahmed (1999) however, calls for work that more critically examines this opposition of 'home' and 'away'. My intention in this thesis, therefore, is to deepen our understanding of the post-disaster 'home', considering how 'being-at-home' is a matter of how one feels – or indeed fails to feel .

In disaster studies, both house and home are meaningfully understood as important places and structures of belonging and togetherness, although can also represent distance and tension (Motasim and Heynen 2011). Those forcibly

displaced by disaster can, then, express a sort of 'doubleness', as they build new homes while still longing for the home they had to leave (Motasim and Heynen 2011). Victims of disaster therefore find themselves in a situation synonymous with "homelessness". Left to negotiate a complex post-disaster environment, they develop a changing and malleable definition of 'home' for themselves. It has long been acknowledged that homelessness represents a major landscape of 'exclusion' (Sibley 1995). Robinson (2005) explores Dovey's (1985) suggestion that homelessness is often shaped by the embodied effects of traumatic homes of the past. Furthermore, Rivlin and Moore (2001) critique the assumption that homeless people, once resettled, are assumed to be resettled at home, arguing instead that this journey is characterized by intense emotion. Building on this limited literature, this thesis will explore how those affected by disaster conceptualise their perceptions of home.

Kibreab (1999) argues that in the current era of globalization, there is a generalized state of 'homelessness', where we are all 'refugees'. While his argument is flawed in numerous ways, it does bring attention to the broad, interdisciplinary field of mobilities, which is relevant to this study. This field presents ways of thinking about how and why people move through different social settings in the post-disaster context. Here, it is Important to note the conceptual shift from understanding 'home versus movement' to understanding 'home *as* movement' (Rapport and Dawson 1998, 30). Blunt (2007) usefully suggests that mobility and migration studies hold many productive connections between them. This is not to suggest that these two strands of research can be collapsed on to each other, but instead highlights the connection in terms of both materiality and politics (Blunt 2007).

Domestic spaces then, are extremely important in our daily lives as they reflect and shape our identities (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Miller 2001). This focus on domestic spaces, however, does not detract from the understanding that one can be 'at home' on many scales (Blunt and Varley 2004; Tuan 1977). This focus also plays a

part in the neglected analysis and understanding of the experience of return migration. Homes, then, are embedded in connections extending far beyond the domestic. These relationships of scale and location are particularly important for understanding whether or not human experiences take place directly within the home. As Blunt and Dowling (2006) point out:

> "Home does not simply exist, but is made. Home is a process of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging. This process has both material and imaginative elements. Thus people create home through social and emotional relationships. Home is also materially created – new structures forms, objects used and placed". (2006, 23).

People can build and transform homes in and to different places.

Literature in geography has identified three levels to the materiality of domestic space: the materiality of the home itself, the objects and personal belonging it contains, and the everyday activities and performances that occur within it. Disaster studies focus mainly on the objects contained within the home. In particular, they highlight the very real emotional trauma associated with losing treasured personal possessions due to extreme events. For the purpose of this thesis therefore, the following discussion focuses on the importance of objects and personal belongings within the home, as a way to foreground later discussions in my empirical chapters that explore the materiality of post-disaster homemaking.

2.4 Material culture

Social scientists have long been concerned with the relationship between people and objects. In the 1980s, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton provided an in-depth consideration the complex subject of person-object transactions. They argued that this relationship must be analyzed if we are to fully understand what people are, and what they might become (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981). Since then, geographic research on material culture has explored the importance of objects as both representations of the self, and as companions to our emotional lives (see Turkle 2007).

The importance of material culture within domestic spaces is highlighted by research that demonstrates its centrality in homemaking and creating a sense of home. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) argue that domestic objects comprise the endogenous being of the owner. This is because these objects are chosen by the owner and therefore reflective of his or her own identity. Appadurai (1986) and Marcoux (2001) further this argument, acknowledging that objects are entangled into many aspects of our social and individual lives, and indeed play a considerable role in identity construction. As Pearce states:

> "Objects hang before the eyes of the imagination, continuously representing ourselves to ourselves and telling the stories of our lives in ways which would be impossible otherwise (Pearce 1992: 47).

As suggested in various contemporary studies of both homed and homeless people (see, for example, Miller 2001) objects also play a key role in the creation (and indeed recreation) of home. They represent an appeal to past homes, but also contribute to homemaking and future projections (Walsh 2006).

The term "reminiscintia" was used by Casey (2009) in his enlightening phenomenological study on memory. He uses this term to refer to objects that "act as inducers of reminiscence" (Casey 2009, 110) and that possess the ability to arouse a reminiscent frame of mind. Extant research confirms the importance of cherished possessions (see for example, Ureta 2007; Whitmore 2001), which are more than a mere memento. Instead, these items represent personal identity and evocation of one's life. As Sherman and Dacher (2005, 72) contend, "the significance of objects within the context of home is that is it the objects themselves that lend meaning to the dwelling. Through the objects it contains, the space is imbued with significance. This is a dynamic and non-linear process". Cherished objects are therefore experienced as meaningful, rather than merely *known* to be meaningful. Objects are, as Whitmore (2001, 59) succinctly points out, "embedded with the essence of life's experiences". In this sense, they can be powerful agents in the construction and indeed reconstruction of home.

Kaika (2004) extends these arguments, contending that social and natural processes, "remain connected materially to the inside of the home, constituting an integral part of its material production and its smooth function" (2004, 274). Home-building, she argues, is dependent on consuming natural materials, such as wood, clay and ore. Furthermore, home-*making* entails ongoing consumption of natural elements (water, air etc), which are selectively allowed to enter the building after being materially and socially transformed through purification, production and commodification (Kaika 2004). 'Home' is, therefore, an integral part of the continuous, always changing practices of uprooting and reestablishing that are enacted by forced displacement (Ahmed et al. 2003).

For bodies on the move, material culture is even more significant. Objects are, of course, more easily transported than buildings or neighbourhoods. By transporting selected objects from place to place, migrants are, as Shumaker and Conti suggest, "able to recreate home in each new setting" (1985, 249). Objects not only provide a continuity from a previous, more stable time, they also reflect personal identity. For migrants, then, 'home' becomes an explicitly dynamic process, involving the acts of imagining, creating, unmaking, changing and moving homes.

As Putnam (1993: 150) suggests, the home is "the principal site where material culture is appropriated in mutual relationships". Following such academic acknowledgement of emotional aspects of home-making (Pratt 2004), recent work on the geographies of home has undergone a 'material turn', including theories of translocality that examine both the physical and social conditions of particular constructions of the local as significant sites of negotiation in migrants everyday lives (Liu 2014; Brickell and Datta 2011). Many scholars therefore view material and emotional aspects of home as equally important. Material geographies recognise the importance of objects within the home as critical in the formation of new identities, shaping memories and scales of identification (Datta 2008).

Many academics (such as Toila-Kelly 2004; Petridou 2001) have also explored the way in which everyday practices, such as cooking and cleaning, are evoked by

Heidegger's term 'building as dwelling'. These practices transform private space, making it distinct from any other, giving the house its identity as home. As Walsh (2006) argues, forced displacement results in a reconceptualisation of home, as it is recreated through ordinary things. Photos, for example, can visually represent a domestic memory, and an emotional connection with a place (Walsh 2006).

Disaster displacement separates victims from their material culture, and migrants are often left to negotiate a home for themselves in a situation where they are forced to leave home again and again. Motasim et al. (2011) suggest that displaced persons might withdraw their emotional attachments from the physical structure of 'home', focusing their energies on mobile objects that can be carried along and are related to 'home' in a conventional sense (kitchen utensils, furniture, jewellery etc). These objects can be seen as carriers of the self, and, indeed, of belonging (Motasim et al. 2011). They create a physical and emotional continuity from an earlier time, which in turn enables migrants to form emotional connections to them (Hooper-Greenhill 2000).

Liu (2014) furthers this argument, reflecting on experiences of Chinese migrants in New Zealand. Her research interestingly demonstrates how migrants are constantly re-negotiating their conceptions of home and indeed their own identities. While her work suggests the value of objects in homemaking, her findings imply that both the physical/material and emotional/immaterial aspects of home are equally important, again reflecting the complexities of home. As Blunt and Dowling (2006) suggest, home is neither a dwelling nor a feeling, but the relation between the two.

As Wise (2000, 229) argues, therefore:

> "Home can be a collection of objects, furniture and so on that one carries with one from move to move. Home is the feeling that comes when the final objects are unpacked and arranged and the spaces seem complete (or even when one stares at unpacked boxes imagining)".

For the disaster-displaced, then, objects offer a reminder of who they are, where they have come from and the journey they have endured. These objects can include pieces of personal symbolism to them such as family photographs or artifacts, but

also include objects that might seem mundane and trivial (Walsh 2006). Ahmed (2004) also presents a relational understanding of emotion (including love). Her work considers love between and among individuals, but also between individuals and objects. For example, the relationship a person can come to have with a piece of jewellery such as a ring (Ahmed 2004). Exploring this relationality in more depth, this thesis highlights the bond between certain objects and the disaster-displaced.

Bodies are, as Ahmed (2006) suggests, shaped by contact with objects and with others. To be affected by an object in a good way is to have an orientation towards an object as being good (Ahmed 2008). Being 'orientated' is therefore synonymous with feeling happy or 'at home' and having certain objects within reach (Ahmed 2008; 2006). In this sense, we move towards and away from objects depending on how we are affected by them (Ahmed 2008). Ahmed considers these arguments further, through the experience of alienation. She suggests that when we feel pleasure from objects, we feel aligned. In the same way, we feel alienated when we do not experience pleasure from proximity to objects that are regarded as being good. In this sense, familiar objects can offer a source of comfort to bodies that move. In an unfamiliar environment, these objects affect us in a positive way (Ahmed 2008).

Literature on comforting geographies (see Bissell 2008) explores the way in which material objects can also represent feelings of comfort. Comfort is, as acknowledged by Bissell (2008) a highly complex sensibility, embedded in material experiences. Bissell's (2008) work defines comfort in terms of an objective capacity, an aesthetic sensibility and an affective resonance, presenting a multidimensional understanding of the concept. In this thesis, I explore the way in which comfort can be understood in terms the level of comfort brought by familiar objects (Miller 2001), but also in terms of corporeal comfort. It is my intention to explore whether some material objects become particularly important in an environment of discomfort. For example, does a sofa become more important when it can provide physical comfort (a place to sit) in a flood damaged domestic setting?

I end this section with a reflection as suggested Convery et al (2005), whose work focuses on the effects of the 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in Cumbria. Their work uses the concept of 'lifescapes' to encompass the complexity of the spatial and emotional relations between people animals and place. They suggest, "the events of 2001 transcended the loss of the material (traumatic though this undoubtedly was) and became also the loss of the conceptual (the loss of the meanings associated with this lifescape)" (Convery et al. 2005, 107). I find this contention useful here as I draw the two sections above together. The loss of both the material and imaginative elements of home through disaster, show how emotion can be employed as a useful analytical lens through which to better understand the wider consequences of disasters.

2.5 Connecting emotion, 'home' and disasters.

As Easthope (2004) suggests, homes can be understood as 'places' that hold considerable social, psychological and emotional meaning for individuals and groups. The sections above have highlighted key debates within the fields of emotional geographies and the critical geographies of home, pointing to some of their interconnections. The intention here is to highlight why emotions and home play such a vital role in the lives of those affected by disaster.

The context of this thesis is characterized by an unexpected flip in emotion. Both the floods and the earthquake caused a sudden and unanticipated shift in the landscape, forcing those affected into a state of turmoil. Exploring the emotions of people affected by disasters that were largely not anticipated, this thesis will highlight how disasters can, very suddenly, disrupt the social order of everyday life.

Building on geographic literature on the concept of 'home', this thesis explores the post-disaster 'home' an emotional space. By engaging with debates from within the critical geographies of home, the domestic 'uncanny' and theories that suggest the dynamic nature of the concept, I intend to explore how those affected by disaster perceive and relate to home in the post-disaster environment.

Drawing from literature on material culture, I intend to further deepen our understanding of how homes are in flux, and how they can be made and re-made. Focusing on the importance of objects and personal belongings, as well as the relationships (and the activities that accompany them) that create a sense of home, this thesis builds on conceptualisations of home and household more broadly, exploring the multi-scalarity of home and the way it can be constructed out of movement and change.

The concept of place has grounded much of the discussions above, and although I have not specifically discussed place literature, I acknowledge the way in which its importance runs through the elements of emotion and home. If emotions, "affect the way we see…the substance of our past, present and future" (Davidson and Bondi 2004: 373) they must then also affect how we move through and relate to places. Being in a place provides the ability to know, or have a sense of that place. Similarly, knowledge and emotions about a place are what Casey (2009) suggests, the 'ingredients' of perception about places. Together, these understandings will inform my analysis of how those affected by disaster relate to specific places in the post-disaster environment.

The chapter that follows will outline the methodological approaches adopted in this thesis. These approaches were chosen to complement the theoretical context introduced in this chapter. The empirical chapters that follow connect closely with the ideas outlined both here and in the introduction, in order to demonstrate how and why they are relevant to the emotional experience of disaster displacement.

In the conclusion of this thesis, I will draw on my empirical analysis to offer a more thorough reflection on the theoretical introduction provided here. This final chapter will also reiterate the broader theoretical contributions this thesis makes to literature on emotional geographies, the critical geographies of 'home' and disaster studies more broadly.

Chapter 3

Methodology:

Researching emotion in a post-disaster context

I can't stop thinking about my interview with Caroline this morning. I feel so sad for her. She's living in a granny flat near the river; a place which, by the sounds of it, doesn't suit her at all. I imagine in her in one of those old Queenslanders! She told me it is modern and cold, and I wasn't surprised to hear she doesn't feel comfortable there. She cried a lot, especially when talking about losing her personal possessions. She held my hand while she talked, and I had to bite my own lip to stop myself from crying. (Excerpt from my field diary, March 2012)

3.1 Introduction:

There are a number of different methodological challenges, priorities and opportunities arising from the theoretical context outlined in the previous chapter. These were converted into a practical methodology in order to conduct the fieldwork on which this thesis is based. This chapter outlines the methods I undertook during my fieldwork, commenting on both the successes and limitations of their implementation. I will also further explore the complexities of the post-disaster environment, reflecting on the challenges I faced as a researcher conducting fieldwork in this research context.

The link between theory and methodology is reinforced through this chapter in a discussion of the way that the latter is influenced by the former. The first section of this chapter therefore presents a detailed consideration of the kinds of methods appropriate for conducting research in the post-disaster context. In particular, I consider the value of ethnography as a method within emotional geography research. Additionally, I will reflect on the usefulness of material culture as methodological tool in this context. These debates acknowledge how the methods used in this thesis must be attentive both to the importance of this setting, and to the people who have experienced disaster displacement.

I will then move on to a more detailed discussion of the challenges associated with 'doing' research in emotional geography. This section is broken into two-subsections, which consider struggles I experienced first as a researcher in the field and then during my writing up process. Both discussions focus on the emotional intensity of my research, highlighting the challenges I experienced interviewing disaster-affected individuals in the field and then dealing with emotional narratives

that depicted stories of loss, heartbreak, anxiety and disappointment during my analysis and write-up. On reflection, my own emotions are a hugely important part of this research project. As I will discuss later, these emotions were, at times, a hindrance to the progression of my project. At the same time, however, there were moments when my emotions were beneficial to way knowledge was produced and shared during fieldwork. As scholars, I believe it is imperative that we do not ignore researchers' emotions (particularly in sensitive research settings). Instead, I believe it is beneficial to discuss the emotional challenges associated with conducting this type of academic research, and what this might mean for my results.

This chapter will then go on to outline the specific methodology I used to research the emotions that infiltrate the post-disaster displacement experience. This research adopted three different methods in order to understand how emotions affect participant perceptions of 'home'. These included: semi-structured interviews with those who were displaced by the floods, object elicitation during these interviews and volunteer work with a non-profit organization in Brisbane who provide assistance to the flood-affected. As I explain these methods further, I will discuss the complexities associated with researching emotion (particularly in this context), the value of object elicitation and the benefit of immersing myself within the post-disaster communities through volunteer work and attending flood support groups and community development events.

Once I have outlined the methodology undertaken with research participants in Brisbane, I move on to discuss my fieldwork in Christchurch. Here, I highlight the benefit of offering a point of comparison with Brisbane and outline the specific methodology undertaken to research emotion in the post-earthquake city.

The final section of this chapter examines practical concerns of recruitment, research locations and ethics. The latter is, I believe, particularly important given the research setting and sensitive research topic. I also go into more detail about the individual characteristics of my research participants. I will account for the challenges in accessing a broad range of participants, reflecting particularly on the

challenge of recruiting men and what this might mean for my results. This introduces a discussion of ethics, exploring the commitment I feel as a researcher to make this research applicable to long-term disaster recovery planners. Finally, I discuss how I analyzed the results of my fieldwork, explaining how these results are presented in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

At the close of this introduction, I see it important to acknowledge that researching and 'measuring' emotions in a comprehensive and meaningful way has been a constant challenge for researchers across academic discipline in the social and behavioural sciences. As Bondi et al. 2007 suggest:

> "On the surface, the discipline of geography often presents us with an emotionally barren terrain, a world devoid of passion, spaces ordered solely by rational principles and demarcated according to political, economic or technical logics". (Bondi et al. 2007, 1)

Emotions are not always easily identified and understood and for this reason can be difficult to be observed and distinguished. As a result, geographers have struggled with how to handle, work with and write about emotion in their research (Laurier and Parr 2000). I have already argued that definitions of emotion remain unrefined. Scherer (2005) suggests that one of the major drawbacks of research in the social sciences is "the need to resort to everyday language concepts in both theory and empirical investigation" (696). The difficulty in obtaining widespread consensus in definitions of emotions creates inevitable methodological challenges in researching the subject. What one researcher sees as emotion, might differ from another (and so on). In this respect, emotion itself is highly subjective. This thesis acknowledges, however, that in making meaning of people's experiences it becomes clear that emotions are "socially mediated reflective interpretive filters through which we experience embodied affects" (Wise, 2010: 934). In a world of change, people relate with both each other and, importantly, the material objects that surround them (Thrift, 1997).

3.2 From theory to practice

As Pink (2004) argues, while a 'method' is defined by a practical procedure, a 'methodology' is understood as a theoretically informed position. The theoretical context outlined in the previous chapter is very much intertwined with the methodological approaches to my research. This is because the theoretical standpoint I have adopted requires certain methodological commitments. A focus on the multiple subjectivities of emotion requires a methodology that facilitates an in-depth engagement with those who have experienced disaster displacement. Furthermore, recognizing the importance of 'home' and material objects requires a research agenda that utilizes a connection to these spaces and the objects from them. The sections below justify these commitments in more depth and present an argument for the methods I used in this thesis.

3.2.1 The representational

Semi-structured interviews are commonly used to explore the complex process people engage in to make decisions (Li et al 2010; Easthope 2009; Landry et al. 2007; Sastry, 2007). Their flexible structure also provides the in-depth narratives required to explore the emotions present within the post-disaster environment. Emotional geography, however, does tend to use a default methodology in 'ethnography' (see Pile 2010a). This is perhaps no surprise as ethnography is a uniquely useful method for uncovering the processes and meanings that underlie socio-spatial life (Herbert 2000). It explores the richness and complexity of lived experience in a way that no other qualitative method does. As Herbert (2000) recognises, ethnography is commonly understood to be an extension of participant observation. It is a method in which the researcher observes and interacts with a particular social group. Ethnography typically involves immersion into a cultural group. In other words, the researcher becomes 'part of' the group itself, interviewing informants, observing activities, writing a research diary and so on

(McHugh 2000). Group interactions allow the ethnographer to establish the group dynamics and relations that connect it together (Herbert 2000).

Ethnography, however, is not simply a matter of carrying out prescribed procedures (Geertz 1973). It is important to recognise the difference between ethnography and tightly organized surveys and interviews. Ethnographers commonly enter their field of study more interested in generally exploring particular social phenomena than testing specific hypotheses about them (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994). Theory is therefore built from the ethnographers themselves, as they allow social order to reveal itself through extended fieldwork (Eyles 1988). Key here is “the need for sufficient empathy to enable the researcher to see how the social world is understood and made meaningful by its members” (Herbert 2000, 552). A further distinction between surveys and interviews is that ethnographers examine people’s actions; they examine what people do as well as what they say (Herbert 2000). This allows for insightful investigation into the broader dynamics that shape social relationships in a way that even in-depth interviews will not. As McHugh states, “ethnographies reveal lived experiences, embedded within socio-cultural contexts” (McHugh 2000, 72). Ethnography then, clearly has much to offer the field of emotional geography, which concerns itself with human experience and interaction.

Ethnography is an appropriate method through which to explore emotions in Geography for another reason: it “involves an engagement of the researcher’s senses and emotions” (Herbert 2000, 552). To be a part of and engage in a group’s lived experience is, as Herbert (2000) argues, to become involved in the emotionality of the group itself. The researcher, then, must appreciate the group’s emotional life, and recognise that his/her relationships with subjects will become important factors in evaluating observations (Herbert 2000). This unique method allows a level of familiarity that cannot be achieved through interview methodology alone.

As McHugh (2000, 72) argues, “ethnographic studies capture varying tempos and rhythms of movement and connection, illuminating implications for both people and places”. Ethnographic methods therefore allow an investigation into how

emotions work as a connective tissue that links experiential geographies and the broader social geographies of place. Drawing attention to how disasters disrupt familiar surroundings, routines and practices, this thesis not only demonstrates the value of ethnography in disaster studies, but also in capturing the emotionality of the displacement experience.

Critics of research in emotional geography argue that the research process, particularly when it involves ethnographic research, can be highly subjective and interpretive. According to Scherer (2005) there appears "no objective methods of measuring the subjective experience of a person during an emotional episode" (712). I argue, however, that as a methodology, ethnography has much to offer fieldwork in emotional geography. It provides an important methodological way forward, enabling "an exploration of the processes and meanings through which every day life is maintained" (Herbert 2000, 564).

3.2.2 Material culture

As well as a theoretical commitment, this thesis also draws heavily from material culture as a methodological tool. Visual methodologies use new techniques less dependent on verbal or written texts. Instead, they incorporate visual elements, including those material objects that are integral to everyday life. In this sense, material culture is not just an integral part of people's experiences, but also becomes a *way of accessing* perhaps taken for granted aspects of everyday life (Tolia-Kelly 2004).

Focusing on these material aspects of disaster displacement is particularly valuable within research in this context. By exploring the objects people choose to share as part of their displacement experience, we can more clearly understand how homes can be (re)conceptualised following disaster. In a broader sense, migration research has commonly and successful used material culture as a research methodology. Perhaps most notably, research on migrant belongings (Hatfield 2010; Tolia-Kelly 2004) shows how material culture can be an important element in the

experience of migration and, as I have suggested, a helpful tool in opening up these experiences for research. The same might be said in the context of my research, which explores people's experiences with the post-disaster home. Material culture is central to homemaking practices because objects themselves lend meaning to experiences and places. Similarly to research on migration therefore, material culture is a uniquely appropriate methodological tool through which to understand the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster homemaking experience.

Chapter six deals explicitly with the objects participants shared with me during the interview process. As I will explore in more depth during this chapter, photographs were the most common objects participants shared with me in this process. Thinking about and with images has been one of the central aspects to human geography fieldwork over the last two decades (Rose 2012; 2003). Non-representational theory (see Thrift 2008) encourages geographers to ask questions about what constitutes an image, and encourages us to understand that images are something more than just representations (Latham and McCormack 2009). Bergson (1988) explains: "the key point, however, is that an image is never just a representational snapshot; nor is it a material thing reducible to brute object-ness. Rather, images can be understood as resonant blocks of space and time: they have duration, even if they appear still" (Latham and McCormack 2009, 253). Further, as Thrift (2008) acknowledges, they have an affective intensity. While we take time to figure out what they signify, they also make sense because their pre-signifying affective materiality is felt in bodies. Photos, in other words, can create emotional surges of memory and as such, offer value emotional geography methodologies.

Domestic spaces are notoriously difficult to access as a researcher, because, specifically in the context of research, they tend to be considered private domains (Miller 2001). My research is grounded in theory that suggests the multiple scales at which 'home' can exist. By situating my interviews in a physical space within the community, I acknowledge that homemaking extends far beyond the walls of a

dwelling and is, indeed, influenced by neighbourhoods, networks and experiences of elsewhere.

3.3 Emotions of the researcher

The emotional intensity of my experiences in both Brisbane and Christchurch is, I believe, an integral part of this research project. Several scholars are attuned to the effects on researchers doing emotionally sensitive research (see, for example, Hyndman 2008; Parr et al. 2005; Widdowfield 2000). The sensitive research environment of the post-disaster landscape throws up a myriad of challenges for researchers, including the difficulties associated with listening to emotionally-intense research conversations and the ongoing challenges researchers face post-fieldwork. In this sense, the effects of doing emotionally-sensitive research are not confined to the field. Re-listening to interview tapes and re-reading transcripts brings to research back to life (often in vivid detail), which can exacerbate the emotions originally experienced in the field.

In terms of my own research, the emotional intensity of fieldwork grew more tangible as time in the field progressed. In other words, the longer I spent doing research, the more I struggled emotionally to deal with the intensity of my research situation. At times, my emotions were prohibitive, as I found myself feeling isolated and alone. Widdowfield (2000) applies the notion of 'paralysis' to consider the way in which upsetting or unsettling research experiences might lead to researchers feeling ill-equipped to finish their research. While I never felt as if I wanted to abandon my research, I did feel drained and sometimes trapped in a very intense research environment. In contrast, there were also times during fieldwork that my emotions were beneficial. For example, at times where I was particularly struck by a participant's story, my sympathy provoked a connection between myself and them, and a medium through which to share knowledge.

Throughout this section, therefore, I would like to draw particular attention to the importance of my own emotions in this project. Emotions are, of course, an

inevitable and unavoidable part of the research process (Widdowfield 2000). Incorporating and acknowledging these emotions into my writing facilitates a greater understanding of the work I have undertaken and forms an important part of the process of situating knowledge. It is, of course, not my intention to privilege my own voice over those I have researched. Instead, in presenting my own emotions, my aim is to demonstrate the very real challenges associated with conducting this sort of academic research. Drawing attention to my own emotional difficulties also has the potential to be useful for other researchers who might find themselves in similar fieldwork scenarios. By reassuring others that unsettling experiences can be part and parcel of the research process, this discussion has the potential to offer valuable support within the academic research community.

3.3.1. In the field

Disasters are, by their very nature, hugely disruptive not only to the physical environment, but also to communities and individuals. Severe disasters often destroy whole communities, leading to grief for lost homes and culturally-significant places and structures. This, in turn, results in individual and group stress, as well as social disorganization of varying levels of severity (Oliver-Smith 1996). As a consequence, the post-disaster terrain is a complex, unpredictable and often unfamiliar research space. My fieldwork was characterized by an emotional negotiation during ambiguous times. The environment I found myself in was characterized by loss and change, evoking heartache not only from those I was researching, but also myself as a researcher. Although I did not experience the floods in Brisbane or the earthquakes in Christchurch, I was stepping into deeply emotional territory.

My personal history as a researcher means that I do have experience working in this sort of research environment. As a Master's student, I explored the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, conducting fieldwork in Houston, Texas and New Orleans, Louisiana. Thinking back to my time in New Orleans, I remember the experience as

incredibly surreal. When asked about these experiences, it is difficult to articulate the devastation I witnessed during my time in the city. I can still visualize the battered streets and broken communities. I can still hear the eerie silence of the Lower Wards. Researching with those who had lost loved ones in Katrina's floodwaters was a challenge as a young researcher, although eye-opening in other respects. It was this fieldwork that ultimately led to my doctoral project, prompting the realization that forced displacement as a result of a natural disaster is, unquestionably, an emotional experience. This fieldwork also opened my eyes to the complexities of this research environment and the need to draw attention to the effects of researching in emotionally-sensitive post-disaster environments.

Before I set off for fieldwork in Brisbane, I reminded myself of the challenges associated with conducting research in an emotionally-raw environment. While confident after my experiences in New Orleans and Houston, I was also very aware that my research in Brisbane would be different experience all together. This is largely because no two post-disaster environments are the same. At the outset of my project, I recognised the sensitivity of my research topic. Not only was I researching emotion, but I was asking participants to delve into their traumatic memories of the floods. In fact, it has been argued that researchers cannot escape the contradictory position in which we find ourselves, in that the "lives, loves and tragedies that fieldwork informants share with a researcher are ultimately data, grist for the ethnographic mill, a mill that has truly grinding power" (Stacey 1988, 23). As I reflect on my fieldwork, I must admit that there were interviews where I listened to tearful, emotional accounts of their experiences, while at the same time thinking that their words would make a great quote for my project. At the same time, there were interviews where I was so struck by a participant's emotional trauma, and personal story, that I struggled to separate my own emotions from those of the researched.

On reflection, this was a constant struggle for me in the field. I heard stories depicting pain and anguish, from participants who were crying or still very

emotionally raw. Quite simply, listening to someone else's trauma was a deeply emotional experience. As a relatively young researcher, I sometimes struggled to conduct fieldwork in a very intense research situation on emotionally sensitive material. At times, I felt quite isolated and alone. It was difficult to assume a sort of counsellor role when I have no training in that position. I was living alone, and during quiet nights, found my thoughts drifting back to research interviews.

As a way to demonstrate this, the following is an excerpt from my field diary in January 2012. I think it usefully highlights the situation I found myself in as a researcher and demonstrates some of the feelings I experienced in the early stages of my fieldwork:

> *"Honestly, what do you say to someone you know has lost everything? At my interview this morning I arrived, and felt immediately ashamed of the good things in my bag. Those £40 jeans I was wearing suddenly felt explicitly inappropriate. I sit here wondering what must it be like to live somewhere where your bed isn't your own, or that mug that you are drinking from isn't yours. Margaret told me today that all of her furniture has been donated to her after the floods. None of it matched. Those unfamiliar possessions must act like a constant reminder of loss. To work all your life to provide yourself with your own possessions, and then to suddenly have lost everything you've worked so hard for seems like a horrible sense of irony. Like this painful, everyday reminder. The cruelty of the floods, like the water itself, has seeped deep into lives of the victims and the painful reminder has left a pungent smell of reminisce in the boxed up remains of their lives. I went to Sherwood Flood Support Group yesterday. What continued to overwhelm me was the friendliness of those who I met. It's the same with Connected, or when I go to community events. I'm forever meeting new faces and I'm never met with judgment. Never met with anything other than a welcoming smile".*

Negotiating the post-disaster research environment was intensely challenging. As mentioned above, it was not uncommon for participants to cry or become visibly emotional during interviews. Interviews often vividly conveyed the heartbreak and distress experienced by those who not only lost their homes and personal

possessions in the flood/earthquake, but those who lost friends and loved ones. As one might expect, trauma is incredibly raw in the immediate aftermath of the floods. During our July 2011 interview, Judith, a resident of Goodna, told me simply: *"I used to wake up every day and just cry*". After immersing myself in the field for a few months, it also, however, became evident that trauma was still very much present more than a year after floods occurred. In April of 2012, Meg from Chelmer expressed the sadness she still experiences in the aftermath of disaster:

> *"It's been a year and it's still very, very hard to deal with. Progress is very slow* [crying]. *It's really quite tough. I'm looking forward to having a good sleep at night – the voices and images in my head still keep me up at night"*.

Emotions, then, continue to punctuate the post-disaster landscape long after the floodwaters receded. For those affected, these emotions continue to make decisions hard and life challenging.

This pain-staking realization was incredibly difficult to deal with. Still, during my interviews, I was careful never to say, 'Yes, I understand what you are feeling'. This is because I was deeply aware that as a researcher, and someone who did not experience the floods, I do not know what these people have been through (and are continuing to face). In this respect, during each of my interviews I simply listened, allowing each narrative to flow naturally. In my empirical chapters, I present my interviews exactly as they were presented to me. While I contemplate the stories of disaster and recovery with sympathy, feeling sorry for these painful experiences, I have not necessarily looked upon the recovery efforts empathically. I also fully acknowledge that the feelings that developed through research relationships and the process of conducting fieldwork itself, undoubtedly affect my understanding and writing (Bondi 2005).

When conducting interviews with people who were visually emotional (crying, anxious etc) I also felt my own emotions mirror theirs. It was difficult to listen to these narratives without becoming entrapped into these emotions myself. I was faced with a dilemma: People were at their most vulnerable, and I was there to investigate. I found myself surrounded in ethical quandary. Was I exploiting people

by asking them to delve into their traumatic memories? Or, could it be justified in the sense that these questions will ultimately allow me to obtain information that could help to improve their situation (or the situation of future disaster victims). On reflection, the exchange of emotions during interviews was a positive one in terms of knowledge production. I shared compassion with these people and while I never cried during an interview, I certainly felt my sadness echo theirs. Conversely, when narratives were more upbeat and discussions turned to happier topics, I too felt my mood lift. The body language and fragments of stories provided insight for me as I researched. Perhaps more crucially however, as a researcher, I shared compassion and hence knowledge with my research participants.

The research participants included in my empirical chapters were extremely willing to share their experiences with me. For some, this seemed to be in the hope that my research will help future disaster victims. For many, however, sharing their story was, as one participant expressed*: "like a form of therapy".* For those who experienced disaster displacement and levels of overwhelming loss, sharing stories truly helps the soul to come to terms with the randomness of such experiences. Aftermath is a way to connect, share and support others in the recovery process. Flood support meetings and community development events, such as the ones I attended while in Brisbane, demonstrate the importance of social networks in establishing a focus on resilience within this aftermath. They also remind us that the damage and loss (both structural and emotional) caused by the 2011 floods remains upsetting. Ultimately, these floods contribute to our understanding of society-environment interactions, while drawing into focus how delicate human life is.

During my experiences in the field, there were two scenarios I found particularly challenging as a researcher. The first relates to interviews I conducted where participants spoke of the sadness and anxiety they experienced returning 'home' after displacement. While inevitably affected by all interviews, I found these especially difficult to listen to. During interviews where victims discussed these

negative experiences of returning to a place that no longer felt like home, I found myself disappointed for them and sympathetic to their emotional struggles.

To highlight this in more detail, below is another excerpt from my field diary. In it, I document the sadness I felt listening to a narrative that where my participant was describing feeling anxious and disappointed on her return 'home':

> *"I spoke to Liz this morning. She was very emotional. It was so sad to hear her talk about such a desire to return home, and then see how upset she was when she got back. I can't imagine what it must be like to go back to somewhere so familiar, and for it to be unrecognizable. Such anticipation, followed by such bitter disappointment – that's it, that's the best way to describe what I saw in her eyes. Bitter disappointment. When she talked about feelings sick, I felt a pit in my own stomach and it's hard not to let me own emotions show…I'm glad she's found help with Habitat and seeing how the are helping makes me really feel proud to be volunteering with them. On Wednesday I'm going to help with the rebuilding of a home in Goodna. Apparently the family are still living in a trailer – how horrible!"* (Diary except, July 2011)

This excerpt also taps into the emotions I experienced as a volunteer. During my initial fieldwork trip to Brisbane 2011, I volunteered with Habitat for Humanity Australia. This experience was eye-opening, as I spent time not only helping to restore a flood-damaged home, but also talking with flood-affected residents. These discussions highlighted the important role of non-profit organizations in the post-disaster environment, as many residents told me of the invaluable aid organizations had given them in the aftermath of the floods. Being amidst people who were suffering emotionally was a humbling experience. I was in awe of those who were strong and brave. This experience enhanced my motivation to get involved in an extended volunteer role in 2012 (see Darling 2011). In this sense, volunteering became much more than just a method; it became a reciprocal experience, through which I learnt about myself as well as the post-disaster community.

The second scenario I found particularly upsetting during my research experience was listening to participants discuss the distress and anxiety they experienced through the loss of their personal possessions. This, I believe, relates largely to participant responses. During my interviews, it was common for

participants to become particularly distressed when they discussed the emotions they experienced losing personal possessions. I listened to tearful narratives depicting the loss of irreplaceable family photographs, birth certificates, books and paperwork. These material possessions could not be salvaged in the aftermath of the floods. To find a photograph of a family member that, because of water or mud damage, no longer looks like that family member, was deeply upsetting, as the following research diary excerpt demonstrates:

> *"These stories I heard today were awful. To lose everything you own in one moment must be just horrible. And then to have to see everything out in the street, in piles of rubbish – just piles of your life all disorganized and destroyed. I'm not sure I could handle it. I also wonder what it must be like to live in a house where nothing is truly yours and nothing feels right, because it has all been donated. It's all so sad. I can't help thinking of the individuals and the stories represented in the photographs I saw today. One in particular: A photo of a woman of all ages, from grandmother to little girl, gathered around a little baby, struck a chord, because a similar photo hangs in my home. A photo of my grandmother, mother, sister and me and I thought how funny it is that across the world, our basic needs are just the same"* (Diary excerpt, February 2012)

As recognised by Gorman-Murray (2007), various meaningful possessions embody different facets of self, while they also "materially embed a 'whole' self in the domestic space (Gorman-Murray 2007, 1). For flood victims then, losing personal domestic possessions constitutes a loss of identity and 'the self'. I found researching this emotional loss extraordinarily challenging.

Despite these emotional challenges, understanding the emotions associated with losing personal treasured possessions through the flood allowed me to appreciate the importance of these objects in the post-disaster environment. Additionally, utilizing object elicitation as a methodology allowed participants the opportunity to further demonstrate their importance. As participants shared objects from their displacement experience, I was privileged to see a meaningful and intimate object that embodied their sense of 'self'. This privilege allowed me to more fully understand how these objects themselves hold emotional attachments.

The process of conducting fieldwork itself has undoubtedly affected my own understandings and writing. While many of my relationships with the flood-affected individuals who participated in this project were short-term, engaging with them on a personal level left me deeply emotionally invested in their personal narratives. As a result, the challenges I experienced doing this research did not end when I left the field. My return to the UK left me feeling guilty for being able to leave the post-disaster environment and sad for those I had left behind. Re-reading of interview transcripts during my analysis was therefore particularly challenging to me. This process reminded me of the challenging experiences I faced in the field, and also brought new challenges as I considered the best way to portray the stories I have heard.

Before I consider these ongoing challenges in more depth, I see it as appropriate to close this section with an acknowledgement of the challenges associated with conducting fieldwork in Christchurch. These challenges are expanded on in greater depth in chapter 8, but here I acknowledge the difficulty in conducting fieldwork in a setting where the disaster remains ongoing. Similarly to Brisbane, many of the challenges I experienced in the field related the emotional intensity of the research environment and my interviews. Furthermore, however, I fully recognise that these challenges were exacerbated by the anxiety I felt when I experienced earthquakes in the city. These aftershocks were small, with only enough intensity to rattle the bed I was sleeping in or the doorframes of the building I was standing in. Still, they inevitably made me uneasy, prompting fear for my personal safety. Again, while these earthquake experiences were confined to the field, they were not forgotten during my analysis. Instead, these were a useful tool in understanding the experiences of Christchurch residents who deal with fear and anxiety on a daily basis. In this sense, my emotions become uniquely useful in my analysis of post-earthquake narratives.

3.3.2. After fieldwork

As Lund (2012) recognises, literature on emotion revolves around feelings of researchers *during* fieldwork, and much less on how emotion affects one's work analytically and theoretically. As the section above demonstrates, researchers in the field might face a number of challenging emotions such as anger, fright, guilt, sadness etc. (Lund 2012; Bennett 2009; Bondi 2003). This literature argues that a researcher's emotional response has the ability to alert and provide insights into the meanings and behaviour of those one is interviewing (Wilkins 1993). Emotions then, have an interpretive function as they facilitate 'emotional labour', making it possible for researchers to gain better intuitive insights (Widdowfield 2000).

Although issues such as positionality can, and of course do, affect fieldwork, studies have argued an emotional response to challenging fieldwork in fact has the greatest influence on research analysis (Moser 2008). As Beatty (2005, 17) suggests, "ethnographers commonly fail to build the diversity of emotional practice into their accounts and have therefore provided a flawed basis for theorizing and comparison". Following Lund's (2012) suggestion, I therefore intend to argue that my own emotions remain a key analytical resource throughout my thesis, by demonstrating the influence of my emotions well beyond the field. Although much revolves around the situation during fieldwork, better insights and analytical skills can be obtained through research that is sensitive to emotions through 'emotional labour' (Hochschild 1983).

When I returned from fieldwork in 2012, I experienced a challenging re-adjustment period. My research interviews resonated strongly in my mind and I felt an overwhelming sense of guilt being back in the UK. My heart ached for those I had to 'leave behind'; the people who I knew were still struggling so much. I felt my thoughts constantly drifting back to the stories of heartache and sorrow. As Bondi suggests, "feminist geography has emphasized the fluidity and pervasiveness of emotion in the context of situated approaches to knowledge-production, in which

researchers are understood as intrinsically connected to their research subjects" (2005, 22). Stanley and Wise (1993, 157) reinforce this argument further:

> "Whether we like it or not, researchers remain human beings complete with all the usual assembly of feelings, failings, and moods. And all of those things influence how we feel and understand what is going on. Our consciousness is always the medium through which the research occurs; there is no method or technique of doing research other than through the medium of the researcher".

The researcher is, therefore, an instrument in his/her research. We are all differently positioned subjects, with different personal histories and lived experiences (England 1994). Fieldwork, by this very nature, is intensely personal. The positionality and the biography of a researcher play a central role in the research process, in both the field, and in the final text: "Emotions, then, should be approached not only as objects of study, but as a relational, connective medium in which research, researchers and research subjects are necessarily immersed" (Bondi 2005, 433).

As I slowly readjusted to life in England, I finished transcribing my interviews and began reading transcripts repeatedly. Of course this was necessary in order to identify common themes within their stories, but re-reading emotional stories again and again was, at times, emotionally distressing for me. At this point, I found my field diary particularly useful. My notes not only described my research situation, but also my feelings about it. Notes about research participants themselves (their personal histories etc) helped me to construct their own stories during my write-up, as a way to give the reader a sense of who they are and the challenges they endured. Perhaps more importantly, however, my own documented emotions became a useful tool as I began my analysis. These emotions are what gives my descriptions analytical insight. My personal comments on whether participants were crying or visibly upset during interviews reveal the reality of the research situation and allow me to present narratives in the way they were told to me.

As I began to write my thesis, I remained attuned to the understanding that emotion is a simultaneously embodied and discursive way of commenting on the possibilities, limitations, frustrations and outcomes of the migration experience

(Zarowsky 2004). Comparing my diary notes with transcripts made me reflect on the type of representations I could give as a researcher. I used my own feelings constructively, as a way to probe beyond what was said during interviews.

Separating and silencing emotions from the seemingly rational economics and politics of a post-disaster research environment is detrimental to critical understandings of how the human world is constructed and lived through emotions. For this reason, it is important to consider the emotional politics of conducting research in this sort of research context. This thesis, then, acknowledges the role of my own emotions both in the field and after, and the challenges I experienced throughout this doctoral project. With this acknowledgement, the section below presents the methods used in this research, demonstrating how they connect to the methodology outlined at the start of this chapter.

3.4 Semi-structured interviews

From an ethical perspective, it has been questioned whether questionnaires are appropriate instruments for research on people under stress. As such, open-ended, dialogic methods tend to be ethically more appropriate and methodologically more effective (Button 1991). Using narrative as a route to accessing individual experiences is also particularly useful in investigating topics relating to belonging, migration and emotion. Studies of human experience are grounded in use of the words 'story' and 'narrative'. Sarup (1994, 95) argues that, "the concept of home seems to be tied in some way with the notion of identity – the story we tell ourselves". Further, when writing of migrancy, Chambers (1994, 5) states that it involves, "a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming – completing the story, domesticating the detour, becomes an impossibility".

Storytelling, while having originated from ancient Greek myths, has been perceived as a fundamental way to interpret experiential meanings (Christou 2011). Most importantly, however, life stories are very often saturated by emotion and constructed subjectively as portrayals of lives that illuminate certain angles of such lives by the experience of re-telling and reflection. Migration, in particular, evokes an image of life in motion: something in the process of becoming, rather than strictly fixed, which has to be negotiated and wrestled with by those who experience it (Christou 2011). This situation also characterizes my research context, which explores the emotional dynamics of post-disaster displacement.

In July 2011 and between January and June 2012, I conducted 53 semi-structured interviews with residents who were displaced by the 2011 floods. I conducted 14 of these interviews in July/August 2011 during a preliminary fieldwork trip. The purpose of this pilot study was to gauge the feasibility of Brisbane as a case study and to establish initial contacts in the field before my larger fieldwork trip in 2012. Collecting data from two different points in time, and therefore two different periods after the disaster, allowed for an investigation into the temporality of emotion in a way that one single fieldwork trip would not. When I returned to Brisbane in 2012, I was able to conduct follow-up interviews with two of my initial participants. These secondary interviews enable me to understand how emotion might change throughout the displacement experience, and how motivations might be different at different points in time.

All participants were residents of a Brisbane suburb at the time of the floods and, when the floods occurred, were displaced to unaffected areas of the city. Of the 51 different research participants, 28 had returned to the same house they were living in at the time of the floods. The remaining participants had relocated to a different suburb in Brisbane. Interviews were based around the following five broad questions:

What was life like before the flood?

What happened when Brisbane flooded?

Can you tell me about your migration experience?

What has life been like since the floods?

Why did you decide to/not to rebuild?

As a way to avoid unintentionally directing responses, these questions do not specifically address emotion. Interviews therefore gauged the perspectives and understandings associated with how displaced flood victims construct their own sense of belonging in a post-disaster landscape. Still, every interview provoked emotional responses from participants (both verbally through their stories and heartfelt testimonies, and visually through tearful narratives).

No research setting is ever neutral. In fact, the setting of an interview is not simply a place, but a complex landscape of hidden biases and researcher subjectivity (Longhurst 2006). Due to their recent experience with flooding, it was imperative that I conducted research somewhere participants would feel comfortable. I therefore carried interviews in community centres in various suburbs across Brisbane. These included centres in Goodna, Towong, Sherwood, Chelmer, Ipswich and Graceville. Interview length varied between 1 hour and 1.5 hours. This time depended on participant responses and their willingness to share their stories.

Every interview was audio-recorded and subsequently partially transcribed. Immediately after each interview I made intensive notes about the interview participant, reflecting on his/her story. Notably, I recorded small details of the interviewee (age, returned/not returned, how long they had lived in Brisbane/their suburb before the floods). I also reflected on their mannerisms, whether he/she was visibly emotional during the interview and thoughts on his/her story. Doing this allowed me to concentrate during the interview itself, although offer a deeper reflection while the interview was still in my mind.

3.5 Object elicitation

My theoretical context outlines a critical geography of 'home' that privileges an understanding of the concept as a dynamic process. When exploring the process

of post-disaster homemaking, the house becomes something that is both material and imaginative (Blunt and Dowling 2006). This project therefore requires a methodology that explores the importance of material culture in the creation and recreation of home following disaster displacement.

The relationship of objects to homemaking has been suggested in various studies of both homed and homeless persons (Digby 2006; Walsh 2006; Miller 2001). When setting up the interview with participants, I invited them to share with me an 'important object' from their displacement experience, as a way to help them make sense of, or express experiences and emotions which might otherwise be difficult to articulate in purely linguistic ways. Doing this allows an opportunity to understand how perhaps taken-for-granted everyday objects play a part in the recreation of home for displaced disaster victims. In the same way 'the home' is seen as familiar and safe, this method was used also to investigate whether objects themselves hold emotional attachments.

My request to participants was made by telephone call or via email as I asked: "Please bring with you, one object, to the interview which was important to you through your displacement experience". I offered participants the opportunity to ask questions about this specific methodology emailing them the informed consent sheet so that they could read it through before the interview (Appendix 1).

The explanation of the subject matter ('an important object') was deliberately vague, in order to allow the significance of objects to emerge naturally rather than be prompted. I hoped that objects would provide a route into the certain emotions that might not have been verbally acknowledged in an interview. The object elicitation this prompted produced a vast array of 'data', which I would not have gained with a purely straightforward interview methodology. Choosing the object before the interview also allowed participants enough time to reflect on what was important, rather than being forced to verbalize this in an immediate interview scenario.

3.6 Volunteering and community support networks

Figure 3.1 Connected Relief Centre, Banyo (©Stephanie Morrice 2013)

Drawing on emotional geographies' commonly-used method of ethnography, my final method involved volunteer work in Brisbane and attending community support and development events across affected suburbs. By immersing myself into these groups, interactions allowed me to establish the group dynamics and relations that connect these communities together (Herbert 2000). Volunteering also allowed me to examine people's actions. I considered what they do. as well as what they say, enabling a deeper investigation into the broader dynamics that shape the social relationships of the post-disaster environment.

While in Brisbane in 2011, I spent five days volunteering with Habitat for Humanity Australia (HFHA) as part of their Brush with Kindness program. This program assists families that were devastated by the 2011 Queensland floods by repairing homes and rebuilding lives (Habitat for Humanity Australia 2012). Commonly, this work involves household renovations and upgrades such as painting,

landscaping and other minor repairs, completed with the help of volunteer labour and donations where possible. During my five days working with HFHA I visited two different flood-affected houses. Outside, I completed landscaping work alongside other volunteers, watching those more qualified work on interior electrical and plumbing repairs. While working, I was introduced to the owners of both houses I was helping to restore. They informally discussed their experiences with the floods and their heartfelt gratitude to all the volunteers and HFHA for assisting with their flood recovery. Despite the short time frame of my volunteer work with HFHA, this experience provided an opportunity to engage with flood-affected individuals who were forcibly displaced by the floods, and a chance to witness and be a part of the invaluable, practical aid non-profit organizations carry out in the aftermath of disaster.

During fieldwork in 2012, I continued my volunteer work with Connected, a non-profit organization that was established after the January 2011 floods by disabled pensioner Craig Michaels. Between January and June 2012, I volunteered one day a week at Connected Relief Centre in the Brisbane suburb of Banyo (Figure 3.1). At a time of crisis, many of the established charities were overwhelmed by the generosity of the Australian public and were unable to process the bulk of donations as they poured in. Connected helps these charities process this overload of donations, providing direct assistance to the disaster affected by offering them basic products at the time when they need them the most. Since the floods, Connected has helped over 10,000 flood-affected families and individuals (Connected Inc, 2012).

Volunteering with Connected provided excellent insight into the flood recovery process. Essentially, I became part of this process itself. Volunteer work also helped me to establish contacts with the flood-affected. I would informally speak to those who visited the crisis centre and often ask if they would be interested in taking part in my research more formally. The relief centre in Banyo was run solely by volunteers, and was open 9am-3pm Tuesday to Saturday. It was established in

two parts, with one half of the warehouse holding donations, and the other half set up as a store. This store was organized with precision and as a way to offer flood-affected individuals the chance to choose things they no longer have (furniture, clothes, toys, kitchenware etc). Once they presented paperwork that proved their flood-affected status (for example, insurance documents), victims were able to 'shop' for the necessities they required. Most of the smaller items, such as kitchenware and clothes, could be taken for free. Larger items, such as furniture (beds, sofas etc), required a small donation. This donation is invested back into Connected to cover internal costs that will ensure the company can continue to help those in hardship.

Since I left Brisbane, Connected Relief Centre has moved locations. The centre is now located on St. Vincent Street in the city, at a location that is more central and therefore more easily accessible to those still needing assistance. I volunteered at Connected every Wednesday from 9am-3pm. My volunteering efforts included sorting through donations, creating care packages for the flood-affected (these often included boxes of cleaning products and kitchen sets), working with other volunteers to organize and re-stock the relief centre store. I also did a small amount of web-based work designing the Connected newsletter. Connected runs under Craig's direction and the tireless work of nine permanent volunteers. Interestingly, these volunteers were not flood-affected themselves. Instead, they were Brisbane residents who could, for various reasons, spare time to help those in hardship.

During my six months in Brisbane I established a good rapport with Craig and with the permanent volunteers. I was bowled over by the dedication and passion of these people, who were totally committed to helping those in need. The women working at Connected were extremely welcoming when I started volunteering, showing me proudly though the relief centre and talking about the work the organization is involved in. Though I openly discussed my research throughout my time at Connected, there were inevitably times when my identity as a researcher

slipped from view. Through my clothing and appearance, I gradually started to 'blend in' to my surroundings, becoming associated with other volunteers. As I got to know these volunteers on a more personal level over the following months, I also saw my role as a researcher become complicated by a series of friendships that developed with them (see Conradson 2003). My time at Connected also prompted an interesting reflection on the role of human agency and generosity (Darling 2011), particularly in this setting. As I spent more time at the relief centre, it became quite clear that most of those helping were defined by their identity as a volunteer. In this sense, care and generosity can be understood as fundamental elements of 'being-human' and of relating to others (Levinas 1985).

I had many conversations with these volunteers about their motivations to work at Connected. All told me that it was because they felt that they could make a difference. I can relate to this on a personal level, thinking about my time in New Orleans and my experiences working with Habitat for Humanity. I also fondly remember one of my first experiences working at the relief centre. I watched a little girl come running out of the children's section with a handful of shoes. She yelled across the room *"Mummy, I've got four new pairs of shoes!"* and her mother looked at Craig, tears in her eyes and said *"Do you see what you've done?"* The moment was priceless because it was so raw. There was a pure appreciation that gave myself as a volunteer a deeper motivation to be a part of Connected. As Cloke et al. (2007) recognise , giving acts as communal sense of connection and engagement within a volunteer setting. Reciprocity is therefore seen as a transformative process (Darling 2011). The relationships that constitute the relief centre are "productively folded into those of the evolving self" (Conradson 2003, 521).

As well as volunteering with Connected, I was also heavily involved in the Sherwood Flood Support Group. Jennie Jones, a local flood-affected resident, established this group in January 2012. The group met every second Thursday morning in Sherwood Community Centre. Located at the centre of the community, this centre was widely used by residents of the suburb as a social meeting place.

Group attendees included flood-affected individuals, a Clinical Psychologist (who offers flood victims free services relating to trauma, depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and grief), volunteers from OzCare (a non-profit organization who offer a range of health services to communities across Queensland. Since the floods, Ozcare played a vital role in the recovery process of affected communities, offering counseling, respite and support to those who were affected), two representatives from FloodFish (a small group of women who are attempting to publish a community service guide, which offers detailed practical information for residents preparing for a natural disaster, for example, information on how to sandbag your house to mitigate damage) and a community officer from the Queensland Health Metro Recovery and Resilience team. This is a clinical service that provides specialist assessment, support and treatment to individuals who are at risk are experiencing moderate to severe trauma (including grief and loss) as a consequence of exposure to the effects of natural disaster.

Many residents attended the support group to connect with others who had been affected by the floods. The group also provided an opportunity for these individuals to meet representatives from organizations offering financial and psychological support in the aftermath of disaster. Sherwood Flood Support Group also organized a number of community development events, such as community BBQs and pamper days. Commonly these events did not dwell on the floods themselves. Instead, they offered an opportunity to focus on community resilience. These events foster community spirit, strength and moral, by bringing residents close together in relaxed settings.

3.7 Christchurch

To offer a point of comparison, on June 29th 2012, I flew from Brisbane to Christchurch to conduct two weeks of fieldwork in the city after the 2011 Canterbury earthquakes. While this short time frame did not allow for a fully comparative research project, I use this case study as a stepping-stone to further research that

might consider the emotional dynamics of different natural disasters. I set off towards the most English of New Zealand's cities, overtly aware of the unique nature of each post-disaster setting. My own emotions were mixed. In one respect, my experience working in other disaster settings gave me confidence about conducting fieldwork in an emotionally intense terrain. Conversely, I was extremely apprehensive about visiting this particular setting because of the ongoing nature of the disaster. Since 2010, Christchurch has been subjected to thousands of aftershocks. For Canterbrians, each earthquake is a continual reminder of the trauma experienced in the city and an emotional blast that intensifies their feelings. I personally have never visited a research setting where the disaster is ongoing. I wondered wondered whether I might feel an earthquake myself and how this might impact my own emotions.

Acknowledging this different research setting, Christchurch offered an opportunity to consider some additional research questions. For example, does emotion (both types and intensity) differ in different disaster contexts? While the flooding in Brisbane was, to an extent, predicted, the Christchurch earthquake was sudden onset. Did the flood-affected have a greater opportunity to make a 'rational' decision in the immediate aftermath of the disaster? How do post- and pre- anxiety levels differ in these situations? Does fear play a different role in Christchurch? For example, how do residents deal with the reality of 'living in fear'? I was particularly interested in the emotions associated with being constantly subjected to earthquakes.

I was also very intrigued about the materiality of damage. Is there a difference between floodwater and dust/liquefaction damage, and does this impact the recreation of home following disaster? Towards the latter part of my fieldwork in Brisbane, the Queensland government was heavily critiqued in a flood report documenting the mismanagement of the Wivenhoe Dam. I therefore left Brisbane wondering to what extent the manmade nature of this disaster sparks emotions that might not be present in other settings (such as Christchurch)?

3.7.1 Observations

During my two weeks in Christchurch, I spent a large amount of time observing the city. As in Brisbane, I kept a field diary that documented my own emotions as researcher. I found this particularly useful in this setting, as I was able to capture my emotions as I felt my first earthquake, as well as the emotions associated with conducting fieldwork in an environment still very emotionally raw and vulnerable.

I visited Sumner, Avonside, Redcliffs and Lyttleton, suburbs notably affected by the February 2011 earthquake, as a way to gauge damage and recovery levels, and as an opportunity to chat informally with Christchurch residents. Each town presented astonishing levels of damage: abandoned houses, empty plots and broken communities. Due to the short duration of my stay in the city, the visual observations I made in Christchurch constituted a large portion of my fieldwork. As with my fieldwork in Brisbane, immersing myself into the post-disaster city of Christchurch was incredibly insightful. Walking through the battered and largely inaccessible Christchurch CBD, surrounded in metal barriers restricting access, offered much insight into this post-disaster environment. Visiting the suburbs and talking informally to residents and community development officials also helped me understand Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) Zoning – something which I was unfamiliar with when I arrived in Christchurch.

3.7.2 Semi-structured Interviews

While in Christchurch, I conducted four semi-structured interviews with residents who were forcibly displaced by the earthquake. Three of these interviews were conducted in Lyttleton Community House, and one was conducted in Sumner Community Centre. All four interviews were conducted with female participants and all were of middle/high socio-economic status (as verbally acknowledged by

themselves). Interviews were based around the same five broad questions I used during my interviews in Brisbane, although noting the change in type of disaster:

What was life like before the earthquake?

What happened when the earthquake hit?

Can you tell me about your migration experience?

What has life been like since the earthquake?

Why did you decide to/not to rebuild?

I used the same questions to make cross-comparison with my participant responses from Brisbane easier. By comparing participant responses in Brisbane with those in Christchurch, I will be able to begin to explore whether the types and intensity of emotion is different in these different disaster contexts.

As in Brisbane, these interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently partially transcribed. Unlike my methods in Brisbane, I did not utilize object elicitation as a method in Christchurch. This relates mainly to the shorter duration of my fieldwork in the city. Most of the interviews I conducted were also quite spur-of-the-moment, and therefore I did not have an opportunity to invite participants to share an important object from their displacement experience. Interestingly, interview participants often discussed objects and materials as part of their narratives. Commonly, they reflected on material possessions in relation to discussions about personal safety. Chapter eight will discuss this further, although the suggestion was that, in a context where participants often feared for their own safety, material possessions did not play as central a role in their migration experience. Essentially, things that could be replaced did not seem as important once lives were in danger.

3.8 Participant recruitment

As a researcher based in the UK, recruiting research participants was a constant challenge during my fieldwork. The very nature of my research agenda means that I was looking to talk to people who had been displaced by the

floods/earthquake. These are individuals who are often living very mobile lives, forced to move again and again throughout a challenging post-disaster landscape.

Establishing contacts from the UK before I moved to Australia was difficult. Having carried out fieldwork in a post-disaster research context before, I wanted to make sure I had established a number of contacts before I arrived in Brisbane. This is because I had previously found non-profit organizations particularly helpful in providing access to disaster-affected individuals. They are extremely active and locally connected within the post-disaster community. I therefore emailed a number of different organizations (The Red Cross, Connected, Ozcare, Volunteering QLD, Habitat for Humanity Australia) explaining my research, asking if they might be able to help me in recruiting participants. I also indicated that I was interested in doing some post-flood volunteering work while in Australia.

Given that I was trying to establish contacts with organizations from the UK, I relied solely on email communication. As a result, a number of organizations I emailed simply did not reply to my emails. Some responded but could not offer help. Volunteering QLD, for example, told me that I could not volunteer unless I was registered as a resident of Queensland. They also expressed concerns about conducting research with disaster-affected individuals. These concerns related specifically to the emotional state of those who were recovering from disaster.

Habitat for Humanity Australia were particularly helpful in terms of offering both an opportunity to volunteer with post-flood recovery, but also a way to get in touch with flood victims. In July/August 2011, I therefore organized to participate in volunteer work with Habitat Humanity Australia and stayed in a home-stay with Carolyn Ehrlich, the Chairwoman of their Ipswich chapter. Carolyn proved an invaluable resource in connecting me with flood-affected individuals Habitat had assisted since the floods. She was well connected in the community well versed in the post-flood recovery process. Though this personal contact and snowballing I overcame difficulties in locating research participants.

Before returning to Brisbane in January 2012, I got in touch with Connected to ask about volunteering opportunities. Upon arriving in Brisbane I had therefore already established connections with the organization and was able to start volunteering immediately. As a volunteer, I actively engaged with those using the organization, introducing myself as a researcher and explaining my research project. My identity as both a researcher and a volunteer aided my rapport with the flood-affected, as I was able to establish a trusted relationship with them. Sherwood Flood Support Group also provided a good forum to meet and recruit potential participants. The non-profit and governmental organizations represented at the meetings were unable to connect me to those using their services due to confidentiality agreements with their clients, although through the support group itself, I met a number of research participants. During my time in Australia I was also a visiting PhD scholar at The University of the Sunshine Coast. This post was useful academically, in terms of providing a research base, but also useful in creating personal contacts with colleagues at the University. Many of my colleagues knew people that were affected by the floods in Brisbane. As with most research in the social sciences, participant recruitment continued through snowballing, as each participant I interviewed was able to put me in touch with other flood-affected individuals.

Before entering the field, I was keen to interview as many disaster-affected individuals as possible. Previous fieldwork in post-disaster settings demonstrated that each participant would share a different story with me. Interviewing people who had returned to their home, as well as those who had moved elsewhere following the floods/earthquake, provided varying insights into the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment. It was also my intention to recruit a fairly even number of male and female participants. This relates largely to gender differences in emotion, both in terms of the type of emotion expressed (verbally and non-verbally) and the intensity of these emotions (see Fischer 2000). Thirty-nine of my research participants in Brisbane were female. While this is not necessarily ideal,

it does suggest an interesting point about the gender differences prominent in the post-disaster environment. Most of the men who participated in this research project were interviewed after I had been in Brisbane for two months and once I had established stronger connections in the community.

The limited time I had in Christchurch meant that participants were recruited fairly informally. This was achieved through connections I established at The University of Canterbury, by talking to the owners of the hostel I stayed at on Barbadoes Street and through Lyttelton Community House. Of course, time constraints meant that I was only able to recruit four participants. Although this will limit the extent to which I can fully explore the influence of emotion in the post-earthquake environment, incorporating these narratives in this thesis will offer a useful comparison to my Brisbane based dataset and a stepping-stone to further extended research on this topic.

3.9 Ethics

In 2004, *The Journal of Traumatic Stress* published a special issue concerned with the ethical issues associated with conducting research in a post-disaster environment. These papers are important and excellently inform readers about the ethical issues that should be considered in disaster research. Many of these discussions focus on the sensitivity of the post-disaster research environment and the way in which research should be conducted to protect the rights of disaster victims.

Much of the previous writing documenting the ethical considerations of conducting research with trauma-exposed participants in a post-disaster setting has been carried out in psychology and related behavioural studies (Collogan et al. 2004). These studies identify some of the special issues that exist for research in a post-disaster setting, including a consideration of whether victims of disaster-related trauma may be able to anticipate the degree of distress that might accompany research participation (Newman et al. 1999; Pope 1999). Still, a number of studies

also explore the benefits participants feel when they participate in post-disaster research, including, kinship with other, learning, insight and feeling of satisfaction or value after participating (see for example, Newman et al. 1999). While these benefits have not been explored in detail, these studies suggest that research in this context can be carried out in an ethically sound manner and in a way to benefit research participants.

Despite ethical concerns, research in disaster settings is productive and necessary line of enquiry. Although the risks and benefits of the participation in disaster-focused research are not fully understood, most would argue that there is a significant need for additional research into the aftermath of disaster (Collogan et al. 2004). This is particularly true in our current climate, when the threat of natural disaster is unnervingly high. Previous research in post-disaster contexts has, for example, considerably increased our knowledge of the human impact of disasters. Psychological studies provide an understanding of the types of mental and physical health problems likely to occur following disasters. Geographical studies have also deepened our understanding of the types of services victims need and are likely to use in the aftermath of disaster. Disaster studies are therefore instrumental in shaping public policy, public education and service delivery following disasters.

Research in the post-disaster context therefore requires a balance between seeking to enhance knowledge of post-disaster populations and research that protects the rights of individual human research subjects. My research project is particularly attuned to these complexities. The research on which this thesis is based was ethically approved by Royal Holloway, University of London. Research participants were given an informed consent form explaining my project in detail and reinforcing the entirely voluntary nature of participation. I made it clear that participants could withdraw from the study at any time and without reason. In fact, many participants took part simply because they wanted to talk to someone. They wanted someone to listen to their story and give them a voice. Participants were also made aware that it was unlikely they would benefit directly from my study,

although their participation will indirectly contribute to a greater knowledge of the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment, thus aiding future disaster planners. I made it clear to each participant that they could receive a copy of this thesis upon completion of my write-up process, as a way to feed back information into the local communities.

Throughout this thesis, I explore the challenges associated with conducting fieldwork in both Australia and New Zealand. As discussed earlier in this chapter, I often engaged with disaster victims who were often very emotionally raw, traumatized by the loss of their homes and possessions. In the year that has followed my fieldwork, these ethical issues have continued to impact my write up process. This is not only in terms of my engagement with participant responses, but also as I have started to disseminate my research findings. During Question and Answer sessions of seminar and conference presentations, audience members often question the ethics behind conducting post-disaster research and the potential risks for participants. I therefore acknowledge and privilege the ethical commitment I have to my participants both in the field and during my write-up process.

3.10 Analysis and presentation

Narrative analysis is designed to take up the challenge of interpreting and understanding layers of meaning in interview talk and, importantly, the connections within these layers (Wiles et al. 2005). For researchers in the social sciences, the emotional dimensions of different experiences become more accessible, as people attach meanings and understanding to experience through narrative. Analyzing and reflecting on what individuals say provides us with useful insights into social and spatial processes and events. In reference to difficult emotional concepts (such as loss and anxiety), Rose and Bruce (1995) argue that people use language, rhetoric and commonplace phrases to frame what they do and how they do it, and thus to cope with the situation. In this sense, talking is used strategically, as well as to represent ideas and experiences.

The process of narrative analysis has been ongoing since fieldwork. I felt it was crucial to start analyzing each interview after it had taken place so that it was fresh in my mind. Therefore, after each interview, I returned to my apartment/hostel room and listened to the recording in its entirety. This gave me an opportunity to further familiarize myself with each interview away from the interview setting. It also allowed me to make some initial reflections on the emotional state of the participant and make some early notes on the interview content itself.

I listened to the interview audio recordings and transcribed sections verbatim. I transcribed only approximately 80% of each interview, due to the time-consuming nature of the transcription process. I recognise that there were times during interviews when participants veered off topic. Typically, this was towards the end of interviews. Therefore, while I noted the direction of discussion, I did not transcribe discussions that were not central to participants' experience with disaster. Each interview was transcribed as soon as possible after it occurred, so I could easily recall the situational information that the interview was embedded in.

While I recognise the ambiguity of narrative analysis, in the sense there are several aspects to a narrative, detailed and repeated readings of my partial interview transcripts allowed me to identity themes, commonalities and differences between participant responses. I used different coloured highlighters to code themes emerging from transcripts (see Saldana 2012). These themes were: loss, home, fear, love, community, happiness, anxiety and material objects. Once transcripts were thematically coded, I grouped them together depending on themes. Of course, many of these themes overlapped, and I used my own notes to develop the consistencies and differences between and within interviews. Eventually, "memory and connection" and "loss of home" became central themes that emerged from my research. These form the basis of my first two empirical chapters.

Once transcripts were finalized, I then made a separate electronic file that grouped participant transcripts depending on the object they chose to share with

me during my interview. For example, interviews where participants had shared a photograph were stored together. This was to make it easy to draw comparisons between interview transcripts. Any photograph of the chosen object was stored with transcripts to recognise that the objects themselves are inseparable from the way in which they have been narrated. When I discuss these objects in chapter 6, I include verbatim quotes to support these materials.

In order to honour the ongoing ethical commitment I hold with research participants, in the subsequent empirical chapters, I pair participant responses with a pseudonym. This is to protect their anonymity. I also explained to participants that some personal information would be used in this thesis (the suburb they live in, short personal histories etc). I have chosen not to engage with social science language in these chapters and present responses as narratives, rather than 'data'. This is to recognise the active process participants go through to narrate their experiences of displacement.

The empirical chapters that follow emphasize a commitment to in-depth research. I therefore present the detailed narratives and objects shared with me during my fieldwork, as a way to demonstrate the how participant emotions are grounded in and constructed by place. Due to the large number of research participants in this project, it is not possible to present each story in its entirety. I will, however, ground each narrative in a brief description of the research participant. In the empirical chapters that follow, these narratives will appear as the personal accounts that they are. They are represented objectively and true to participants' voices.

3.11 Conclusions

The following empirical chapters are rich with participant narratives. These narratives describe participants' experiences of disaster displacement and the emotional dynamics that influence how 'home' is conceptualised following disaster. As a result of narrative analysis, my empirical material is best demonstrated in three

separate chapters on ‘home’: ‘connection to home’, loss of ‘home’ and ‘materiality of home’. Together these chapters will demonstrate the spatiality of emotion in the post-disaster environment. As Casey (2009) suggests, knowledge and emotions are key ingredients in how we relate to places. Ultimately, then, my thesis will develop an understanding of how emotions influence how those affected by disaster relate to specific places in the post-disaster environment. Of course, there is much overlap between these chapters, highlighting both fluidity of emotions and the importance of ‘home’ in post-disaster environment.

My methodology was chosen specifically to complement the theoretical demands outlined in the previous chapter. These stress a focus on the subjectivities of emotion and the materiality of ‘home’. While these methods provide rich and poignant narratives, these methodologies also bring challenges and limitations. The ethics and complexities of researching in a post-disaster context will not be forgotten here. Instead, the empirical chapters that follow acknowledge the importance of my research setting in both narrative analysis and reflection.

The empirical chapters will unpick participant experiences. Small-scale analysis of these narratives will invaluably point to a broader way of understanding the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment. Together, my narratives have so much to say about the experience of disaster displacement and the complexity of post-disaster homemaking. They are raw and intimate and offer a unique snapshot into the post-disaster environment. Breaking the empirical section of this thesis into three chapters, however, provides a way of deconstructing disaster displacement experiences, acknowledging that they are experienced in complex and individual ways.

The first empirical chapter draws heavily on participant narratives to discuss nostalgia, connection to ‘home’ and the influence of social networks in the post-disaster environment. By exploring a number of different narratives and highlighting the individuality of emotion, this chapter begins to unravel how disaster-victims attach meanings to places through emotion. This chapter focuses specifically on

joyful conceptualisations of the post-disaster home and the way in which ‘home’ is positively understood as a place of belonging and safety. Furthermore, I begin to explore the multiple dimensions of the post-disaster home, considering how community strength and support influences how people indentify with these particular places.

Chapter 4

Returning 'home':

Memories and connections

"I remember one day going to the dairy, and there was this other woman on the street next to me and I was crying, and she was crying, and even though we didn't know each other, we hugged and cried together, because we were sharing this dreadful grief." (Kim 2011)

I first met Kim at Ipswich community centre in July 2011. I'd been given her name by a Habitat for Humanity volunteer worker, who told me what a remarkable story Kim had to share. On the morning of our interview, Kim was sitting quietly in the corner of the community centre, drinking a cup of tea. As I approached her, she greeted me warmly and gestured for me to take a seat. Kim looked visibly tired. Despite the warm weather, her face was pale and her eyes looked puffy and strained. I remember thinking to myself that this looks like a woman who has been through a great deal.

As out interview began, Kim started her story by telling me about her life before the floods. She painted a picture of a happy time, telling me: *"Life was good".* It was a time when Kim and her husband Colin were planning renovations to the downstairs portion of their home in Riverview.

Her story of the floods started the day before their house was inundated: *"Colin and I intended to stay, because we didn't feel any danger".* As a precaution, Colin decided to move their cars to top of their street once the water began to rise. Kim went on to discuss flood experience at length:

> *"I was exhausted that night and so went to bed fairly early. I woke up to Colin saying to me - holding a pair of gumboots – you might want to put these on. There was water lapping against our bed, and that was about 8am, and that was upstairs. Then we sort of realized that we were going to have to call the SES [State Emergency Service] to come get us. They took about 2 hours. By that time our bed was floating".*

When the SES (State Emergency Services) arrived with a helicopter, Kim was astonished by the eeriness of her neighbourhood. She remains haunted by this image:

> *"We live on the motorway and there's always traffic…to wake up and it was silence. Absolute silence. And all I could*

> *hear was helicopters and it was really, really strange. You know I actually dream about it now. I still dream about it."*

Unfortunately, the helicopter was unwilling to take animals. Kim and Colin, who refused to leave their beloved cat behind, were forced to wait on their verandah for a boat to rescue them. Kim described the disgusting conditions she found herself in:

> *"I said to Colin, I have to get out of the water, I just have to. And then main reason why I – even then I don't think I was thinking I was going to drown but I had spiders, ants, any insect, they just wanted something dry. Like I was an island and they all got on and it was just – EUGH. It was disgusting".*

Once the SES boat arrived, the couple was taken to a community refuge centre where they stayed for a few days. After this time, they moved in with Kim's second cousin Karen, who lived in an unaffected area of east Ipswich.

Kim's voice faltered as she recounted the emotions she felt viewing the damage to her house for the first time. Once the water receeded, they were able to return to survey damage:

> *"Walking into our house I knew I was in for a shock. So many thoughts ran through my mind. When you look at your home and see the damage done by such a flood, you just want to clean it, clean it, and clean it again – get it looking normal and back to feeling comfortable and safe".*

She went on to discuss the trauma she felt as the reality of the floods began to sink in. As a researcher, this part of the story was particularly difficult to listen to:

> *"And then we woke up and it was a world of hurt, you know? Like it just all hits you that everything's gone. And all we could think of was, try and look at the positives. We had Taz, my cat. But yeah... It's been really hard ever since. I ended up having to get anti-depressants. My husband refuses any counseling, but he talks to me. The first couple of weeks I spent a lot of time sitting out here at 2 o'clock in the morning on the phone to Lifeline, just to speak to somebody. And a lot of times I couldn't get through cos everybody else was in the same boat and they were so busy. But they have this calming music. So even if I didn't get to talk to somebody, I'd just listen to the music. And that really helped me."*

Kim and Colin were led to believe they were covered by insurance. Devastatingly, their claim was denied by Suncorps:

> *"And five weeks down the track, they said no, you're not covered. So then another wave of, you know... You just feel helpless. Really, and it's – you feel a little bit – I wouldn't say ashamed? It takes away a bit of your self-respect, doesn't it. Having to live with other people and really, rely on them. And ask for help, it's really hard."*

As my interviews went on, I discovered that this story was one similar to many. The insurance companies in Queensland received significant public criticism in the wake of the 2011 floods, amid complaints that some companies did not cover all types of flood in their policies and therefore avoided paying out claims. This prompted a federal government review (which will be explained in more detail later), which called for a standard definition of a flood, greater coverage easier to understand product disclosure stations and, importantly, a four-month time frame for claims to be processed (Hurst 2012).

Kim found herself, like many, in a long and tiring battle with Suncorps:

> *"Everything is so slow! In the end, I think the insurance companies just want you to give up…Having to constantly go through paperwork and think about what you've lost just makes it worse. It's like you have to experience everything again and again and it's not easy. I cried so many times after getting off the phone to Suncorps."*

The added stress from her battle with their insurance company heightened Kim's traumatic experience of the floods. Not only did she experience heartache after losing her house and many treasured possessions, but she then faced the painstaking realization that her insurance claim was void. As a result, her anxiety levels remained high, long after the floodwater subsided.

At the time of this interview, Kim and Colin had not yet returned permanently to their house in Riverview. During our meeting, Kim discussed her experience viewing flood damage to her home for the first time:

> *"When I saw my house for the first time, I think I was numb, you know? It doesn't really sink in. And there was this terrible smell of mud. And it just gets everywhere, in all*

the clothes and the furniture. It really was distressing – seeing somewhere so familiar to you, look pretty much unrecognizable".

Despite this level of damage, Kim and Colin still expressed a strong desire to rebuild their home. This intention was grounded by the emotional attachment they held to this familiar place:

> *"Our main aim is just to get back into our house. I think a lot of people feel like that. I mean I wouldn't say it was an easy choice and I will admit there were times that I wondered if we were doing the right thing. But it's the memories and connections and the community that brought us back. It's the house Colin and I built a life together in, and it's unsettling to think about moving. Or to think about not being able to go back. We'd rebuild again and again if we had to".*

Almost a year later (June 2012), I revisited Kim in the Ipswich community centre. The community centre itself had been renovated since my last visit, with new floors and lights, as well as the installation of a small kitchen. The place was buzzing. A group of women were laughing together and older man played cards with a younger boy at a table nearby. This time, Kim greeted me with a warm smile and hug. It was a welcome more akin to a friend meeting an old friend, which I found endearing. In herself, Kim looked brighter. She had more colour in her cheeks and a different haircut.

During this follow-up interview, we discussed the progress of her post-flood recovery, both in terms of her own personal struggles with the traumatic memories of the floods and the physical restoration of her house. The couple returned to their home in Riverview in March. During our interview, Kim told me that she feels stronger emotionally: *"Oh it has definitely got easier…each day is a step forward"*. She also, however, suggested that there are times when the still struggles with the reality of her loss:

> *"And you know, it's [grief] still here. It hit me the other day, I was driving along and all of a sudden I had tears running down my cheeks. It's the same sort of loss you experience when you lose a loved one. It's still there, that emotional blast".*

She continued:

> *"There are times when I wonder if I will ever come through all the sadness and distress. Colin and I draw comfort and energy from each other and from the support of our fellow Australians".*

Interestingly, Kim talks of her support on a national level, using her nation as an identifier for her neighbours. She went on to discuss the joy she felt upon returning to her Riverview home and the comfort she felt being surrounded by her own possessions again:

> *"The day we went back the sun was shining! Both of us were in a good mood, so, so happy to be home…I started unpacking boxes and rearranging things in the kitchen and I remember thinking that we could finally move on with our lives."*

By all accounts, Kim's story is one of heartbreak and hardship. While of course it is not representative of every narrative, it usefully begins to demonstrate the underlying trauma associated with life after disaster. Feelings of loss and heartache flow deeply in her story, bound up in the traumatic experience of disaster displacement. Her desire to return to the home she lost through disaster, relates largely to the emotional connection she feels towards the place she feels comfortable and safe. In this sense, 'home' is largely static – defined as a safe and familiar haven.

Kim's narrative also begins to suggest the emotional intensity of the post-disaster environment and the way in which emotions define her understanding of domestic space. My follow-up interview demonstrates the temporality of emotions in the post-disaster setting. While emotion is still prevalent, the types and intensity differ to the emotion that punctuated her earlier interview.

4.1 Introduction: Connection to home

The sections below will begin to demonstrate how emotions inform participants' understandings of the post-disaster 'home'. Our feelings about places

can be conscious, particularly in situations where change occurs (Brown and Perkins 1992, Manzo 1994). Brown and Perkins' (1992) research highlights that when there is a disruption to our daily routine, such as a disaster, it is accompanied by an increased awareness of our environment. These authors explore the active process in which people engage to establish, or indeed re-establish, their relationships to places. For example, in managing voluntary relocations, people take active steps to search for new attachments. Many even begin managing their relocation prior to the move itself, as individuals come to terms with the reality of leaving a place. This suggests that relationships to places can be a conscious process, as well as an unconscious one. In these empirical chapters, I intend to explore this contention further, examining how we become aware of certain places beyond time and disruption. How, in other words, we relate to certain places which have become meaningful to us through a life event (either positive or negative). These are, as Manzo (2003) suggests, places we must return to because of the events they symbolize and the emotional meanings they hold.

In this first empirical chapter, I will begin to explore how emotions help victims attribute meaning to certain places in the aftermath of disaster. As I have suggested, the post-disaster environment is a hugely ambiguous terrain, characterized by competing feelings and emotions. Julie, a single mother of two, who I met in Mt Omanney community centre, summarizes this reality succinctly:

> *"One of the worst moments was when the huge machinery appeared on our block to remove all the debris left. I did not want them to take it all away, to make it final and real. On the other hand I just wanted to start again and get my life back on track. It was an emotional tug of war watching the fragments of our precious life being scraped up and taken away. I cried."*

This raw and personal narrative illuminates the competing emotions that residents experience in the aftermath of disaster. Simultaneously, this quotation highlights the traumatic effects of the 2011 floods.

This chapter focuses predominantly on participants' emotional attachment to 'home'. Here, I explore the way in which 'home' is an emotional space,

highlighting the multi-scalarity of the concept (see Blunt and Dowling 2006). While drawing into focus the fragility of 'home' in the post-disaster context, this chapter will simultaneously deepen our understanding of people's emotional relationships to places. As Seamon (1993) suggests, the very term 'relationship' suggests a dynamic process. Throughout this thesis, I intend to explore the movements, rests and encounters, and indeed the interrelationships among them, that describe relationships to place as dynamic and emotive processes. Contributing to literature that explores the relationship between 'home' and 'away', this chapter specifically intends to explore the influence of nostalgia on decisions to return following disaster displacement. In this sense, we can see the way in which being away from 'home' helps to inform our understanding of being at 'home'.

4.2 Returning to a house

In 1988, Russell found large corner block of land in the Brisbane suburb of Graceville. Here, stood a beautiful, large Victorian House, which dated back over 100 years. This house stood out from the traditional Queenslanders because of its inclusion of closed verandahs. Built in natural timber and with decorative posts that adorned its interior, Russell told me how he knew this was the place he wanted to call home. During our interview, he spoke fondly of his house, which was situated in this quiet, green pocket of Brisbane:

> *"It's the sort of place where you sort of hang round and can retire here. I've already told my kids to mark out a little piece of land on the plot where you can put me when I'm dead and gone".*

When the January 2011 floods arrived, Russell remembered his experience with the 1974 flood. At that time, he was living with his sister in Fairfield: *"Given my upbringing, floods never really worried me. They were events that just sort of happened".* In 2011, he watched Toowomba flood through the eyes of his television set. Still, he remained in denial about the extent of the damage:

> *"I kept thinking, 'That's got to be wrong'. But then the waters rose here…I don't think it really impacted me until*

> *26 hours later… The point it really hit me was when I tried to get over the Pamphelett Bridge and it was blocked. I knew how bad it was then".*

Russell's house was very badly damaged. The waters destroyed his beautiful 7-inch pine floors, which bucked and twisted under the pressure of the floodwater. They washed away personal possessions and the memories of a happier time. With no insurance coverage, Russell was forced back to his sister's house in Fairfield.

At the time of our interview, 15 months had passed since the floods. Russell had still not returned to his house, but continued to express a strong desire to rebuild his house. His story was one of determination. He was restarting life, slowly sorting and repairing, and bringing the house he loves so much back life:

> *"I don't like letting go. I was devastated – it was like a piece of me was broken. When you see everything you've worked so hard for, like that – everything you've put together for so long being washed away, or thrown on the streets".*

Losing his beloved house was heartbreaking. As the floodwaters receded, however, Russell remained determined to return to his Gracevill home. This determination was motivated by his strong emotional connection to this physical structure: "*My life is that house*". Russell continues:

> *"The original gate entrance and the original decorative timber posts were saved, and they didn't get thrown out. They were part of the house when it was built, so I'll keep them with it. Just like that part of my arm* [points] *– it was there when I was born so I'll keep it with me. I'm re-doing the timber floors, walls and ceilings. Timber grows and lives forever. It lasts – Just like this house".*

For Russell, his idealised and romanticised domestic space reflects and shapes his own identity. His home is imbued with personal and intimate meanings and emotions, which affects the way he perceives this domestic space. This begins to suggest the affective capacity of home, highlighting the powerful emotive bond between people and places (see Duncan and Duncan 2001).

*   *   *   *

In chapter two, I explored literature that explores home as an emotional warehouse (Easthope 2004). Phenomenologists describe dwelling as a way of being in the world that spans a variety of settings. Furthermore, theoretical work on dwellings also brings the relationship between 'home' and 'house' into question. As Saegert (1985) suggests:

> "The notion of dwelling highlights the contrast between house and home. First, it does not assume that the physical housing unit defines the experience of home. It connotes a more active and mobile relationship of individuals to the physical, social, and psychological spaces around them." (Saegert 1985, 287)

Phenomenologists tend to view dwelling and home as existential states. More specifically, "home is often identified as the archetypal landscape" (Riley 1992, 25). This definition, however, neglects the complexity of the concept (Manzo 2003).

Tuan (1972) explored the term topophilia, which describes the affective bond between people and place. This bond is both an affective response to place, but also a practice that can actively produce places for people (Duncan and Duncan 2001). Malpas (1999) draws on Bachelard (1969) to explore this argument further. He states: "In Bachelard, the life of the mind is given form in the places and spaces in which people dwell and those places influence human memories, feelings and thoughts. Inner space is externalized and outer space brought within" (Malpas 1999, 5). This bond between people and place means that an investigation of places is essential to any phenomenological/psychoanalytic study of memory, self and mind (Malpas 1999).

Throughout my fieldwork, respondent narratives all demonstrate the affective bond between people and place. Narratives all discussed the overwhelming levels of loss they experienced as the Brisbane floods destroyed the places and possessions they hold an attachment to. During interviews, participants reflected on a dark and lonely time, when they lost not only their homes and possessions, but

also their dignity, their sense of self and their self-respect. During our interview in Goodna, Andrea expressed this sentiment clearly:

> *"It's weird to wake up and think that we no longer have a home. It almost makes you feel unworthy…and different. Like it's something to be ashamed of."*

Andrea's narrative demonstrates how losing one's home is not only emotionally distressing, but also leads to feelings of uneasiness and vulnerability. In turn, this contributes to 'house as haven' conceptualisations of home, as home is understood as a place of refuge and security. The loss of this idealised domestic space is deeply upsetting to disaster victims.

This romantic view of 'home' provided a theoretical foundation for understanding the emotional relationships to place because it affirms subjective experience (Chawla 1992). It also focuses on the residence as a locus of positive experience:

> "Seeking to preserve spiritual vision in an increasingly secular world, the Romantics transferred images of paradise as a place of final rest and fulfillment to secular images of home. Home became a haven" (Chawla 1992, 64).

Many narratives demonstrate how this romanticized view of 'home' drives a desire to return following displacement. For victims of disaster, the meaning of home is defined by these feelings of safety, happiness and comfort.

The West End is a lively inner city suburb of Southern Brisbane. It is commonly hailed as Brisbane's most multicultural suburb, hosting much of the city's indigenous population. The West End is easily accessible from the city centre and just a short walk away from the river itself. During my stay in the city I associated this suburb with vibrancy and culture. Along Boundary Street and Vulture Street, the West End is lined with quaint cafes and thrift stores, all creating an energetic and unique atmosphere popular with University students and young workers.

In 2012, I interviewed West End resident Rob about his experiences with the floods. He described a grim post-flood environment: *"If you had to liken it to something, the smell permeating the West End the morning after the floods, is*

probably closest to rotting fish". The worse damage Rob saw was along Ryan Street, where piles of destroyed household goods, clothes and memorabilia filled the footpaths. He went on to discuss his own perception of home:

> *"Your house is usually your - what's the word - it's a key place that you go to as your refuge so to speak, but all of a sudden you find you haven't got a house. Everything's – just everything in your house is - you know, destroyed. It's very traumatic."*

This narrative is helpful in that it demonstrates the way in which home can be conceptualised as a place of sanctuary and safety, illuminating the fixities of home. Here, home is the place that has not moved. It is a static refuge amidst the shifting post-flood landscape. In this sense, home becomes somewhere flood-affected residents have to return to. This understanding supports debates that suggest how emotions play a key role in the creation of certain spaces. Here, positive emotion is attached to and therefore defines 'home'.

Rob's narrative also brings into question an important point about the difference between male and female responses. Psychologists conceptualise emotion as having multiple components (Kring and Gordon 1998). These include a behavioural or expressive component, an experiential or verbal component and a psychological component (see Gross and Manoz 1995). Kring and Gordon (1998) suggest that emotion expressivity reflects the extent to which individuals outwardly display their emotions. Literature on emotional response in men and woman is replete with studies that explore the expressive component. With a few exceptions, results indicate that women are more emotionally expressive than men (for a review of the literature, see Brody and Hall 1993). While there is some discrepancy between whether women are more expressive in *all* types of emotion, results suggest that women are more expressive of most emotions compared with men. More specifically, studies investigating specific emotions have found women to be more expressive of sadness, fear, happiness and anger (see Kring and Gordon 1998).

Supporting the argument above, while Rob discussed the emotions he felt throughout his displacement experience, his overall expression of emotion was less visible than most of the women I interviewed. Of course, this is not to say *every*

woman was more expressive than the men I interviewed. The expression of emotion in men might also reflect discourses of gender (Brownlow 2005). For example, in situations of anxiety and unease (such as the post-disaster environment) expressing fear or sadness might be seen as an expression of weakness and therefore a challenge to traditional hegemonic masculine identity. Rob discussed the extent to which he felt a commitment to be strong for his wife: *"She was crying all the time, and so I knew I had to be the strong one. I mean I'm a sort of matter-of-fact guy. It happened, let's deal with it as best we can".*

My interview with Janelle demonstrates this argument further. During our interview, she described the different responses to disaster that she saw in the aftermath of the floods. She told me:

> *"It's funny how people reacted. The guy next door was good, in control, he knew what needed to be done and his wife was there too but after a while she cracked and she left the house. She left and said I'm not coming back until the house is fixed. She'd had enough – she was at breaking point. She was devastated to see her gorgeous home – and it is gorgeous – like that. She was quite distraught by it I'd say. To the point where she couldn't even talk to me. You know I'd pop over and say 'I'm returning this' and she'd say 'oh thanks' and she couldn't even stop and say hello. You could just see she was right on edge.*

Janelle's narrative again suggests the different ways that men and women respond to disaster. The woman depicted here was deeply traumatized by the damage to her home. The floodwaters disrupted and altered her conception of 'home', to the point where her return was restricted by the emotions she felt towards returning to a place that she no longer recognised. The next chapter will further explore these alternative visions of 'home' in more detail, deepening our understanding of how the post-disaster 'home' can disappoint us on return.

When speaking of her own experiences, Janelle told me:

> *"Walking into our house I knew I was in for a shock. So many thoughts ran through my mind. When you look at your home and see the damage done by such a flood, you just want to clean it, clean it and clean it again – get it*

looking normal and back to feeling comfortable and safe. I love our home and it was heartbreaking to see it like that, but we would never move elsewhere".

Again, this narrative highlights the heartbreaking loss associated with losing home through disaster. In essence, it also captures the emotional attachment Janelle holds to her house.

Throughout my fieldwork, men and women both expressed the extent to which their decision to return home was based on the emotional connection they held to this specific place. In literature on displacement, nostalgia is a key emotion that emerges as individuals yearn for the stability of past times and places (Milligan 2003). This literature also suggests that absence from places of significance (such as domestic space) leads to an emotional longing for this place (Skrabis 2008; Black 2002). The narratives of displaced flood victims are clearly punctuated with this emotional yearning to return to the place they perceive as home. In July 2011, I interviewed Natalie. Although still living in temporary accommodation as a result of the floods, she painted a happy vision of her old house: *"My home is beautiful! Green trees – Brisbane is always so green. It's my little sanctuary and I so want to be back. I get goosebumps just thinking about the day I finally move back".* For her, home is a place of happiness and familiarity. These positive emotions ascribe meaning to her domestic space, resulting in her definition of 'home' as somewhere she must return to.

In 2012, interviewed Luke at Benarrawa Community Centre. After extended financial struggles and an extensive renovation project, Luke moved back into his damaged house a year after the floods. Similarly to Natalie, Luke's home was a place of memory and connections. A nostalgic yearning to return drove his decision to go back to Graceville:

"It wasn't even a question about whether to go home or not. I'll never leave – this is it, it's my home. There's simply too many memories, it would be very hard to leave them behind".

Sylvia develops this argument further. After floodwater inundated her home in Graceville, she was forced to find temporary accommodation in a nearby suburb. She discussed at length the reasons behind her decision to return:

> *"It was just that – I felt secure here. And I felt comfortable. And I felt at home. I lived in several places after the flood and I never felt – never felt at home, you know. It never felt right. But here, I've come back and – you know when you put an old shoe on? [Laughs] It just feels comfortable."*

This narrative again suggests that feelings of nostalgia emerge among those who are forcibly separated from their home, which drives a desire to return. For those who continue to express this desire, although have not returned, their situation represents one of continued displacement. Bill and his family lost their home in Ipswich during the 2011 floods. During our interview, he told me: *"We just want to get back to our home – back to a normal way of life".* His emotional desire to return intersects with the other variables, such as financial stability, that limit his capacity to return.

Giuliani defines a psychological attachment to home as, "the state of distress set up by the absence, remoteness or inaccessibility of the object" (1991, 134). It is important to note that Giuliani treats home as an object. Easthope (2004) suggests, if we replace Giuliani's use of the term 'home', with the term 'house', and recognise that she has assumed that one's home is located within one's house, then her analysis remains useful. Her definition of well-being in the presence of home and distress in its absence is interesting and is similar to arguments about the role of the home in providing ontological security to an individual. Giuliani also discusses the quality of the attachment to home, which largely corresponds to its emotive connotations. Home, as Gurney (2000, 34) describes, is:

> "an emotional warehouse wherein grief, anger, love, regret and guilt are experienced as powerfully real and, at the same time, deposited, stored and sorted to create a powerful domestic geography, which, in turn sustains a complex and dynamic symbolism and meaning to rooms and spaces".

The narratives of residents displaced by the Brisbane floods go some way to render visible people's emotional connection with home. This, in turn, allows for a deeper understanding of their social relations, their psychology, their emotions and their lived experiences.

In January 2011, June and her daughter were living in Ipswich when their one-storey house was inundated with floodwater. I interviewed June for the first time in July 2011. At the time of this interview, June and her daughter were living with June's sister in New Farm. She told me:

> *"No-one can be happy without a home – it's just not natural. You don't have to have money to be happy and raise healthy kids, but you need a safe, clean, dry home – a home kids can bring their friends to and not feel upset because it's not their own home, but it's just somewhere temporary… I don't have a word to describe long-term displacement; being in limbo is just 'weird'. We want to be home and back in our comfort zone, rather than feeling like strangers in our own city"*

Her interview spoke at length about her experience of being forced to find temporary accommodation in Brisbane, the struggles she faced both financially and emotionally and her overwhelming desire to return to the house she tragically lost. Her vulnerability as a single mother featured prominently in her dialogue: *"I felt quite vulnerable and things became surreal – it became really hard to make decisions. It was just too much to deal with".* June's interview went on to discuss the emotional struggle attached to her loss of the comfort and familiarity that accompanied her life before the floods. She told me:

> *"Emily doesn't know any other home. It's the little things we miss. Not being able to cook in our own kitchen, not having our own space and not our own place. I'll tell you what, we won't ever complain about our house ever again. We're actually looking forward to housework!"*

Again, we see how disaster victims view home as a space where one can reconstitute the 'self' in a comfortable setting. This particular narrative also contributes to debates that suggest the way in which everyday practices, such as cooking and cleaning, alter private space. Heidegger's 'building as dwelling', explores

this further, demonstrating how these practices transform private space and have the ability to give the house its identity as 'home' (Tolia-Kelly 2004; Petridou 2001).

In February 2012, I conducted a follow-up interview with June. During this second interview, June expressed her mental progress: "*I feel much stronger now. One of the lessons in the aftermath is that every step back to normality – such as having a house, a roof, or a job, is a cause for celebration".* Although still living with her sister in New Farm, she and Emily were in their final stages of renovating their home in Ipswich. June told me:

> *"The more time has passed, the more we just want to be back. It's ridiculous how long we wasted battling with our insurance company NRMA – it was just a lost cause. We're a year on now and I can't even put into words how sick we are of being in this temporary situation. We don't seem to be able to close this horrible chapter of our lives. I dream of our old house – the garden, sitting out on the deck. [Sighs]".*

June's narrative contributes to ongoing debates that suggest the more distant a 'home' is, in terms of both time and space, the stronger an emotional yearning to return becomes (Black 2002). As she explicitly states, time lapse increases her desire to return to the place she perceives as home.

June's story also shares another parallel with Kim's. Like so many other affected residents, her home was not covered by insurance. Following a natural disaster, the insurance industry plays a vital role in funding the rebuilding, repair or replacement of damaged homes, infrastructure and assets (van den Honert and McAneny 2011) Approximately 88% of homeowners in Australia have home and contents insurance. These cover damage arising from most natural perils, with the exception of riverine flood. Flash flooding, as a direct consequence of rainstorm runoff following high intensity rainfall, is covered.

For the purposes of insurance in Australia, riverine flood is defined as, "the overflow from rivers and creeks following long duration rainfall over large catchment areas, or water rising up from flooding rivers, in contrast to water coming down from rain and storm" (van den Honert and McAneny 2011). Many policy

holders were unaware that most insurance companies do not offer cover for a riverine flood. This realization was not made clear until the catastrophic effects of the 2011 floods. Consequently, while insurers generally settled claims by insured victims of flash floods in Toowoomba and the Lockyer valley, many Brisbane river residents had claims denied (van den Honert and McAneny 2011). This led to widespread criticism of the insurance industry, through community backlash and media reports who claimed insurance companies were failing to honour their policies.

In response to this criticism, the Australian Commonwealth Government announced the Natural Disaster Insurance Review in March 2011. Key discussion points of this review included the issue of a single, unified and consistent definition of "flood" for insurance purposes (The Australian Government the Treasury 2011). In the context of availability and affordability of flood insurance, non-insurance and under-insurance, the review also explored consumer understanding and dispute resolution, flood risk measurement and mitigation and some aspects of government funding of natural disaster relief and recovery (The Australian Government the Treasury 2011). The review also highlighted the difference between flood insurance and risk management, stating that the former is not an alternative to the latter. Instead, it is a means of transferring the residential risk once risk management measures have bee put in place (van den Honert and McAneny 2011). Finally, this report also led to a decision by Brisbane City Council to raise the defined flood level. This will serve to decrease the city's vulnerability to future flooding (The Australian Government the Treasury 2011).

With so many stories of failed insurance pay outs, Brisbane's flood-affected were forced into a situation of heightened turmoil. This reality also contributes to debates that suggest 'home' is often dictated by largely political realities (Brickell 2012). For those who are financially insecure and failed to receive an insurance pay-out, were unable to renovate their houses due to their inability to fund their decision. This, in turn, heightens the emotions attached to this situation. The anger

and frustration among residents who struggled with insurance companies was evident through emotionally raw narratives. Angela, a young, single mother living in Taringa, told me: *"Who do they think they are? After everything, they've hammered a nail into our coffin. We'll never be able to go back now* [crying]*".*

I interviewed John, a retired carpenter, in Ipswich community centre. Although insured by Suncorps, John did not receive an insurance pay out after filing for a claim on his flood-damaged house. Despite this, John remained determined to return home and rebuild his house in East Ipswich. He told me this determination was motivated by the memories attached to this specific place:

> *"It wasn't even a question about whether we wanted to go home. My wife and I lost our daughter a few years ago to cancer and our granddaughter stays with us now – that house holds the memories of her mother and she says every day how much she wants to go back. Losing that house just brought back all of the feelings from when Anne died – she wants to go back so she can feel close to her mother again. We can lose the house, but we can rebuild the memories."*

John and his family hold a powerful emotional connection to his flood-damaged house. His narrative suggests the imaginative space of home, by implying that 'home' can be (re)envisioned and (re)created following disaster. In this sense, the emotive space of home is dynamic. It is a space constantly process, grounded in and constructed by positive emotions.

Narratives provided by Brisbane residents who did not receive insurance compensation also suggest an important element to post-disaster recovery. Socio-economic limitations to post-disaster return are commonly discussed within disaster literature in geography (see for example, Landry et al. 2007; Elliot and Pais 2006). Financial inability and struggles with insurance companies often dictate levels of post-disaster recovery capacity, which in turn leads to exacerbated stress levels in the aftermath of disaster. This is important to acknowledge because it explicitly highlights the complexities of a post-disaster environment and the variables that can shape the intensity of emotions.

Throughout this section, I have explored the insurmountable loss experienced when Brisbane flooded in 2011. Narratives of those who were displaced by this catastrophic event have begun to tap into the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment. These narratives highlight the powerful emotional connection displaced residents feel towards their flood-damaged homes. This emotional connection is driven by the feelings of familiarity, safety and memory that create an affective bond between people and their idealised domestic space. Critical geographers have long recognised, however, that the concept of home is multi-scalar. The following section will explore this in more detail, presenting narratives that understand 'home' on a broader scale. These narratives will discuss the emotional attachment individuals feel to their flood-damaged communities and/or neighbourhoods.

4.3 Returning to a community

"Progress is slow and it has been very tough and difficult to deal with [crying]*. It's been a long process but I think the community response has been quite overwhelming, and it's lovely to know that its there. There's a lot of people who think, oh the floods are over. But I know that from a lot of my school students, we've got people who are living in homes, in caravans, and the pain is still out there. Families in Ipswich, they're still finding it really, really though. Rebuilding money just doesn't go a long way". – Jo (2012)*

Betty has lived in the same house for the last forty years. In 1973, she and her family moved to Chelmer where they established themselves in a small house in the centre of the community. This house was small, forcing her sons to share a back bedroom. Later, the family extended the garage, added a patio and a fourth bedroom for extra room. Betty was a delightful, warm-hearted woman. During our interview she spoke at length about her personal resilience and determination to stay in her own house after the floods.

Growing up, all of Betty's boys were involved in Sherwood's local Scout Group. They enjoyed this activity immensely and relished weekend trips camping trips with their friends. At this time, her own life was centered around the house:

> *"At that time I was being a good housewife, baking every Friday. Everybody in the street baked every Friday and I can still remember the lass next door calling out saying she'd made a boiled fruit cake and she'd put the eggs in before it was cool and they'd all curdled! The children used to play with the other kids on the street while I'd rush around and get the kitchen tidied and so on. It's that sort of area".*

Betty was also involved in the local Methodist church at Graceville, teaching Sunday school and running the junior choir. She knew all the kids in the district and told me how she is still friendly with a lot of them now: *"They still ring me up and take me for coffee".*

As her boys were growing up, Betty didn't want to commit to full time work. She did, however, find paid weekend work with Channel 9, working the switchboard and taking shorthand. This job lasted until just after the 1974 flood. She was then offered job from the editor-in-chief of the Sun newspapers, which she declined. After the 1974 flood, however, Betty accepted work to pay for the repairs to her flood-damaged house.

Betty spoke briefly about her experience with the earlier flood, particularly noting the differences between the 1974 and 2011 events. She recalled watching the floodwaters rise with her two sons. They were collected in a small boat by a friend just before her house was completely covered with water. Help, she said, came from relatives and friends, particularly from the church. Although the house suffered significant damages, Betty and her family moved back into her house immediately after the 1974 floodwater receded. It was, *"a time when people made do".*

The 2011 flood event was very different experience. Betty now lives alone in Chelmer. Her sons left Brisbane years ago and her marriage ended in the 1990's. Unlike the 1974 flood, Betty was more prepared to leave her house when the floodwater began to rise in 2011:

> *"We put pictures in pillow cases and my brother-in-law did a few trips to the Gap – lots of things I didn't pick up… I didn't pick up my clock and my little radio – I knew from*

> *'74 I didn't need to worry about China and linen. I am sorry about some things I didn't pick up".*

After the floods, Betty stayed in temporary accommodation in a different suburb: *"I didn't want to leave in the first place. Initially I couldn't get back here to even see the damage and that scared me".* In the immediate aftermath of the floods, Betty was overwhelmed by the amount of community support she received. She knew some of the people who helped her, but said there were a large number that she didn't know, who came from local relief efforts. Old friends from work also returned to help her for a second time:

> *"I was sitting out in the middle of the yard with all these books around me in the middle of the mud and this pair of black and white spotted gumboots walked towards me. Linda said, 'Hello Betty'. She'd rung my other friend Judy and said 'I think Betty's flooded again. We should go round and help her'. Oh the support I've had!"*

During our interview Betty spoke fondly about her connection to Chelmer and to the house she has spent many years in:

> *"My dear little house – It was me who painted the inside, and wallpapered…This was my only home...the only home I'd had…I wanted to come back here. I've always felt safe in Chelmer. It's comfortable. It's a leafy quiet suburb. The people have remained mostly the same for years. It's a street where people are in and out of your house – if there's a need, they are there for you".*

It took a long ten months for Betty move back into her house in Chelmer. Due to the significant levels of damage, a substantial amount of reconstruction was needed for her house to be habitable again. During this time, Betty lived in four different places, staying with friends or in rented accommodation. She spoke openly about her emotional response to the floods:

> *"Looking back now, I was traumatized. I'd cry myself to sleep every night and I'd wake up and think, 'where's this' or 'where's that', or you know 'that's gone' and silly things like that. But when you're in another persons house I wasn't going to let them know I was crying, or that I'd like to get up and have a cup of tea because then they'd be up and I didn't want that. So I just used to cry quietly".*

Her narrative here touches on ideas of discomfort, recognizing that displacement represents an undesirable sensibility.

On the 5th of November 2011, Betty finally returned home:

> *"It was awful coming back. My forty year old house was a new house. Some of the furniture had been salvaged and once that went back in – once I put curtains up (thanks to my friend Joan who washed them for me) – once those went up it felt a little more like mine again."*

In the aftermath of the floods, Betty was helped by many non-profit organizations, including St. Vincent de Paul, who replaced some of her furniture and thoughtfully provided a Christmas hamper in December. Friends and family members also assisted in her healing processes. Through an incredibly emotional testimony, Betty told me of the gratitude she feels towards her neighbours. These people assisted supported her during her long struggle home after the floods:

> *"The lass across the road came in every afternoon to see me. She'd often bring me meals since I was on my own. I am eternally grateful to her. People here look out for me. I've been here for so many years, I just know everyone. Kath and I go shopping together. Dianne drops in to see if I'm ok. This kind of sort of thing makes life that little bit easier. I think that my community is this street – this is home, you know?"*

Betty's interview taps into many of the themes that are explored in this chapter. Her narrative discusses her traumatic experience of the floods, illuminating her connection to Chelmer in particular. Her home community is defined by the emotions she experiences in this particular space. Interestingly, Betty's narrative also begins to demonstrate the importance of social networks in the post-disaster recovery. For her, these social networks provided important emotional support during the aftermath of disaster.

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In chapter two, I explored literature on the critical geographies of 'home'. In particular, I considered the contested nature of 'home', drawing on debates that

consider home as a psycho-spatial entity, a socio-spatial entity, an emotive space, or a combination of all three (see Manzo 2003). More importantly for this section, however, my theoretical context is based on an understanding of 'home' as multi-scalar. This section will go beyond an overly simplistic view that home is merely a house, to explore how emotions affect the way flood affected individuals relate to their local communities.

This section will also explore the synergistic role of social networks in post-flood emotonal recovery (Li et al. 2010). Social networks are, "the trust, mutual understanding shared values and behaviors that bind members of human networks and communities and make cooperative actions possible" (Cohen et al. 2001, 4). As argued by Ritchie et al. (2007), when we contextualize social capital in terms of disasters, they facilitate a flow of information and provide a basis for action, assisting in both community and individual goal attainment. Particularly in reference to minority disaster victims, religious institutions have been seen as a major space of social capital (Mohan and Mohan, 2007). In their study, Li et al. (2010) determined that social networks were indeed influential in creating a positive relationship between people and places. Their study suggests that having a social network to return to in New Orleans led to a greater desire to return to the city following displacement. In contrast, creation of a social network in a site of displacement decreased the desire to leave the Katrina diaspora. Analyzing the narratives of displaced flood victims will allow for a deeper knowledge of how these social networks not only provide emotional support for disaster victims, but also establish themselves in the aftermath of disaster.

In 2011, I interviewed Ashley at the community centre in Toowong. During our interview, she discussed witnessing the creation of social networks in the aftermath of the floods: *"People really come together in crisis".* Mutual love and support is therefore experienced, felt and shared by people during times of crisis. Anna expressed the same sentiment: *"Disaster can trigger change, innovation and diversity, especially in the natural world. It's unfortunate that bad experiences for*

some, just bring out the best in people. It restores your faith in humanity". While the following chapter will more broadly explore the tensions, fractures and contradictions communities can face after disaster, the majority of displaced residents I spoke to focused on the strength of community in the aftermath of crisis. Australians, in particular, have a strong sense of national pride. Today, Australian culture is founded on battles and brave soldiers, sporting and working heroes and, perhaps most famously, the great outdoors (McAllister 1997). Australia defines itself by its Aboriginal heritage, vibrant mix of cultures and thriving art scene. With the exception of the United States, popular feelings of national pride in Australia are, in fact, higher than any other country in the world (McAllister 1997). In the aftermath of the 2011 floods, Premier Anna Bligh made a heartfelt speech to highlight Queensland's spirit:

> *"As we weep for what we've lost, as we grieve for family and friends. As we confront the challenge for memory. Let's remember who we are. We're Queenslanders. We're the ones they breed tough. We're the ones who get knocked down, and then get up again."* (Premier Anna Bligh 2011)

A similar story is represented through the narratives of displaced flood victims. They clearly highlight the role of community support in post-disaster recovery. Jennifer, a resident of East Ipswich, discussed how her community came together in the face of hardship:

> *"On the bright side, the community has come together. People and neighbours have met each other for the first time, and the amount of street BBQs and recovery BBQs that have been held in those streets with those residents has seen a renewed life and friendships within the street, which, you know… It's a shame a natural disaster has to bring that out to get the community to come together again, but I'm not sure I would have been able to come back if it hadn't been for all of the support. These people, they pick you up when you're having a bad day. They're the reason I didn't go crazy!"*

Here we see the creation of social networks through disaster. Her narrative also demonstrates the love of her community members, whose emotional support aided

Jennifer's return to her community. This contributes to literature that demonstrates how social networks provide emotional support for individuals living in stressful conditions (see for example, Unger and Powell 1980).

In addition to hearing about the support felt by displaced residents through interviews themselves, I also saw the value of this support through my volunteer efforts in Brisbane with HFHA and Connected. During my volunteer work, I often watched flood victims browse through clothes at the relief centre. For me, this was a reminder of the continued presence of emotional trauma in the aftermath of the floods. Volunteering also showed me exactly how communities come together in crisis. From the volunteers at Connected, there was an overwhelming sense of sympathy. From the flood-affected, I sensed love, hope and gratitude. In chapter three, I discussed the intimate moment I witness when a little girl found herself four new pairs of shoes at the Connected warehouse. During my formal interview with her mother, which took place a week later, Rose told me:

> *"The support I received here was unbelievable. Sometimes I used to come in just for a cup of tea and a chat. Connected have really helped me to get back on my feet and I'm not sure we could have got through these last few months without them".*

Rose's interview explicitly demonstrates the value of community support in terms of both emotional and practical support. For months, I watched people come to Connected to share their heartache in a situation that was more akin to friends meeting and exchanging stories, than any other scenario. There was an overwhelming feeling of support and love, as well as gratitude and hope.

In April 2012, I attended a RedCross and Ozcare co-funded community BBQ, which was held at the Sherwood Community Centre. When planning this event, the flood-affected suggested that the focus of the BBQ be on community development, rather than the floods themselves. It seemed as though some want to remove the 'flood victims' label, which they say so often identifies them. After this BBQ, I interviewed Shelly in the community centre. She discussed the value of these community development events:

“Everyone was working, and helping, but there was never one person in charge. That’s the great thing about a community. If anyone asks me what makes a healthy community I would just say people getting involved for a positive reason and that’s happening daily, regardless of any disaster. But when a disaster comes, it really manifests it in very powerful ways”.

She also discussed at length the emotional connection she holds towards her community, stating, *“I can’t imagine being anywhere other than here. It’s a wonderful place”.*

4.1 Sherwood community center BBQ (April 2012) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

This sentiment was discussed between both male and female respondents. My interview with Michael, for example, explicitly demonstrates his emotional attachment to the Oxley community. As a child, Michael lived life on the move. He lived in the Hunter Valley region, Baxland, Penrith, Wagga and Melbourne:

> *"I can remember it was Dad's plan to settle in Brisbane eventually. He'd come from here and so to us it seemed like the promise land! In Wagga we lived close to the lagoon and I remember seeing birds and turtles as a boy and imagining one day being in Queensland watching crocodiles!"*

Michael and his family moved to Oxley in 1990. Tragically, his parents were killed in a car accident in 2002. After this, Michael and his sister stayed in their family home until his sister married in 2007. Now, Michael lives in the house with his five year old dog, Abbey.

During our interview, Michael told me he was aware that his house had flooded in 1974. As result, he was extremely apprehensive about its vulnerability to future flooding. As he watched the floodwaters start to rise, Michael began making precautions early, placing books and valuables in zip locked bags and storing them in the attic with the knowledge that the last flood didn't reach the ceiling.

When the Brisbane River peaked, Michael left his house to stay with a friend in Mt Ommaney. The next day, he returned to survey flood damage. Using a boat to glide gently down Richardson Street, he negotiated rubble and debris in the remaining floodwater. When Michael reached his house, he was astounded at the levels of damage present. During our interview, he spoke at length about the traumatic experience of seeing his house in this state:

> *"It really was horrible, seeing everything like that. I felt numb and didn't know what to do. I would say I'm a fairly straightforward guy and I don't tend to show my feelings very much, but standing looking at my house covered in water made me cry."*

Many of the individuals I interviewed had a tendency to believe that their situation was not as bad as that of other people who had been affected. No matter how much damage or loss they spoke of, victims often told me that their situation could have been a lot worse. Michael, for example, said he felt like he was one of the lucky ones:

> *"My situation is better than many. Some stories are very sad. People still paying mortgages on houses they couldn't use and renting elsewhere. There's so many houses not*

> *completed, or abandoned. I feel so bad for people where it happens every year – Roma, Rocklea, Windsor…How can you put up with that".*

Again it was Michael's connection to Oxley that drove his motivation to return and renovate his flood-damaged house:

> *"You want to be home…It's been a good house and I love the area because I know so many people. It's a good location. No I wouldn't move…moving is traumatic. I don't like change".*

Immediately after the floods, Michael moved to Toowoomba to stay with family. After this time, he returned home briefly, before moving in with a friend in nearby Graceville. Michael spent the next six months waiting for his house to be renovated and repaired. At the close of our interview, he told me: *"I'm happy I'm home. We've been a close community always and it's the memories and history that brought me back".* Michael's narrative again contributes to our understandings of the underlying trauma associated with life after disaster. For Michael, home is conceptualised in terms of the natural and built environment of Oxley.

In January 2012, I interviewed Joanne at Ipswich Community Centre. Although she and her husband had not yet returned to their flood-damaged house, the love and affinity the couple hold for their community motivates their determination to return one day:

> *"We miss our community a lot. It's difficult to understand if you're not from there, but it's always made us happy. The friendly faces and community spirit. It's painful to be somewhere now that's so unfamiliar and cold to us".*

Again, Joanne's narrative demonstrates the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment and underlines how emotions unite in and around places of significance. Joanne's old community, for example, becomes significant through the positive emotions she experiences in this place. Joanne's narrative also supports arguments that suggest 'home' is a key element in people's sense of themselves (see Blanchard 1969).

4.4 Conclusion: Returning 'home'

This chapter begins to unveil the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment. The 2011 Brisbane floods caused heartbreaking loss to thousands of people. This loss resulted in feelings of sadness, anxiety and anguish, which torment victims who are attempting to recover in the aftermath of tragedy. My interviews with flood-affected individuals highlight the ongoing trauma associated with life after disaster. They remind us of the long-term nature of flood recovery and the continued emotional turmoil residents face in the months after disaster.

Contributing to literature from within emotional geography and work on the critical geographies of 'home', my narratives have so far conveyed the way in which places are made meaningful by feelings and emotions. In the post-flood landscape, home is a dynamic, emotional and multi-scalar place. In this environment, emotions affect how flood victims move through and relate to places. Home is meaningfully understood as an important place and structure of belonging and togetherness. Narratives explicitly suggest that an emotional attachment to home drives a desire to return and rebuild following displacement. 'Those who are separated from their flood-damaged home create a nostalgic and romanticized view of the place they perceive as comfortable and familiar. Narratives also suggest that the more distant home is, in terms of time, the stronger an emotional yearning to return becomes.

Together, my narratives also suggest that home is embedded in personal meanings, memories and emotions. As such, different people are likely to understand home in different ways and in different contexts. Indeed, as Lawrence (1985, 129) notes, any analysis of home should include "a study of continuing processes rather than isolated actions". As evident from my narratives, it is impossible to provide a detailed and static definition of 'home'.

In the chapter that follows, I therefore intend to explore how disasters can disrupt and alter conceptions of 'home'. More specifically, this chapter will further consider our emotional relationships with place and the way in which the post-disaster 'home' can represent distance, tension, disappointment and neglect (Brun and Lund 2008). Again, my intention is to highlight the dynamic nature of 'home',

demonstrating how meaning is constructed out of movement as home is (re)imagined and (re)created in a number of different ways.

Morley (2000, 47) contends, "At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation". The ambiguities and challenges of the post-disaster environment create inevitable emotional turmoil for displaced flood victims. As this chapter has demonstrated, disasters produce feelings of uneasiness, discomfort and anxiety, which may threaten the security and familiarity of domestic spaces. It is these emotions that will remain at the forefront of my enquiry, as I continue my investigation into their spatiality and influence within the post-disaster landscape.

Chapter 5

Loss of ‘home’

"It was a few days before we could get back into the house. The whole neighbourhood resembled a war zone with a smell no words could describe. People and emergency services were scattered around like busy worker ants, they scuttled between heavy moving equipment and rubbish trucks. It was heart wrenching to see everything look so broken. It was a place I couldn't be". (Liz 2012)

In January 2011, Liz watched in horror as the Brisbane floods consumed her West End post-war cottage. The floodwaters came to just below the ceiling, destroying almost everything Liz owned. During our interview, Liz told me she was unaware of just how high the floodwaters would come:

> *"When I was evacuated, I took just my laptop, photo albums and a folder with some important documents…I knew our house was in a flood zone, but I wasn't around for the 1974 floods in the area. I'd questioned the real estate agent about being in a flood zone and even considered calling off the contract but she had said 1974 was a one in a one hundred year flood. Everything would be OK. So I really had no idea just how high the waters could rise".*

Liz went on to discuss her distress at leaving some of her personal possessions in the house. In particular, she spoke of a rug she had received from her mum for Christmas. Before she evacuated, she rolled up this rug and put it on her bed for safekeeping. Sadly, the floodwaters washed it clean away.

When Liz evacuated, she went to stay with a work colleague who lived on high ground in East Ipswich. Together, they watched in dismay as their city flooded:

> *"Sitting across town on much higher ground, we sat glued to the television set, watching Channel 9's 'rolling coverage of this unfolding disaster'. Every now and then there was 'breaking news' of yet another street that had gone under. Another person missing. Southbank was under. Riverwalk had broken away. Drift restaurant was floating down the Brisbane River. From the comfort of the couch, it all seemed a bit surreal, like it was happening somewhere else, to someone else and not me...Until it was."*

Liz continued, discussing the heartbreak she felt watching her neighbourhood appear on the television screen:

> *"They say nothing is black and white, but when you see your street name right up there on the television and reporters in your neighbourhood doing their live crosses – well, it's black and white.*

> *There's no grey. Your street has gone under. Your house has gone under. And in one split second, nothing is the same".*

Still, Liz remained positive at this point, stressing: *"I really just wanted to get back. I was so tired, I just kept thinking 'everything will be OK when I'm home".* A few days later, Liz was able to return to her West End home to survey the damage. She watched the Mud Army, Brisbane's flood recovery volunteers, travel from house to house while television crews *"looked for the most disastrous area to film from".* The media, intent on documenting the worst damage, moved up and down the street amidst people who had returned to assess the devastation. The floodwater reached just below the ceiling of Liz's home:

> *"I was shocked and devastated – yes, that's the best way to describe it. Total devastation. Absolutely everything was destroyed and turfed out into the street to be collected by the endless trucks. All the beautiful photos in silver frames, Mother's day cards, Kindergarten drawings. A lifetime of memories destroyed. The interior of our home was covered in a thick, sludge of mud and sewerage, and the backyard was littered with neighbouring hot water systems, wheelie bins and furniture".*

Liz spent the next two days cleaning her home, with the help of *"kind strangers".* The previous owners even stopped by to see if they could help with the recovery process. They had experienced the 1974 floods and so empathized with Liz's loss. Their compassion came from their own memories of losing personal possessions in a flood event.

After such devastating damage to her home, Liz decided the best option for her and her family was to relocate to a different suburb. She simply could not face the task of rebuilding. She attributed this decision to a number of factors. Firstly, she was fearful about the possibility of further flooding in the area: *"We weren't happy about rebuilding there. We sort of - well, what if it happens again, you know?"* Amidst all of the generosity of her community, Liz also spoke about the looting she was subjected to:

> *"The house was completely open, windows broken, it was all open, you could just walk in. We got robbed over and over again, five times. The majority of people were fantastic, and then we saw the other side of it. The neighbourhood was deserted and it was like*

even our police gave up. And it was pure looting – like shopping for free in our shed. Everything we'd got, sheets, towels, all of it was gone again".

More specifically however, Liz discussed the feels she experienced when present at her flood-destroyed home. This, she told me, was the overriding factor in her decision to move elsewhere:

> *"I feel sick in the stomach every time I go there. I do. It's just instant. I sort of – there's a few times I thought, oh what's going on, you know? I feel really queasy. And then I worked out, it's just every time I go there. Just being there and seeing it. Seeing our house, you know, like that. And the dirty muddy water, the idea of that. That just does it. You think, you're better off somewhere else."*

At the time of our interview, Liz was receiving aid from Habitat for Humanity. The organization provided a fully furnished three-bedroom house, which was totally free of charge. Liz was busy excitedly searching for a plot of land for her new house: *"Thanks to Habitat we can move on. We have a future now and we are just over the moon. We can leave the horrible memories behind".*

5.1 Introduction: losing 'home'

Contributing to literature from within emotional geography and work on the critical geographies of 'home', chapter four began to suggest the way in which places are made meaningful by feelings and emotions. In particular, I explored the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster home. In the post-flood landscape, 'home' is an emotive space. As my narratives suggested, those who are separated from 'home' during displacement create a nostalgic and romanticized view of this particular space. Feelings of happiness, comfort and belonging construct a static vision of home as somewhere that must be returned to. For many, this emotional attachment drives a desire to return following displacement. Liz's story supports this contention, as she discussed a strong emotional connection to her flood damaged home. Her narrative, however, goes on to demonstrate the emotions she experienced viewing her flood-damaged home. In particular, she discusses her distress and anxiety viewing her once familiar home in a state of devastation.

Furthermore, she discusses the fear of future floods and her experiences with post-disaster looting. The Brisbane floods altered Liz's perception of home to a point where 'returning' was no longer her desired displacement outcome. With new opportunities elsewhere and the support of Habitat for Humanity Liz is looking forward to "starting over" and recreating a new life for herself in a new suburb.

Liz's narrative suggests how emotions influence the way we perceive places. Furthermore, it usefully demonstrates the importance of non-profit aid organizations in the flood recovery process. Liz's recovery is largely aided by Habitat for Humanity:

> "Habitat for Humanity works in partnership with God and people everywhere, from all walks of life, to develop communities with people in need by building and renovating houses so that there are decent houses in decent communities, in which people can live and grow" (Fuller 2000, 293).

Volunteering with HFHA helped me to understand the vital work non-profit organizations do in the aftermath of disaster. They build much more than just the physical structure of a house. By building hope, they reinforce relationships, strengthen communities and nurture families at a time when people are in desperate need of support. Liz's aggravated conception of her West End home caused her distress and anxiety in the aftermath of the flood. By providing Liz with a new house, Habitat gave Liz both material support and emotional. Non-profit organizations therefore play a crucial role in long-term post-disaster recovery.

Throughout this chapter I aim to broaden our understanding of the emotions associated with disrupted conceptions of 'home'. Through narrative analysis, I will demonstrate how feelings of uneasiness, sadness, anxiety and fear can infiltrate and alter post-disaster conceptions of 'home'. Ultimately, this chapter explores the domestic 'uncanny', highlighting how disasters affect domestic geographies of the familiar. Here, I will suggest that in this context, 'home' is often (re)built from something more than memory, drawing on narratives that show how people are often just as keen to forget as they are to remember.

5.2 Altered perception of 'home'

I met Catherine at the Sherwood Flood Support Group. Although she was not a regular attendee, Catherine came to the group about once a month, to connect with fellow flood victims. After a few informal meetings, I arranged a formal interview with Catherine at the community centre. She is a young mother of two who lived in Ipswich when the Queensland floods hit. Together with her boys and husband, Catherine evacuated from their home the day before the Brisbane River peaked. Similarly to many others, she told me that she had never expected her house to incur so much damage:

> *"Right before, we put a few sandbags down, and I remember thinking 'Maybe I'll have to replace the carpet once we get back'. It seem so ridiculous now* [Laughing] *that I even cleaned up my house a little to make sure it looked nice for when we got back. I even hung up some new pictures I'd gotten at the market".*

Leaving her home, however, Catherine was suddenly struck with the reality of the situation. She began to worry that the floods would devastate her house to a level beyond the possibility of repair. At this point, Catherine realized that she might return to a very different place than the one she was leaving:

> *"At that point, I think a part of me knew that it wouldn't be the same when we got back. From the truck I took one last look at the house and there was this sudden eeriness in the air – like a silence. I was sad. I took it all in because I got this really ominous feeling that 'I don't know how it's going to be when I get back.' I thought it might be moldy cos of the water, but I still had no idea I was going to lose everything".*

Initially, the young family stayed in motel on the outskirts of Ipswich, while they waited for the floodwater to recede. Catherine remarked that their situation was somewhat fortunate. She remembered the many friends and neighbours who struggled to find temporary accommodation in the days that followed the flood peak. Watching coverage of the flood on television, she was astounded at the levels of devastation:

> *"I mean, I remember just watching the TV like I was in a theatre, just a whole bunch of good memories come flooding back of*

where you live, and then sadness – because, you know, it's not the same".

Four days after the floodwater receded, Catherine and her husband left their boys with a friend and returned to their home in Ipswich to view the damage:

> *"We'd spoken to a few friends who told us our road was pretty bad but I was still hopeful – excited even to get home. Driving down our street it was like someone had just coloured it grey and stepped on it and decided to throw a cup of water on it. I mean it was just like a horrible, horrible dream. Everything was just very abnormal, and I had this very surreal feeling like 'what's going here".*

When they eventually reached their house, Catherine was heartbroken at what she saw:

> *"It was a very weird scene. Just horrible. Like the most horrible thing you can imagine. Water got up to about 9 feet in our house, so that meant we lost everything. Our first home had been washed away* [Starts crying]*".*

Despite an initial desire to return to their Ipswich home, Catherine and her family have since relocated to Sherwood. While they wanted to stay in Ipswich to be close to family, they decided to move to another area of the city to "*escape the bad memories*". Catherine told me:

> *"I just couldn't stay there. I walked around the house bawling my eyes out. Everything was covered in mud and it stank. It was as if everything about the house was dead to me – everything was gone.* [Crying] *And I cried to Stephen that I couldn't stay there cos it was breaking my heart…So I left and I haven't been back since".*

This narrative was particularly chilling to listen to. Catherine visibly emotional and her distress was heartbreaking to listen to. The notes that I took during this point of our interview read: *"horrible and hysterical",* reflecting the traumatic impact of the flood. My sympathy during this interview was, however, useful for knowledge production. My own emotions provoked a connection between Catherine and myself. In other words, my sympathy created a connective medium through which we shared knowledge of the floods and the emotional turmoil caused by the event.

Once they had decided to relocate, Catherine's husband took their ten year old son to *"say goodbye"* to the house he had grown up in: *"We thought it was*

important that he see it one last time. Louis was too young, so we thought he wouldn't understand, but Stephen took Sam. He was very brave about it".

With "*no desire to see more than I've seen*", Catherine and her family have built a new life for themselves in Sherwood. Although Sherwood was also badly affected by the floods, Catherine's interview discussed the new opportunities she has found in their new suburb:

> *"People here were affected too and that's sad. We know what it's like. But for us, being her is like a new start. The boys are at a new school. Louis has just started kindy. We like it here. Everyone's friendly and there's a real sense of community. I think it's very easy to be lost in this sort of situation. And I've met a lot of people who are I think. I think maybe I was initially – I was grieving. But now we've adjusted pretty okay considering everything we've been through. It's been a tough road but we're finally feeling like we're back on our feet".*

Our interview was carried out 14 months after Catherine lost her house in Ipswich. Despite her obvious distress, she was extremely forthcoming with her story. She even verbally acknowledged that she enjoyed our interview. When I asked her about this in more detail, she told me that she was *"grateful to have you listen to my story. Of course it's painful, but it helps, you know, to talk about it".* This is why Catherine attended the support group. She enjoyed the social setting and connecting with people who had shared the same experiences as her.

Catherine's story is very representative of the reality of losing home through disaster. Importantly, it exposes the intimate feelings of loss and distress that present themselves as 'home' is disrupted and altered through disaster. For Catherine, the sadness she experienced viewing her house as somewhere that no longer looked or felt the same led to her decision to relocate to Sherwood. Heavily influenced by these negative emotions, Catherine's narrative demonstrates how the post-disaster home can become a place of tension and anxiety.

In chapter 2, I discussed literature that calls for a deeper understanding of the way in which home can aggravate and disappoint us, as well as offer us comfort and support (see Brickell 2012; Manzo 2003). Research and literature on people's

emotional relationships to places tends to focus on place as a source of rootedness, belonging and comfort, neglecting a consideration of the ambivalent experiences and feelings we can hold to places. Indeed, chapter 4 demonstrated that participants often view 'home' as a place of familiarity, safety and comfort. Ultimately, displaced residents define 'home' as somewhere they want to return to. Narratives in this chapter, however, provide a deeper perspective of the negative aspects of people-place relationships. The anxiety and sadness experienced at the once familiar 'home', drives a desire to relocate elsewhere. This, in turn, highlights the dynamic nature of people-place relationships.

Giuliani and Freedman (1993) challenge the view of early place-attachment theories, which suggest a purely positive experience:

> "If we accept the prevalent definitions of place attachment…that it is an affective bond to place, we need to consider whether or not to include…a negative emotional relationship. To speak of negative attachment contrasts with the everyday meaning of the word. The places where Nazi lagers were located are certainly 'places' with a strong emotive value, in particular for Jewish people. Would they say that they are 'attached' to them?" (Giuliani and Freedman 1993, 272).

This contention is further explored through feminist research on negative experiences in the residence (see for example McDowell 1999; Kuribayashi and Tharp 1998; Anthony 1997). Interestingly, these studies suggest that places where negative experiences occur can become just as meaningful as places where needs are met and security is found. Emotional bonds with places can, therefore, form or change over time (Manzo 2003). This is particularly true in situations where one has experienced tragedy or loss. Phenomenologists, for example, have long explored the experience of separation from place (see Seamon and Mugerauer 1985). In this situation, a person feels alienated because they are from an environment that is confusing or unkind (Manzo 2003). This dynamic is particularly useful when considering experiences with one's residence. For those who experience the residence as a source of trauma, a person may experience existential outsidedness

or alienation towards a place that was once one of their most intimate places (Manzo 2003)

Together, the narratives of displaced flood victims illuminate the negative and challenging experiences of home following disaster. The painful emotions that resonate through their narratives powerfully bring to the fore the tensions and ambiguities that victims of disaster face as they negotiate the reality of rejecting the home they romanticized at a distance. Catherine's story above depicts the heartache she experienced viewing flood damage. Her romanticized image of home, held as she was separated from it, was shattered by the intimate anxiety she experienced upon returning to her house in Ipswich. The emotions she experienced being present in a place altered by disaster impacted her decision to relocate to Sherwood. Similar emotions were present in Kim's narrative, which I recounted at the opening of chapter 4. Her experience with trauma haunted her flood recovery. Kim's anxiety and distress defines her meaning of 'home' in the post-disaster environment.

Many more of the flood victims I interviewed experienced feelings of alienation and anxiety in the aftermath of the floods. In March 2012, I interviewed Pauline in the Indoropilly Community Centre. In 2011, Pauline's one-storey bungalow was completely inundated by floodwater. Her narrative interestingly suggests that she did not consciously understand her own feelings towards 'home' until it was lost. At the outset our interview she told me:

> *"You don't fully know how lucky you are, to own a home until you actually have to leave that home through a natural disaster. The first few months were really hard. It was almost impossible to establish any form of normalcy at that time, because I was forced to leave my home. It's something that's unexplainable when you are forced to leave and you feel you can't go back".*

Pauline was visibly distressed throughout the majority of our interview. As I listened to her heartbreaking story, I felt compassionate for her struggles. Pauline's interview discussed the emotions she experienced in the immediate aftermath of the flooding and the emotional stress she continues to endure. She told me:

"I'm the sort of person that has never been depressed, but after the floods, I knew I was. I felt like I was trapped in my own body, and I couldn't do anything but let it do whatever it was doing….How do I feel now? Well, I'm not saying I don't have moments of where I slip right back and I'm there at that day, at that moment in time. Because I do. I have those. I still have bad days. Still have my pajama days where I just want to stay in bed and I don't want to speak or see the world. In that sense, I guess the trauma is still so raw".

While staying with relatives in the initial aftermath of the flood, Pauline held a strong desire to return to return to her flood-damaged bungalow: "*I just wanted to get back – back to a normal way of life".* This statement contributes to debates concerning how the image of 'home' is idealised from afar, resulting in a desire to return (Wyman 2005; Black 2002). Pauline's narrative suggests a desire to return to a state of normalcy, which she equates to her life before the flood. In a similar way to many others, she classifies the aftermath of the flood as a period of *"limbo",* which is unfamiliar and *"deeply upsetting".*

A few days after the Brisbane River peaked, Pauline returned to her home in Indoropilly to view the flood damage. For her, this damage was particularly painful because this was the first house she owned outright. Driving towards her bungalow, Pauline was met with desolate and unfamiliar streets:

"I cried from the moment we started towards our house until I reached our street. I mean it was just devastating to see, you know. And it was so quiet. You know, normally, I'd come into my street and you'd see a neighbour and shout "How you going!" but there was nobody around. Everything was drowned".

Inside her house, Pauline was met with total devastation:

"I felt devastated. I thought everything would be okay but I was so disappointed at what I actually saw. When I walked in, there was this very thick mud. It was a very bad experience to see things that meant a lot to you, damaged and broken. Furniture was upside down and everything had moved".

Studies of return among diasporic groups suggest that disappointment is a common result of return. Returning to a place in reality can be deeply disorientating for migrants, when this romanticized image of home is not met (Christou, 2002, Markowitz 2004). While these studies do not deal with post-disaster return

migration, Pauline's narrative suggests similar disappointment on return. While she imagined returning to a comfortable and familiar place, the floods irreversibly altered her conception of this domestic space. The distress and anxiety experienced at her flood-damaged home changed the way she relates to this place within the post-disaster topography. As a result, she was unable to return to her bungalow permanently.

Since the flooding, Pauline has moved to Mount Ommaney. She now lives in a small apartment near the railway station, which lies on higher ground. Despite an initial desire to return to Indoropilly, Pauline was unable to face the reality of rebuilding her home after the flooding:

> *"You know I wanted to go back. I really did. I told myself that I needed to just suck it up and get on with it – like everyone else seemed to be doing. But I just couldn't do it. It was just too much for me to deal with…It wasn't home anymore...What I really miss is the neighbourhood. I miss knowing everyone in my street, but it seemed so broken after the flood. I'm still in touch with some of my old neighbours. Some moved on like me, and some stayed".*

Here, Pauline's narrative demonstrates her inability to overcome the levels of distress she experienced at her flood-damaged. The flooding destroyed her first home and broke the emotional attachment she held to this once idealised domestic space. Pauline's narrative also brings up an interesting point about how people negotiate their emotions in different ways. During our interview, Pauline worried about appearing "weak" through her inability to return rebuild her bungalow. She discussed feeling as if she should be able to deal with the impact of her loss in a better way. This was a sentiment expressed by a number of those flood victims who did not return after disaster. Essentially, they felt ashamed of their grief. Finally, Pauline's narrative also expresses the various return outcomes, suggesting the complex emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment.

During our interview, Pauline expressed a deep sense of post-disaster disillusionment. In fact, this was a sentiment commonly discussed during my interviews. This disillusionment is characterized as a time when survivors attempt to deal with their grief, as the reality of their loss becomes clearer. Many relive the fear

and danger of the flooding, while others mourn deeply for the loss of loved ones or for lost homes and possessions. Pauline's narrative focused on the level of anxiety she felt during the aftermath of the flooding: *"I do feel anxious – particularly when it rains. When it rains I'm a wreck* (Laughs nervously]. *It's very exhausting".* Mental health literature suggests that a major source of anxiety following a disaster event is a lack of routine (see Cook and Bickman 1990). While attending Sherwood Flood Support Group and the Centenary Recovery Group, I connected with a number of mental health professionals who discussed the work they do in the community. Psychologists, psychiatrists and mental health nurses provide a range of assistance to flood victims in Queensland. While it is not the purpose of this thesis to dwell on the psychological effects of the disaster, drawing attention to them is useful for understanding the long-term emotional impacts of disasters. Notably, their work illuminates the complicated long-term mental health issues facing flood victims. As Pauline's narrative demonstrates, the emotional effects of the Brisbane floods continue to affect the everyday lives of those who were impacted. In June 2012, Queensland Health Service was still conducting assessments with flood victims across the state, demonstrating the long-term effects of disaster-based trauma.

Post-disaster anxiety can also be exacerbated as the brutal reality of dealing with bureaucracy can bring disappointment and anger as people wait for help, insurance payouts or rebuilding assistance. Despite holding home insurance with NMRA (Australia's largest insurance company), Pauline did not receive any insurance money in the aftermath of the floods. This, she told me, was a major source of anxiety:

> *"For me it was the final straw. I was already grieving for my home and to find out that our insurance was basically worthless was just it. I couldn't be there anyways, so I decided to cut my losses and move".*

Pauline's post-disaster anxiety was fuelled by the distress at her altered conception of home and the frustration when her insurance company refused to pay out for her claim. Ultimately, this anxiety contributed to her decision to relocate to a new

suburb of Brisbane. Although her journey was a complicated *"emotional rollercoaster",* she was looking forward to building a new life in Mount Ommaney:

> *"I was picking curtains the other day for my new apartment, and I've gradually gotten more furniture from Connected and some of my friends donated some things. In that sense I'm lucky and I'm starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel…It's starting to feel more like home".*

Contributing to debates that suggest the concept of home is fluid and dynamic (Blunt and Dowling 2006) Pauline's discusses how she slowly re-creates a sense of 'home' in a new dwelling. Her narrative demonstrates how emotions influence the way 'home' is understood following disaster and, ultimately, how homes can be re-created in this context.

I spoke with many more relocated flood victims who expressed stories that shared interesting parallels with Pauline's. In 2012, I interviewed Hannah, who was living in Oxley with her 84-year-old mother at the time of the floods. Hannah was visibly emotional as she talked me through the reality of returning to somewhere that no longer held the same levels of attachment it once did. Similarly to many others, Hannah told me her story through a very tearful testimony, demonstrating the reality of continued levels of trauma in this environment. When the floodwater began to rise in Oxley, Hannah was reluctant to leave. Her elderly mother was extremely frail and she was worried about the physical strain of temporary relocation:

> *"Everyone was out on the streets, everyone was out there – except us. We had a boat in our garage, that was our insurance, so that if our island went under, we could still try to find our way to dry land. Mum is 84 years old, so I didn't want to put her through all that trouble and upheaval unless it was really necessary".*

Hannah spent a long, strenuous day carrying furniture and their canoe upstairs as a precaution. She and her mother then watched the floodwater slowly rise, stopping just level with the clean blue water of her neighbour's pool. Looking out onto the street from her window, she observed her now quiet community:

> *"It was so quiet on the street. No more people as everyone had gone. There was no wind and the rain had stopped so the water*

> *was quite still. I looked for a sign that anyone else had stayed, a kerosene lamp in a window or something, but I didn't see anything. The only light I saw were a few Christmas lights flickering across the water. I guessed they must be solar powered."*

Although she was emotional during our interview, at times I felt Hannah reflect on her situation calmly and thoughtfully. The quote above in particular depicted a setting that was very serene. There was something almost beautiful about the way she painted a picture of the reflection of the Christmas lights in the water. Her gentle voice aptly conveyed this moment of stillness amidst the post-disaster chaos.

After a few hours, Hannah took a trip downstairs to find waist-height floodwater in her living room. *"I think I was quite numb, it's surreal to be standing in water in your home. It felt like I was in some sort of dream".* Taking the canoe downstairs, she decided to inspect the current level of damage. With limited daylight left, she set off into this new "*topsy-turvy world*":

> *"I looked for the places where the ground is lowest, following the deeper water along Glenwood Street, with its many trees. Oxley Road rose out of the water and I beached the canoe on Queenscroft Street. On a normal day, the traffic would have been creeping slowly at peak hour. No-one was there".*

Hannah drifted slowly back to her house, where she continued to track the watermark. That night, Hannah struggled to sleep: *"The water lapping against our home, here in the middle of the city, was unnerving*".

The next morning, the water had risen about another metre, making it increasingly difficult to maneuver inside the house. The stillness she spoke of so gently remained, but had now become a source of anxiety. Her mother was beginning to struggle in the house, due to her limited mobility. At this point, Hannah decided that it was time to leave. After calling the SES, the women waited for what seemed like an eternity. Eventually, a boat arrived to collect them:

> *"They were really great with mum. Calmed her down. I think she was pretty numb too as she wasn't saying much. Once we got out of the water, we went to stay with friends on the other side of Chelmer. They lived on high ground, on a house that was moved to where it was after the 1893 flood, though I didn't know this at*

> *time. They were kind enough to open their home to both of us. I think that's one of the biggest stories from the flood. The kindness of others – not just friends and family, but total strangers. Stretching out a hand when you need it most".*

A few days later, Hannah began to feel the devastating effects of the flood. The reality began to sink in, she felt overwhelmed by the gravity to the situation

> *"It took a few days to sink in, but then when it did hit it was just a pain I cannot describe. To realize that your life, everything you've worked so hard for…that so much has been destroyed. I wouldn't wish it on anyone. I tried to think of the positives. We had some furniture that was upstairs and not damaged, but I found it really, really hard. So did mum of course. I was constantly worrying about her too. One day we sat on the front porch of my friend's house and cried together".*

Viewing the flood damage was an extremely difficult experience. Hannah's narrative suggests the physical aspects of emotions, as she explained: *"Experiencing that level of loss was gut wrenching. That's when I really cried".* Emotions then, are not simply cerebral, but physically expressed in this environment.

Unable to cope with the loss of her home, Hannah and her mother have since relocated to a new house on the other side of Brisbane. At times, they struggled to settle into their new community. The alternative of returning to Oxley, however, is not something she feels she could handle. She called her decision the *"lesser of two evils"*. This reinforces how emotions are often specific to certain spaces. The feelings of loss and anxiety experienced at her flood-damaged home give meaning to this specific place. Ultimately, Hannah's decision to relocate since the floods was determined by the painful level of loss she experiences in her old neighbourhood.

Hannah's interview usefully demonstrates the emotional impact of the 2011 floods. Unlike many others, she did not evacuate when the floodwaters began to rise. Instead, her disaster experience was extremely first-hand, which it seems has impacted her level of trauma. During our interview, Hannah admitted that she continued to struggle with the memory of being trapped in her own home. Her interview spoke at length of the numbness she experienced in the immediate

aftermath of the floods. In mental health literature, this absence of emotion is a common immediate reaction to experiences with disaster (see for example, Foa at al. 2006). These studies, however, tend to focus on numbness within discussions of post-traumatic stress and depression, neglecting the way in which emotions (or indeed a lack of emotions) are grounded by the concept of place. Geographic studies, then, have much to offer this understanding of the spatiality of emotions. The post-disaster topography is a space where emotions present themselves in a variety of different ways.

Hannah's story also illuminates the fragility of 'home' in the contemporary world. As I discussed in chapter two, excluding natural processes has long been a prerequisite for the construction of the familiar space of home (Kaika 2005). When the floodwaters inundated her home in Oxley, they shattered the emotional attachments she felt to this once familiar domestic space. Contributing to work on the domestic uncanny, Hannah's narrative explores the impact of crisis on domestic geographies of the familiar. The flood initiated feelings of uneasiness, discomfort and anxiety, tearing down the security and familiarity of her home.

My interview with Sarah also demonstrates how disasters can impact the way in which we understand 'home'. In 2011, Sarah talked vividly about losing her house in the Brisbane floods. When the Brisbane River peaked in January, Sarah was in New South Wales on a family holiday. Despite being initially "*excited*" to return to Brisbane, returning to assess the damage to her home was emotionally heart-wrenching: *"It didn't even look like our house – just this strange shell I didn't know."* After this first visit, Sarah made countless trips to back to her damaged house to further assess the impact of the floods. She was also keen salvage some of her possessions: *"I found my grandmother's wedding ring amongst the piles of rubbish!"* Her teenage son struggled significantly in the aftermath of the floods. At one point, Sarah took him to get psychological help, *"He's been depressed. He had to go see a councilor. He told me that he wants to paint his room black".* During my attendance at Sherwood Flood Support Group, I met representatives from Queensland Health.

This local government authority offers flood victims counseling services in the aftermath of disaster. Interestingly, their services are separated into adult and child branches. During our meetings, the Queensland Health representatives openly discussed the affect of natural disasters on children. While it is not the purpose of this thesis to explore the emotional impact of disasters on children, Sarah's narrative and the services provided that specifically target child recovery suggest the wide extent of post-disaster trauma.

During our interview, Sarah discussed the emotional struggles she and her husband faced in the aftermath of the floods. In particular, she spoke of the reality of visiting the house they lost so tragically:

> *"Mark won't go visit the house, he says he can't deal with it and I do understand. I thought it wouldn't be that bad, but every time I go and stand in front of it I feel physically sick".*

This narrative suggests the spatiality of emotions in the post-disaster context. Sarah's emotions are grounded by the physical location of tragedy. In this case, her flood-damaged house. The negative emotions she and her husband experience at this specific place influence the way they ascribe meaning to 'home' in this environment. Illuminating the differences between an expectation and the reality of post-disaster return, this narrative also begins to suggest the gender discourses among male and female responses. While Sarah and her husband experienced a similar set of emotions when present at their old home, other interviews suggest that women experience negative emotions upon return much more explicitly than men.

In chapter 4, I suggested the differences between how men and women express emotion in the post-disaster environment. I explored studies that suggest females are more emotionally expressive than men (see for example, Brody and Hall 1993). Generally, these studies indicate that women are more expressive of sadness, fear, happiness and anger (Kring and Gordon 1998). In my fieldwork, men tended to be less open about their emotions. Instead of visibly expressing their sadness, most man came across as strong and brave often in the post-disaster environment. Often,

this was in an effort to support their female partners. In 2011, Neil talked me through feeling "*crushed*" in the initial aftermath of the flooding. As our interview progressed, however, he spoke about the development of his coping strategies:

> *"I was pretty cut up at the time, but my wife is still devastated. She wanted to leave when we first saw our home – couldn't deal with the reality of it all. I think she just wanted to close the door and forget… I deal with it like I deal with anything. You get knocked down, then you get up, dust yourself off and get on with it. I have to be strong for my wife. I find it best not to dwell on it – of course there are times when I feel sad, but as I tell Penny, what's happened has happened and we just have to get on with it. There's no use crying about it".*

Neil attributed their ultimate decision to relocate to his wife's inability to deal with the emotions she experienced when present at their flood-damaged house:

> *"We made the decision pretty quickly. I think once you realize that you are better off elsewhere, it makes it easier. Once we Penny couldn't wait to regain a sense of normalcy in a new place. We were both ready for something new".*

Neil's narrative again supports arguments that on the fluidity of 'home' (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Blunt and Varley 2004; Young 1994). While the floods disrupted their former sense of 'home', relocating to a new suburb offered Neil and Penny the chance to recreate home in a new setting. For Penny, this new 'home' offered an escape from the traumatic memory of the floods. Neil's narrative also reinforces the gender discourses that present themselves in the post-disaster context. During our interview, Neil was never visibly emotional. He spoke in a casual tone, supporting the matter-of-fact view he held about his own disaster recovery. The post-disaster situation is one characterized by anxiety and unease. For men, expressing fear or sadness in this environment could be seen as an expression of weakness and therefore a challenge to the traditional hegemonic masculine identity (see Brownlow 2005). Neil remained emotionally strong to support his wife during a difficult time.

Some of the men I interviewed did visibly express their emotions when faced with the destruction of their home. In February 2012, I interviewed Marie at the Benarrawa Community Centre. Benarrawa is a community hub, situated at the

intersection between Sherwood and Graceville. In 2011, Marie's old Queenslander home was inundated with floodwater from the Brisbane River. Similarly to many others I interviewed, Marie was not expecting to be hit badly:

> *"When the floods came, I was perhaps in denial. People kept ringing me up and saying 'You're on the river, what do you think?' and I kept saying 'It's not going to happen, it will come up maybe to this top level of lawn, but it won't go any further, it wont encroach our house'. I just couldn't believe that would happen. People across the road were sandbagging, and we had put a marker down on the lawn, about 2 metres high and we were just sitting watching it and when it reached the top my daughter said 'I think we have to do something mum, just in case' and I'm saying 'No no no, wait until it hits the swimming pool'. Well, it hit the swimming pool and covered it, and my daughter wouldn't take no for an answer, she began to take stuff back to her house. She lives in Corinda, two suburbs away".*

Six days later, Marie and her husband returned to view the flood damage:

> *"We had to wade through the water to get up the front stairs and then come in here. We could see the debris under my son's windowsill (the scumline) and we had a big billiard table downstairs that had stuff piled on it and the waterline came to just underneath the green baize of the pool table".*

Marie discussed the gravity of her husband's emotional response to the floods, portraying his initial reaction to the flood damage:

> *"I wouldn't say I was traumatized, but my husband was totally traumatized. When we came here to see what had happened he could not even walk into the house. He sat on a fence across the road and would not come in. He refused to come in. And even when it had all gone down, he would not come back to see it. He just couldn't handle it. It was heartbreaking for him. He just couldn't see it."*

Unfortunately, I was unable to interview Marie's husband. As a result, it is not possible for me to reflect on his emotions. Marie's exploration into these gender discourses, however, reflects the way in which emotions are individually unique. For Marie's husband, the sadness he experienced viewing the damage to his beloved Queenslander home was unbearable to see. As a result of her husband's emotional struggle, the couple have since relocated to Corinda to be closer to their daughter. Marie told me:

"It seemed like a much better option, you know? My husband couldn't handle being there and we decided to move closer to Claire. Get a nice little retirement place, you, know? I'm 60, I'm retired now and my husband is semi-retired. We have a lovely little bungalow now, which we moved into just before Christmas. My husband is much happier now. Of course most of the furniture is new but we do have some of our old things, which we managed to salvage from the Queenslander. We can thank Claire for that. She took it upon herself to be the 'police' [Laughs], *and she would say 'no that's salvageable, just wash the tiles down, you don't have to throw that'. Because all the helpers were gung ho on throwing everything out. No matter what it was if it had mud on it, out it goes. And so she was pretty good like that she would stop them and say no put that aside."*

Marie's narrative it is useful in demonstrating how emotions are spatially defined and simultaneously constitutive in place construction. In other words, while Marie's husband experienced negative emotions when present at his destroyed former 'home', he is happier and now recreating a new sense of 'home' in a new space. Browns and Perkins' (1992) research explores the active process people engage in to establish a connection to a specific place. They argue that this is common during times of change, such as the period following a disaster. Marie's narrative supports this contention, demonstrating how a new space offers her husband an escape from the memory of the floods and place to form new attachments.

5.3 Changing 'home': changed community

In chapter 4, I discussed the synergistic role of social networks in the post-disaster recovery process. I explored the value of social capital in the aftermath of catastrophe and the creation of social networks as people come together during a time of crisis. Chapter 4 also demonstrated the multi-dimensional aspects of home, arguing that 'home' is indeed multi-scalar. It is often defined as a specific community, rather than one physical dwelling. Demonstrating how emotions influence the way in which disaster-affected individuals relate to their communities,

my narratives highlighted how feelings of comfort, familiarity and safety influence decisions to return to disaster-affected communities following displacement.

This section of the chapter, however, attempts to explore how negative feelings impact and therefore influence flood victims when their community network is broken through disaster. Disasters often engulf whole communities. Commonly, victimization is shared (Kaniasty and Norris 1995). A disaster, in other words, can evolve into a devastating collective trauma, “a blow to the tissues of social life that damages the bond linking people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality” (Erikson 1976, 302). Many have documented the levels of solidarity, fellowship and altruism that commonly emerge immediately after the event (as demonstrated in the previous chapter). In particular, these studies recognise the outpourings of mutual helping at a time of crisis.

Paradoxically, disasters can also impede the exchange of social support because they disrupt social networks through death, relocation/displacement and the psychical destruction of environments conductive for social interactions (Kaniasty and Norris 1995; Drabek and Key 1984). Unlike the disaster itself, stress caused by an extreme event is by no means acute. As my narratives suggest, victims of disaster (and their communities) are left facing continuous challenges in the months and years following the event. As time lapses, the initial increased sense of benevolence and mutual support dwindles, as the reality of loss and grief consumes victims. Of course, non-government organizations such as The Red Cross, Ozcare, Connected and Queensland Health work to maintain and (re)establish the levels of community support in the aftermath of disaster. Unfortunately, their funding remains limited. Ozcare, for example, were funded for disaster recovery until September 2012. Spending time in a community still struggling, I understood this deadline would worry those who continued to require practical and emotional support in the aftermath of the floods.

In psychology, there are a number of studies that document the depletion of community and social networks following disaster. For example, Erikson (1976)

explored how the survivors of the United States Buffalo Creek disaster suffered both individual and collective trauma. The latter was reflected in their loss of communality. Human relationships in the pre-disaster community were established from traditional bonds of kinship and neighbourliness. When forced to give up these long-standing ties with familiar places and people, survivors experienced demoralization, disorientation and loss of connection. Stripped of the support they received from their community, affected residents became apathetic and seemed to have forgotten how to care for one another. As a result, survivors of the Buffalo Creek flood struggled to find the personal resources to replace the energy and direction they had once found in their community (Erikson 1976).

Destruction of the physical environment as a result of disaster may also disrupt social activities such as shopping, recreation and attending church. These community activities create a sense of social embededness and promote companionship. In their study with Hurricane Hugo victims in North America, Kaniasty and Norris (1995, 96) explore this argument in more depth:

> "Victims experienced disruption of routine activities, loss of opportunities for fun and leisure, and less satisfaction with their social lives. Relocation or job losses removed relatives, friends or neighbours from readily accessible social networks. Personal fatigue, emotional irritability and scarcity of resources augmented the potential for interpersonal conflicts, isolation and loneliness".

In this sense, natural disasters can impair the capacity of a community's support systems by dislocating and shattering established ties. Interestingly, Kaniasty and Norris's (1995) study also demonstrated how deterioration of social networks and community impact the psychological well-being of Kentucky flood victims. The erosion of social support accounted for increased levels of depression and trauma among victims (Kaniasty and Norris 1995). While these studies are useful in illuminating the impact of reduced social networks and community support following disaster, there remains a void in geographic studies on this impact. Brisbane's flood-affected often conceptualise home in terms of a wider community or suburb. When they are displaced from this community, victims expressed a desire

to return. My narratives, however, also show how the breakdown and alteration of community through disaster is often a contributing factor for victims when they decide relocate following displacement.

In 2012, I met Michelle at a Centenary Recovery meeting. A week later, I conducted a formal interview with her at the Mount Ommaney Community Centre. She and her husband were living in Rocklea at the time of the floods. This suburb was one of the most badly affected by the 2011 flood event. Michelle's personal story started much further away from Queensland. She was born and raised in Sydney, moving numerous times as a child before spending her late school days in Western Sydney. At 18, she moved to Melbourne for university, where she met her Brisbane born husband. They moved to Brisbane in 2004, just before the birth of their son and were happy to be closer to Michael's family. Her immediate impression of Rocklea was positive. The suburb offered a quaint charm akin to that of a little village. She was visibly animated as she happily described her old neighbourhood:

> *"People were very down to earth and welcoming – once they know you are here to stay! Neighbours saying hello, people in the street saying hello while walking by you, shop owners getting to know your name. I really felt very comfortable. It was different from Sydney where I grew up, shop owners didn't know your name there".*

Michelle's fond memories of her old neighbourhood in Rocklea highlight her established connection to this particular community. Rocklea became meaningful to Michelle through the positive emotions she experienced living there.

As a result of the 2011 floods, Michelle's home was partially inundated by the floodwater: *"enough to cause some serious damage, but I think we were relatively lucky".* Although the first floor was livable, Michelle and Michael decided to stay with Michael's brother-in-law until the water had receded. Elsewhere in Rocklea, friends and neighbours suffered similar damage levels. Sadly, the local school and "*heart of the community*" was also entirely flooded.

Five days after the floodwater receded, Michelle and her husband returned to their home in Rocklea to survey damage:

> *"When we drove down our street it was pretty deserted. There were some volunteers out – the Mud Army – they were there sweeping away at people's driveways. Before I came back I thought that everything would be the same – but nothing was the same. The sparkle had gone. It's sort of complicated when you try and explain it but I didn't want to see our neighbourhood like that. I wanted to remember the lovely place it used to be. It was very sad to me – to finally feel like we had found a place to call home and then to lose it."*

As a result of her experiences that day, Michelle and Michael made the *"difficult decision*" to pack up their belongings and move to a nearby suburb. They have been back to the area since, noting the huge impact on the Rocklea community: *"The impact on the community was just huge. There are still homes that are empty after 18 months. They either can't afford to rebuild or moved out and don't want to know".*

Almost a year and half after the Brisbane floods, Michelle still has days where her mind drifts back to her old community:

> *"I do find myself slipping back to, what I call the good old days now* [Laughs] *that's the biggest thing I miss – the community – that network. Feeling like I have support around me has always been a very important thing to me. I mean, just being able to visit so many people in one day and just having a good time, going here and there, knowing exactly where everything is and where everyone lived. They used to have little park in the middle of the community, where everyone would gather on a Sunday. Sometimes there'd be live music and a barbie and everyone would be there in good spirits. This stopped after the floods – I'm not sure whether it's started up again."*

With her old neighbours now scattered across different Brisbane suburbs, Michelle and her family have settled into a new routine in Mount Ommaney.

> *"It's nice to get a sense of routine back, you know? We're starting to feel like we know more people now and there's quite a few community events here in Mount Ommaney. I'm glad, there was a time after the flood where I felt a bit lost…a bit lonely".*

Perhaps due my own personal narrative, which involved over ten relocations before the age of 11, I was particularly touched by Michelle's story. I felt a deep level of compassion towards her as she spoke of finding 'home' in Rocklea and the subsequent distress she felt returning to a shattered community.

In contrast to Michelle, 62-year old Fiona had lived in Graceville all of her life: *"My parents lived here too, until they passed away. My sisters and I were brought up in the same house and I knew everyone on the street".* When Brisbane flooded, Graceville experienced particularly high water levels. Fiona told me:

> *"All the little pockets. After living there for all of those years and seeing what it is not. It just broke my heart [crying]. I told my daughter that I wanted to move closer to her. So I sold my home to a builder, who I think was going to re-develop it. This was sad in itself, saying goodbye to my house as well as the community that I had lived in for so many years. But it didn't look the same, and it didn't feel the same."*

Fiona's narrative contrasts with many of the other older participants I interviewed. Broadly, throughout my research, those who had lived in a particular community throughout their life expressed little desire to relocate elsewhere, regardless of trauma level. Fiona, however, could not deal with the negative experience of returning to a community she no longer felt a connection to. As a result, she relocated from Graceville to a new, smaller home in a different suburb. Again, this difference highlights the individuality of emotions, demonstrating the different ways in which we negotiate emotions in times of crisis.

Fiona's narrative also brings up an interesting point about the value of family networks in the aftermath of disaster. Anelle clearly explores this point:

> *"The ones that really suffered were the older generation, in the 70's, who lived in the houses on the other side of the railway. Some of the houses are still vacant, because those people, they either don't have the money to come back, or they've got no support. They're the ones who I really feel sorry for. We have our friends and family, but it's the ones who lost everything and don't have anyone to help them. Even though the government says they've helped and everything – they say the best they can - the ones who really struggle to come back are the ones with no emotional support. It's tough for them."*

Fiona's relocation was motivated by her negative experiences in Gracevillle. In her fragile, emotional, post-disaster state, relocating closer to her daughter offered Fiona a level of much needed support in the aftermath of the floods.

Fiona now lives in a small flat that is actually closer to the river. I asked whether this was something of a concern to her, but she seemed un-phased by the threat. Still, she remains haunted by the memories of the flood, despite her new physical location:

> "*Pushing it out of your mind doesn't work as a long term strategy. Avoiding the memory doesn't work either, for example avoiding a certain place that evokes memories. I do feel better being away from Graceville, but I still have nightmares about it".*

As Fiona's narrative demonstrates, these traumascapes create a bond between people and specific sites of tragedy. The 2011 Brisbane floods distorted Fiona's relationship to Graceville. Despite once holding an emotional connection to Graceville as 'home', she now perceives this specific suburb as a place of anxiety and unfamiliarity. These feelings prompted her decision to relocate to a different suburb following disaster displacement.

Both Michelle and Fiona spoke of losing their community through the floods. This catastrophic event broke connections and caused heart-wrenching distress to many communities across the greater Brisbane area. Interestingly, although they had forged connections with their communities over different periods of time (Michelle since 2004, Fiona since birth), both Michelle and Fiona discussed the negative experiences of returning to a community heavily altered by disaster. Together, their narratives deepen our geographic understanding of the spatiality of emotions. These negative emotions are tied to and embedded in specific places. As Anderson and Smith (2001) suggest, these emotions present themselves in response to specific situations, such as times of crisis. Ultimately, these narratives demonstrate how meaningful senses of space emerge only through the interaction between people and places.

While in Australia conducting fieldwork, I worked at The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) as a visiting scholar. This provided a useful resource for my

research, as a number of colleagues in the School of Social Science were affected by the floods in 2011. One colleague, however, declined to participate in my project. She felt she too emotionally raw to talk of her experiences, which involved an SES home rescue. Her refusal to participate reminded me of the continued emotional trauma present in the post-disaster environment. The long-term emotional impacts of the disaster continue to affect the lives of those who experienced it.

While at USC, I also met Holly, a researcher in social policy who was living in Brisbane at the time of the floods. After their home was inundated, Holly and her young family relocated to the Sunshine Coast. When the floodwater started to rise, Holly's family was quick to pack up as much as they could. With a full jeep, they headed towards the Sunshine Coast to stay with friends:

> *"Since our home had flooded in 1974, we knew there was a big likelihood it would happen again and with young children we didn't want to take any chances. So we packed up the ute and headed up towards Bribe".*

As with many of the interviews I conducted, Holly was unaware of the extent of the flooding until she returned to view the damage:

> *"We just had no idea. Our home was totally destroyed. When we walked up to the house we saw piles of what looked like rubbish on the street. We didn't realize, until a bit later, that it was that it was our stuff. Piled high on the street along with everyone else's. It was all covered in a thick layer of mud".*

Holly was particularly impacted by the breakdown of the local community following the flood: *"Our little community was broken…I was devastated to see it like that....It was very distressing.".* Being present in her old community provoked feelings of uneasiness and distress. These emotions influenced her decision to move to the sunshine coast: *"I didn't like being there anymore. Something just felt wrong so we decided to cut our losses and bring the children up to the coast. I work here anyway so it seemed to make sense".*

Holly and her family now live in the small community of Peregian Beach, which is situated about 20 minutes north of the University, just south of Noosa. At the time of our interview, Holly seemed happily settled in her new community:

"We're lucky really. We're now renting a great place close to the shops. I managed to salvage some of our stuff from the street by hosing off the mud. Most of it wasn't salvageable but some was ok. We've got it in our new house now, which has come together nicely…I love Peregian. It's a really tight community, a good place to bring up children. There's a famers market every Sunday, which everyone goes to. We normally go – I'll have a coffee and the children will play with friends, then we'll all have a walk on the beach. A few weeks ago a teenage boy died in a surfing accident and it rocked the community quite hard. Absolutely everyone was at the funeral. It's that sort of place".

Since moving to Peregian, Holly has forged deep connections to her new community. For her family, the community offers opportunities and levels of comfort she no longer found in Brisbane. Her narrative demonstrates the way in which disaster victims can consciously create attachments to new places. While she has *"not forgotten the floods, or the heartache they caused",* she has created a new home for herself in a new community. This creation of home was aided by the inclusion of some material objects from her old flood ravaged house. This begins to highlight the way in which objects play a role in the creation of 'home' following a natural disaster.

5.4 Conclusions: An undesirable 'home'

This chapter contributes to geographic work on the domestic 'uncanny'. Throughout this chapter, narratives have revealed the helplessness, terror and subsequent hardship, grief, suffering and loss caused by unprecedented, massive and unavoidable floodwaters. These floodwaters inexorably crept up on some and thundered violently and unexpectedly down on others. The often-inspirational accounts of courage, bravery and the resilience of the human spirit highlight the undeniable emotional affects of the 2011 floods. While chapter four explored emotional connections to 'home', this chapter has gone further to explore the understudied negative emotions attached to the experience of returning to a place deeply altered by disaster. Demonstrating the way in which disasters have the ability to disrupt and alter one's conception of 'home', this chapter highlights the levels of

anxiety, loss and despair that make returning an extremely challenging process. Contributing to the limited geographic literature that explores the way in which home can disappoint us on return, this chapter further explores the emotional attachments people feel to places. Loss features prominently in my narratives, which discuss a loss of home and subsequent loss of routine, familiarity and feelings of safety. Narratives also document loss of community and social networks in the aftermath of the floods.

This chapter furthers our understanding of the way in which emotions play a key role in the construction of place. While many narratives explore the emotions present when physically viewing damage to their homes, this chapter also notes a number of circumstances when participants viewed flood-damage from a distance, through the eyes of the media. In this sense, their emotions are constructed by the representations depicted by the television. Viewing images of flood damage evokes feelings of uneasiness and vulnerability among those affected. These emotions then inform their understanding of this lost place.

This also chapter begins to make an important distinction between voluntary and non-voluntary notions of leaving home. When the 2011 floods inundated houses across the Brisbane River catchment, they caused an involuntary displacement of thousands of people across the city. These flood victims were forced to find refuge in new communities and unaffected suburbs in the greater metropolitan area. This chapter specifically focuses on the impact of negative emotions experienced when residents visit their flood damaged houses and communities. Feelings of anxiety, unfamiliarity and discomfort provoke an alternative vision of 'home' as an undesirable place. In his 2006 report, Anderson contends that in almost every decision people make, there is a component in us that wishes life to be somehow better (Anderson 2006). In this context, hope compels flood victims to voluntarily opt for a better life elsewhere.

For those who chose to relocate, this hope intersects with the negative emotions that arise when flood victims are faced with their old 'home'/community.

This contention highlights the connection between affect, feelings and emotion (Anderson 2006) reminding us that for emotional geography, the body is a site of both feeling *and* emotion. These experiences and feelings are both socially embedded and localizable in the body (Pile 2010a). The body is essentially the location of the psychological subject. As depicted by the narratives in the last two chapters, emotions may take on social forms of expression, but behind these forms of expression lie genuine personal experience that are seeking representation (Pile 2010a). As Pile argues (2010a, 16), "it is the political imperative of emotional geography to draw out these personal experiences, and bring them to representation".

Finally, this chapter contributes to literature on the critical geographies of 'home', exploring the impact of crisis on domestic geographies of the familiar. My narratives highlight how disasters can produce feelings of uneasiness, discomfort and anxiety. Through these emotions, the once familiar domestic space can become a challenging and unfamiliar place. This further contributes to geographic work that considers how places are made meaningful through emotions (Davidson and Milligan 2004).

So far, this thesis has demonstrated the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster 'home'. In this environment, 'home' is a deeply emotive place, defined through the dynamic acts of imagining, (re)creating, (un)making, changing and moving homes. In chapter two, I explored the varying levels of the materiality of domestic space. In particular, I considered literature that suggests how objects play an important role in the (re)creation of home. They represent both an appeal to past homes and also play a key role in future homemaking practices (Miller 2010; 2001; Walsh 2006). The following chapter will explore these arguments in more depth through an analysis of the material objects displaced flood victims chose to share with me during our 2012 interviews.

Chapter 6

The materiality of 'home'

"There was all this stuff out on the road, people's beds and chairs just on the road so that the council trucks could take it all away. And it was rather traumatic, just to see your life sitting in a pile of rubbish. It was horrible. [Crying. "I'm sorry, I can't help it"] *It was just awful to just walk out and see all your life, you know, just sitting in a pile of rubbish out on the road. It was awful, because everybody has their own little treasures and their own things that they like and it was just horrible to see a pile of your life just sitting there. No. It wasn't much fun. I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy. Because if you really like where you live and you like what you have and you have all your special bits, and you're forced to go through something like that, it's horrible. You can't think straight"* (Margaret 2012)

In chapter 4, I introduced Margaret, who I met while attending Sherwood Flood Support Group. She is a small, friendly woman who always attended meetings dressed smartly and wearing a gentle smile. Jennie, the flood group coordinator, introduced me to Margaret, suggesting that she might be an appropriate research participant. A few weeks later, I conducted a formal interview with Margaret in the smaller meeting room at the back of the community centre. The week before our meeting I asked her if she would be willing to share with me an important object from her migration experience, explaining that I would discuss the object during the latter portion of our interview. She politely obliged.

As usual, Margaret arrived at our interview dressed smartly. I noted this particularly because most of my participants dressed very casually. I wondered whether Margaret's attention to her appearance was consciously intended as a part of her own personal recovery. Perhaps she felt better by dressing this way. Margaret's daughter had given her a lift to the community centre and she commented: *"I don't know what I would do without Julie".*

In January 2011, floodwater inundated Margaret's home in Graceville. As a result, she was forced to find temporary accommodation in a nearby suburb. During our interview, Margaret extensively discussed her emotional attachment to Graceville: *"It was just that, I felt secure here, and I felt safe".* This emotional connection to Graceville as 'home' drove her desire to return to the comfort and security of the suburb.

As in many of the interviews I conducted, Margaret got visibly upset when sharing her story. The floods, she expressed, "*were deeply traumatizing. And it's not easy to regain your composure in the aftermath".* In November 2011, Margaret was able to return to her Graceville home. This experience was one of, "*mixed emotions*". Margaret's home was now occupied by donated furniture. By her own admission, it did not suit her.

Towards the end of our interview, I asked Margaret what object she had chosen to share with me. She bent down, reached into her bag and pulled out a number of very large opal stones (Figure 6.1). Beaming, she told me:

> *"I know it might sound silly, but I've collected these for as long as I can remember. People know they are in my house when they see all the stones. They come in and say, "Yeah, we're at* [Margaret's] *house alright!" I just love the pieces of opal, they're really special to me".*

Figure 6.1 "I just love my opal Stones" (Margaret) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

As Margaret spoke about her opal stones, her voice was animated and energetic, reflecting her fondness of these objects. In the aftermath of the floods, these stones were not only a powerful marker of her own belonging, but they also offered her comfort and familiarity during a time of uncertainty and change.

Interestingly, Margaret also brought with her a small plastic box. She placed it on the table in front of us and told me:

> *"I wasn't sure whether you would be interested in this but I have a lot of boxes like this in my garage. They've got some of my documents and books and photos inside them, which were all damaged by the floodwater. You can still smell the mud".*

Margaret opened the box and passed it to me. I was immediately overwhelmed by the smell of mould and dust, which made me feel physically sick. This experience with the material damage caused by the flood impacted my own emotions as a researcher. Reflecting on the intensity of the water damage, I felt immediately sad and sympathized with Margaret for her loss of these irreplaceable documents and photos. Her damaged photographs particularly struck me as I contemplated the irreplaceable memories attached to them. As a result, I was keen to know why she had kept these boxes. When I asked her, she took my hand and simply replied: "*as a reminder*".

6.1 Introduction

The loss of not just a house, but also a home is one of the most devastating impacts of a natural disaster (Wilford 2008). For those at a safe distance, watching coverage of the flooding on television, the symbolism of entire houses or neighbourhoods being destroyed was striking. Bill, who watched the devastation unfold on TV told me: "*The physical world appeared to be revolting against some higher order…The floods led to a transformation of many meaningful objects"*. Wilford (2008) explores this contention through an analysis of Hurricane Katrina, which destroyed significant portions of New Orleans in 2005. Homes were rendered unlivable by nature's destructive power. Survivors in New Orleans therefore lost the central material referent for ordering nature and human behaviour. As Wilford

(2008, 655) suggests, "This sense of *disorder* was not a projection of meaning by humans onto a seemingly *disordered world*; rather it was the product of the physical transformation of a key material participant in the *meaning of order*" (emphasis in original).

The central consequence of the materiality of the flood-transformed house is one of alienation and appropriation. As demonstrated in the previous two chapters, first visits back to a flood-damaged house are commonly characterized by a deep sense of loss. This loss is unique in that much of what has been 'lost' is still present. Many of the residents returned to their flooded homes to find everything still physically present, but covered in a thick layer of mud. Salvaging objects from the interior of their homes is a way for flood victims to reclaim this space. Indeed, reclaiming these objects can also be understood as reclamation of the self (Taylor 2006).

This chapter broadens our understanding of the materiality of the post-disaster 'home'. Focusing on the material aspects of disaster displacement is particularly valuable within research in this context. By exploring the objects participants choose to share as part of their displacement experience, we can more clearly understand how homes can be reconceptualised following disaster. The objects participants brought to interviews provide a route into certain emotions that might not have been otherwise verbally acknowledged in an interview. Object elicitation therefore produced a vast array of 'data', which would not have been possible with a purely straightforward interview methodology. The following sections therefore intend to emphasize the key role objects play within post-disaster homemaking. Further reinforcing the dynamic nature of the post-disaster home, this chapter discusses highlights how 'home' can (re)created and re(constructed) in a variety of different ways.

Objects in this chapter are presented according to the frequency with which they were mentioned. This is not to suggest certain objects are more important than other in this environment. Instead, this structure draws attention to the number of

participants that shared each sort of object with me. Photographs, for example, are discussed first. This is because they were the most common object shared during this portion of fieldwork. Following this, I move on to discuss artwork, kitchenware, jewellery and furniture respectively.

6.2 The importance of objects

"One of the worst moments was when the huge machinery appeared on our block to remove all the debris left. I did not want them to take it all away, to make it final and real. On the other hand I just wanted to start again and get my life back on track. It was an emotional tug of war watching the fragments of our precious life being scraped up and taken away. I cried."

There are many different processes at play when both people and things cross social and cultural boundaries as they move through time and space. Emotional dynamics are a key part of these processes. In an attempt to broaden geographic knowledge on the significance of material culture in the post-disaster environment, I intend to explore how flood-affected individuals relate emotionally to changing material environments. Furthermore, I aim to investigate whether mobile objects evoke feelings in particular surroundings or environments.

As suggested in various contemporary studies of both homed and homeless people (see, for example, Miller 2010) objects also play a key role in the creation (and indeed recreation) of home. They represent an appeal to past homes, although simultaneously contribute to homemaking, future projections and a future stability (Walsh 2006). In the disaster context, material possessions become even more important as they become a signal of a time before the floods: a more stable lifestyle.

Literature on return migration shows the making of homes as an important, ongoing and often active process (Blunt and Dowling 2006). For example, homemaking brings into focus the practical upheaval entailed by moving home. This includes the ideological *and* physical challenges of packing up, relocating and unpacking (see Harper 2005). Centralising these practices is the nature of

homemaking, as emotional attachments are constantly built and remade in relation to homes. Objects, for example, are introduced, moved or disposed of in continuing efforts to 'make home' (Tolia-Kelly 2004).

Figure 6.2 Debris from the floods, Ipswich, 2011 (©Carolyn Ehrlich 2011)

So far, this thesis has suggested that the notion of 'home' is indeed complex and difficult to define because it can be both physical and emotional. In this context, attachments to home can be about physical belongings, transportable souvenirs or simply 'being' in a location. It can also, however, be about emotional attachments through relationships, nostalgia and a memory of what a particular location is like. Objects can also play an important role during the displacement of disaster victims. Objects once connected to the home, such as furniture, toys and photographs become vitally important in times of transition. This is because they have the ability

to transform shelters, temporary accommodation, or indeed new houses, into something that resembles 'home' (Wilford 2008).

Elsewhere (Morrice 2013), I argued that the post-disaster situation is unique in that often 'home' is often defined by its absence. For displaced residents who express a nostalgic longing for their domestic space, 'home' is defined through emotions as a place that has not moved. Instead, it is something that must be returned to. While the same appears true in Queensland, this thesis also recognises that any fixity attached to home is not absolute. Instead, 'home' can be mobile, re(created) by the transport of the objects that lend meaning to the dwelling. As Blunt and Dowling (2006, 23) suggest:

> "Home does not simply exist, but is made. Home is a process of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging. This process has both material and imaginative elements. Thus people create home through the social and emotional relationships. Home is also materially created – new structures formed, objects used and placed."

'Home', then, continues to be understood as a site of self-construction, it is no longer seen as a fixed, unchanging space which 'stores' traditional values under threat from the modernizing world. Rather, home is in a constant state of becoming. It is remade over and over again through processes called homemaking.

The movement of objects also creates a physical and emotional continuity for flood victims as they reestablish their lives following disaster. The physicality of these objects enables flood victims to forge emotional connections to them (Hooper-Greenhill 2000). The objects produced in this empirical chapter hold a personal symbolism to the individual. They represent an individual's personal identity and an evocation of their life experience. Photographs, cultural artifacts and seemingly trivial objects, for example, might not hold any meaning to others, yet are culturally and emotionally significant to the individual who owns them (Tolia-Kelly 2004).

In chapter 2, I highlighted the growing body of literature across the social that explores the connection between 'home' and identity construction. In essence,

these studies argue that material homemaking practices are a key means of reconciling fractured or fragmented identities. They highlight, in particular, the importance of material objects within this process (see for example, Gorman-Murray 2007). Domestic objects comprise the endogenous being of the owner and are therefore reflexive of his or her own identity (Pearce 1992). Blunt and Dowling (2006) explicitly acknowledge the important material dimension of homemaking. This contention is reinforced by Taylor (2006) who argues that the interior of our homes and the objects we surround ourselves with become projections of our self. Taylor (2006) argues that objects lie at the heart of the home; it is the objects that people take when they relocate and therefore they symbolize the 'self' more than the actual dwelling.

Many of the objects lost in the floods, were treasured personal possessions such as photographs, books, birth certificates and marriage certificates. While objects such as furniture and kitchenware could often be salvaged, paper documents such as original birth/marriage certificates and photographs were often unsalvageable in the aftermath of the floods. The loss of these irreplaceable possessions contributed to the heartbreak experienced by flood victims in the aftermath of disaster.

My interview with Michael demonstrates this in more depth. During our meeting, he discussed the devastating loss of a precious family photograph. His despair was captured through this emotional narrative:

> *"I had a very, very old photograph which I've had for a long time. It was passed through from my grandparents, to my parents and when I moved to Brisbane, to me. Now it's gone and I can't get it back and it's just devastating."*

For Michael, the loss of this treasured possession was a source of deep anxiety. The photo not only represented his family unit, but it contributed to his own sense of 'self'. Its loss also reinforces the destructive power of nature and the fragility of our own identities.

Each interview I conducted explored these emotions in an intimate way. Narratives explicitly highlight the importance of material possessions within this

post-disaster setting and how objects play a key role in post-disaster homemaking. Here, objects are critical in the formation of new identities and memories. This importance is highlighted as many relocated participants acknowledge the comfort they gain from familiar material possessions that they salvaged from their flood-damaged home. In January 2012, I interviewed Laura, a resident of Chelmer before the floods. During our interview, Laura discussed the challenges she faced in the aftermath of disaster. Furthermore, her interview highlighted the significance of material objects in this post-disaster environment:

> *"One of the lessons in the aftermath is that every step back to normality – such as having a house, a roof, or a job, is a cause for celebration – even if this step back means several steps away from the area. It is an empowering feeling to move out of a temporary "in-limbo" situation into a confirmed future direction. And it is comforting to take a little of that old life with you, whether in the form of a photo or a day bed".*

After the flood, Laura relocated to East Ipswich. As her interview suggests, keeping familiar objects with her allowed her to recreate a sense of 'home' in a new physical dwelling. The presence of these objects offered comfort and familiarity during a time of uncertainty and anxiety.

Narratives also discussed the importance of material objects for those who had returned to their flood damaged home. In 2011, Megan told me:

> *"To come back and just see a shell, wasn't good. Because it was all different. It just wasn't mine, you know. But then after Graham put the curtains up – even though they weren't hung properly, and he put some photos on the wall, it started to feel – you know. Now I feel more comfortable in my bedroom and living room. I hate the study because there's nothing. It's just empty. The bed's gone and photos and so forth. But after the things came back and had been rescued and cleaned - so that I feel content sitting in the living room. I guess that's why I didn't want to get rid of the sofa suite, because it was something I knew. The bedroom is the way that I used to have it except there was a mirror above the bed. That was my feeling coming back. It just didn't feel right. And the floor was different. When I looked at this I was like "ahhh!" it was so garish and yellow. But I've got used to it. When I started getting a few things around me again, you know – that's when it just felt right again".*

This narrative usefully demonstrates how familiar domestic objects can help to recreate a sense of 'home' following the floods. Megan's narrative is also particularly interesting because it demonstrates a personal struggle to overcome an initially negative experience viewing flood damage. In chapter 5, I explored how negative emotions can influence how flood-affected individuals relate to specific places in the post-disaster environment. Experiencing anxiety and distress when present at their flood-damaged house often prompts victims to relocate to a new suburb following disaster. In her interview, however, Megan talks about persevering through the distress and anxiety she initially experienced when she encountered a house that was no longer familiar to her. Through the presence of familiar objects the act of organizing her home the in the same way it looked before the floods, Megan was able to reestablish a sense of 'home' in her Graceville bungalow. This reinforces arguments that suggest homemaking is an active process, by showing how 'home' comprises both imaginative and material elements.

6.3 Human Agency

In chapter 4, I discussed the community relief efforts displayed in the aftermath of the Queensland floods. During my fieldwork, participants documented the aid they received from friends, neighbours and volunteer organizations, such as the Red Cross and the Queensland local governments. On a smaller scale, many localized relief efforts provided invaluable practical aid in the days immediately following the flood peak. For example, 'The Mud Army' is a group of volunteers who came from a variety of communities, nationalities, occupations, ages and religious denominations, to help those in need after the flood. They provided invaluable practical aid in the days immediately following the river peak, helping affected neighbourhoods with clean-up efforts and the removal of thick mud that encased everything.

My interview with Nichola explicitly demonstrates the anguish and despair she felt as the floods headed towards her home:

"It's a very sobering and difficult process having to go through all of your belongings and having to decide what to take and what to leave. I thought I could return a few days later and still gain access and retrieve a few more things, but by then it was too late. The flood had already done its deed and the vast majority of my possessions were lost".

Similarly to many of those I spoke to, Nichola experienced a great level of shock as she came to terms with the reality of the disaster:

"Everything I experienced in the days leading up to the clean up had been extremely stressful and upsetting. The realization that I had lost my home and had finally sunk in – when the mental fog of shock and disbelief had lifted, I was left with harsh reality and the back-breaking task of removing everything from the house and clearing away the vile mud".

Amongst this pain and anguish, Nichola found consolation in the hundreds of Mud Army volunteers who arrived at her home in Chelmer to help with flood recovery. To Nichola these kind-hearted volunteers were, *"selfless, compassionate and generous".*

Over the course of the following two days, Nichola's possessions were thrown into "*piles of junk…These items ceased to have monetary value, but sentimental value is another thing. Some pieces can't be replaced, nor can they be gauged in monetary terms".* When I asked her what object she would like to share with me, Nichola produced a photograph she had taken with her when she left her house before the floods. Nichola spoke fondly of his picture, stating:

"I only took a handful of photos on the day, but at the very first opportunity I viewed them and had a really close look! It was then that I felt a great sense of sadness and loss, and to be perfectly honest there was some anger too. In those photos I saw items that I'd owned for years, some practical, others sentimental. My 30+ year old portable TV, my 20 year old microwave oven, an old foot stool that was older than I am, books that I had enjoyed, family hand-me-downs, and the list goes on. All these things were beyond repair and therefore destined for the dump. There didn't seem to be any dignity in that. These were things I just didn't have time to rescue before the flood or salvage after it, and I didn't even notice them on the day."

Nichola continued, justifying the emotions she experienced:

> *"I guess my anger stemmed from the fact I was emotionally attached to everything. No one was to blame for any of this, it was an event that was beyond anyone's control. But to watch people come in and just cart stuff out – which is precisely what they were there to do – was heartbreaking."*

Not only does this narrative highlight the anger Nichola experienced through losing her precious possessions, it also highlights how objects themselves hold emotional attachments. The loss of these objects enhances the levels of despair flood victims experience in the aftermath of the tragedy.

Nichola expressed her appreciation of the efforts from the Mud Army during an emotionally stressful time:

> *"In the first few days, the priority was to purge. Cleaning mud could not proceed until the house was completely empty, and the mud was beginning to pose a health risk because it was contaminated. In my opinion, there wasn't really time to be sentimental at that moment, and because these folks – the volunteers – had no sentimental attachment, they could be emotionally detached and thus more objective about the task at hand, something that I wasn't able to be. I tried, but looking back now, I'm sure I was more of a hindrance than help, walking about in a trance, teary eyed, and getting in people's way. Unbeknown to these people, they carried me emotionally".*

While she expressed this gratitude to the Mud Army, for *"carrying out their mission with beauty, precision, speed and diligence"*, many of my narratives also discussed the negative emotions associated with watching volunteers throw out personal possessions in clean-up after the floods.

Many participants told me that volunteers threw out objects that could have been salvaged in their efforts to help and discussed the emotions associated with this tragic process. In this sense, flood victims dealt with direct loss from the floodwater and secondary loss that ultimately could have been avoided. Anelle told me: *"They meant well, but they didn't realize that a lot of the stuff was salvageable and meant a lot to me...it was like salt in the wound".* Many of the attendees at Sherwood Flood Support Group also discussed this sentiment. Jenny, for example, conveyed the heartbreak she experienced realizing that some of her salvageable items had been thrown away: *"Ugh. It really was disgusting. Some of them were so*

careless, just heaping people's stuff out onto the street with no feeling. Not recognizing that they were throwing out someone's life". As researcher, I found this story challenging to listen to. I felt angry for her loss and irritated that the volunteers had been so careless. Betty expressed a similar story:

> *"In a way I was lucky that I wasn't there to watch the process, my son wouldn't let me be there. He did what he thought was best, but I can't help thinking that if I had been there, I would have been able to save more of my things".*

Betty's narrative notes an interesting division of emotional labour. Her son refused to let Betty view the flood damage to her house, resulting in exacerbated levels of loss as some of her personal possessions were discarded during the clean-up process. With their human agency limited in the aftermath of disaster, the emotional turmoil of those affected is heightened.

As the narratives above suggest, objects are an important part of individual lives. These narratives also begin to suggest that personal possessions hold valuable emotional attachments in the aftermath of disaster. It is, however, worthwhile to point out that some participants suggested that material possessions were not as important as their own safety. For those who found themselves in a greater risk of danger during the floods, they viewed material possessions as less important: "*It's just stuff*". This is not to say they did not express *any* emotion in regards to the loss of their personal belongings. In fact, in some cases, expressing this sentiment seemed to be an attempt to ease the pain of losing irreplaceable treasured processions.

6.4 Photographs

In chapter two, I explored the contention that photographs can represent a domestic memory and often offer a powerful connection to a certain place (at a certain time) (Walsh 2006). Photographs have particular relevance to this chapter because the following discussion of post-disaster materiality and homemaking draws on a number of photographs produced during the object elicitation portion of my interviews. In fact, a photograph was the most common material object participants

shared with me during interviews. These photographs facilitate and represent the transport of home across both time and space. They form a virtual thread temporally and geographically between locations (Rose 2003).

Figure 6.3 "This photo has been passed down in our family for generations" (Bill) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

Photographs are an established way of freezing time, capturing a specific moment and preserving it long beyond when it has occurred (Rose 2003). A photo is a reminder of someone or something; a place, a relationship, or a loved one. They are our memory keepers and our histories. As Edward (1999, 22) explains, photographs "belong to that class of objects formed specifically to remember…[they] express a desire for memory and the act of keeping a photograph is, like other souvenirs, an act of faith in the future. They are made to hold the fleeting, to still time, to create memory". Photos are a particularly powerful tools in the post-disaster environment because the memory of 'life before the flood' is visually embedded in a paper form. This, as Hirsch (1981, 45) suggests, allows for the

“succession of our homes…The past is always at our fingertips, always available to us on paper or plastic, for instant replay”. For those who have experienced disaster displacement, these photographs also represent a memory of a more stable time. In this sense, photographs taken from the participant’s ‘home’ before the flood offer a connection to with their former self (see Holland 1991).

All of the photographs within my research are family photographs. As Rose (2003) acknowledges, these photographs are usually taken by members of the family and viewed mainly by members of the family. In the Western world, these photographs are exceptionally popular, often capturing celebratory moments such as birthdays and christenings. Sometimes, however, they simply present an everyday family setting (Rose 2003). These family photos are representative of domestic space and thus are an important means through which ‘home’ is made from a house (Rose 2003). At the same time, family photographs are also a method of integration beyond the house. For example in my research, the photographs presented by flood victims represent different spaces and times in their lives. Photographs, then, can also articulate absence, emptiness and loss, as well as family togetherness.

Each photograph reflected the complex situation of the research participant. For the purpose of protecting the anonymity of my interviewees, faces have been blurred in all photos of people. Commonly, photographs represented their emotional connection to a specific place. Often, the place pictured was in fact their flood-affected home. In 2011, I met Emily while volunteering with Habitat for Humanity on a rebuilding project in Goodna. At the time of the floods, she and her family were living in small, one-storey home in the centre of the suburb.

Emily’s narrative demonstrated the heartbreak and distress she experienced through losing treasured personal possessions. This loss increased her levels of anxiety in the aftermath of the floods. As a result, her ability to make decisiosn was blurred by her own personal trauma: She described:

> *“It’s been a very distressing time. Even with all of the help, I’ve feel lost, confused and – at times - out of place. And we so want to be home by the end of the year!... I carry this photo with me. It’s from*

before the floods – it's just of our back garden but it's a nice memory… When we get back into our house, I'm going to frame it to remind me what we've been through."

This particular narrative explicitly highlights the materiality of home in the post-disaster landscape. The photo Emily speaks of represents a domestic memory, indicating a complex yet powerful connection with a certain place. I conducted this interview in 2011, before incorporating object elicitation as a method in my fieldwork. Emily therefore shared this intimate representation of her past home with me by her own accord. This reinforces the importance of photographs in the post-disaster environment and the valuable role they play in post-disaster homemaking efforts.

Figure 6.4 "It's a nice memory to have when you are surrounded by heartbreak" (Beth) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

In a disaster situation, photographs are often the last thing a person might grab before they leave home and the first thing they go back to look for. For many, returning to find photographs destroyed by floodwater and thick mud was deeply emotionally distressing. Rose told me: *"To go back and see all my photos and albums*

destroyed in such a way was heartbreaking. They're the things you can never get back". Many research participants purposely took photographs with them when they left their houses before the floodwater peaked. Betty explained: *"Since I'd been through the 1974 flood, I knew things like photos were not salvageable. So I packed up many as I could, and took them with me".* Flood-affected individuals also explicitly highlighted the value and comfort of having photographs with them in the aftermath of the floods.

I met Leanne during volunteer work with Connected in 2012. At the time of the floods, Leanne was living Ipswich with her family. Now, they live in north Brisbane, as they wait for their flood-affected house to be renovated. When Leanne and Brett initially returned to Ipswich to view flood damage, they were faced with an eerie, unrecognizable city:

> *"I'd heard a lot of people talk about the smell of mud that was left behind by both the Brisbane and Bremer rivers, but by the time we got to Ipswich it wasn't so much the smell of mud, but the smell of a giant garbage tip. It was hot – 35 degrees or so, so there was this smell of baking garbage* [She grimaces]. *I couldn't believe what I was seeing. It was like something out of a movie, just – too surreal to comprehend. We saw houses with their fronts washed away – just completely GONE – and their contents were spilling out onto the footpath".*

When they reached their own street in Ipswich, they turned the corner in time to watch, *"army troops trying to clear piles of rubbish that used to be the contents of family homes".* Devastatingly, their own family home was completely inundated with floodwater. Despite being *"deeply traumatized"* by the damage to their family home, Leanne's emotional connection to her flood-ravaged community remained strong:

> *"It's where we built a life for ourselves and our family. We didn't even think about leaving – Ipswich is home, so we always knew we'd rebuild. Brett always says that he's proud to bring our daughters up in a place where they can learn what it's like to be part of a community".*

Figure 6.5 "[This photo] is a symbol of hope" (Leanne) (©Stephanie Morrice 2013)

Before our interview, I invited Leanne to bring an important object to our meeting. When I asked her which object she had chosen, Leanne produced a photograph of her and her husband (Figure 6.5) and smiled. Standing it gently on the table, she treated this snapshot of memory with care and tenderness:

> *"I brought this photo because it's something special to me. Something I can look at again and something I can remember from before. Something that wasn't scarred from that day in January, when absolutely everything in my life changed, or was in some way destroyed".*

While Leanne and her family stayed in temporary accommodation following the floods, this photograph became, *"a symbol of hope. Something that made us feel more at home while we waited to return to Ipswich".* Leanne's narrative demonstrates the way in which displaced flood victims place emotional attachments onto material objects in the aftermath of disaster. For her, this family photograph

represents memory and hope. Keeping this photo close while living in temporary accommodation helped Leanne create a sense of 'home' in an unfamiliar setting. As Ahmed (2006) suggests, bodies are shaped by contact with objects and others. Leanne felt 'at home', or 'orientated' because she had this photograph within reach. Her narrative therefore shows how objects offer comfort to bodies that move.

Photographs were also commonly utilized as a way of continuing links with past homes. Simultaneously, they help flood-affected individuals to construct and stabilize a new sense of home in new surroundings. In this respect, their presence played a vital role in post-disaster homemaking practices. My interview with Catherine, who I introduced in chapter five, demonstrates this argument clearly. During our interview at Sherwood Community Centre, Catherine produced an old family photograph (Figure 6.6). Like Leanne, she handled this photo extremely carefully, placing it delicately on the table in front of us.

Figure 6.6 "It's funny how the little things become especially important" (Catherine) (©Stephanie Morrice 2013)

When speaking of this photo, Catherine told me:

> *"This is one of the few photographs we have from before the floods. A lot of our other photos were destroyed in the mud and floodwater, but we managed to salvage this one. I've always liked it… It's funny how the little things become especially important during a time of crisis".*

During our interview, she also emphasized how this photo made her feel more comfortable in her new house in Sherwood:

> *"It's weird trying to start again somewhere new and even though we feel settled now, it's very hard to pick yourself up and move on after you've lost everything. Having little things that were familiar to me made that transition just that little bit easier".*

Again, Catherine's narrative explicitly highlights the role of material objects in post-disaster homemaking. For those affected by diaster, a meaningful 'home' represents a place that provides shelter, emotional refuge and opportunities for self-expression. 'Home' provides a mirror for the 'self' and can offer a sense of continuity in the face of changes to life. In this sense then, this photograph facilitated Catherine's homemaking in Sherwood by offering her comfort and safety during an emotionally stressful time.

6.5 Artwork

Three of my participants chose to share pieces of artwork with me. In chapter five, I introduced Hannah, who was living in Oxley with her elderly mother at the time of the floods. Due to her mother's physical fragility, they did not leave Oxley when the floodwaters began to rise. Instead, the SES rescued the two women on the morning after the floods peaked. Despite losing many of their personal possessions, some of their furniture was kept upstairs and so avoided flood damage. Hannah saw this as a silver lining amidst her flood heartbreak.

During our interview, Hannah presented a portrait of her late father (Figure 6.7). Like many participants, she seemed proud of her chosen object, handling it carefully as she placed it on our interview table. Hannah's mother drew this portrait

before her father passed away a few years ago. As a result, this piece of artwork was especially important to the two women:

> *"Mum drew this after dad had retired. In fact that's when she started drawing quite a lot, since she had time on her hands. Because he is no longer with us, I think it holds an extra special meaning because it's a little bit of him, you know? It's a memory we can take with us and keep with us wherever we are. It might sound strange but I think for mum it means more to her than the house itself".*

Figure 6.7 "Because he's no longer with us, it holds special meaning" (Hannah) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

Hannah's interview was particularly emotional, as she spoke of the *"gut-wrenching sense of loss"* she experienced when she realized the majority of her possessions had been destroyed. Similarly, while speaking of her father's portrait, Hannah became visibly emotional as she expressed grief for her lost father and her treasured personal her possessions:

"A house isn't really a home unless you've got familiar things in it. I think that's why we struggled to settle for such a long time. Not only was the area quite unfamiliar, but we were suddenly living in a house that didn't feel right. We had very little furniture and a lot of the pieces were donated to us by friends or aid organizations… Dad's portrait is one of the few pieces that is really ours".

Hannah's narrative again highlights the challenges associated with attempting to negotiate a new sense of 'home' in an unfamiliar environment. It explicitly highlights the importance of her father's portrait, which offers comfort and familiarity in a new domestic space. Reinforcing arguments that suggest home is largely constructed and made through the presence of objects, Hannah's narrative demonstrates the material dimensions of home. As she suggests, objects lie at the heart of the home as they symbolize the 'self' more than the actual dwelling (Ahmed 2006).

Throughout my interviews it became clear that artwork was commonly associated with past memories. This sentiment was expressed clearly during my interview with Bill: *"My artwork is really important to me…Some of it has been in our family for years. There's just a lot of memories attached to it, you know?"* In the post-disaster environment, Bill's artwork acts as an inducer of reminiscence (Casey 2009). These cherished pieces of art are a marker of his own personal identity and an evocation of his life experience. In the post-disaster 'home', objects such as artwork lend meaning to the dwelling. Through these objects and the emotions attached to them, 'home' is imbued with significance.

In 2012, I interviewed John at the Mount Ommaney Community Centre. Similarly to Bill, John also attended our interview with a piece of artwork (Figure 6.8). Although he was not visibly emotional during our discussion, he expressed the anxiety he experienced losing personal possessions in the floods: *"A lot of the photographs of my daughter were destroyed and that is something we will never be able to replace. That's what is really upsetting to me. And I'm sad for my granddaughter, because they were all she had left of her mother".*

Figure 6.8 "It offers me comfort" (John) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

Towards the end of our interview, John presented the piece of artwork he had brought with him. While he verbally acknowledged that this painting, *"might not mean anything to anyone else",* it offers him *"comfort"* during the aftermath of the flood. He went on to explain this further, suggesting his attachment to this material possession:

> *"I've always loved this piece. I think its simplicity is refreshing. When we returned to East Ipswich, one of the first things I did was hang it on the wall in our hallway. Hanging pictures around the house was quite a moment for me. Probably the moment when I really let myself believe that we were home".*

During my write up, I looked more closely at the photograph I took of this painting. I am curious about the object the three people are facing. While I would assume it is a tree, it could also be a nuclear mushroom cloud, which would be an interesting shape in this context. For John, this piece of artwork prompts an emotional surge of memory, representing both comfort and familiarity. Re-hanging artwork in his renovated home signified finality to his displacement and therefore an important milestone in his recovery process. His narrative clearly demonstrates how the

presence of these material objects lends meaning to his dwelling. His artwork therefore played an important role in his post-flood recovery, helping to recreate a sense of 'home' in his domestic space.

6.6 Kitchenware

In chapter two, I discussed literature which explores how everyday practices, such as cooking and cleaning, are evoked by Heidegger's term 'building as dwelling' (see Tolia-Kelly 2004; Petridou 2001). These practices transform private space, making it distinct from any other and giving the house its identity as home. Other scholars (for example Longhurst et al. 2009) have explored people's visceral experiences with food, suggesting that these experiences can tell us a great deal about their emotional and affective relationships with place. This is especially true for people on the move, as food helps people feel 'at home'. Food can also prompt individuals who are absent from their domestic space to miss home. Perhaps most importantly, food can also help create a new sense of 'home' in new settings, as it provides a connection to one's life experiences (Watson and Caldwell 2005; Ashley et al. 2004; Kershen 2002; Warde 1997).

Again, it is noteworthy to recognise the multi-scalarity of 'home' here. As Blunt and Dowling (2006) suggest, "diasporic, transnational and global imaginaries influence and are themselves influenced by, everyday, domestic experiences and practices" (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 197). In other words, 'home' often exists in more than one place. More specifically, food's relationship to these varying scales of home is multiple. Thinking about food, including questions about where we eat, what we eat and what we use to eat, is particularly important for migrants (Longhurst at al. 2009). As depicted by my female participants, domestic routines are commonly disrupted through disaster and during the subsequent recovery period following the event. During this time, cooking becomes an important way of staying connected with home through a sensory and emotional geography. While some feminist scholars have argued that the home (particularly the kitchen) is a

major site of women’s oppression (see Ahrentzen 1997), this was not the case with my participants. Instead, my female participants spoke fondly of cooking, discussing the positive emotions associated with this domestic practice. Furthermore, narratives also explore the importance of the material objects used in cooking, such as kitchenware and crockery. These objects contribute to the act of cooking itself and therefore contribute to the practice of post-disaster homemaking.

Figure 6.9 “It’s just that little bit of home, you know?” (Shirley) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

My interview with Nancy demonstrates these ideas further. I met Nancy at the Graceville Community Centre during an oral storytelling workshop coordinated by Bennarawa Community Development Group. This workshop brought together locals from the surrounding communities for an afternoon of storytelling in the aftermath of the floods. This workshop, however, did not solely aim to produce ‘flood stories’. Instead, attendees were encouraged to share positive experiences from their community as a way to strengthen and foster community spirit. My

presence at this event was met with much interest. Many residents were fascinated by my research and keen to contribute in any way they could. They welcomed me openly and even gave me the opportunity to discuss my own experiences of conducting research in the suburb. I was thankful for their response and enjoyed spending time with local residents in this relaxed environment. Usefully, this setting was also a good opportunity to share knowledge and emotions about the floods. Furthermore, it provided a forum in which to contemplate the localized recovery efforts in the community. At the end of the workshop, I asked Nancy whether she would be willing to participate in my project. A week later, we met in the same community centre and I conducted a formal interview. Nancy is a 40-year-old mother of one who had been living in Brisbane's West End at the time of the floods. Similarly to many others, her narrative was an emotional account of her struggle to rebuild her life in the aftermath of disaster. She discussed the dread she experienced waiting to view flood damage in the immediate aftermath:

> *"We left and went to stay with friends on higher ground. I remember lying in bed at night, not able to sleep because I was dreading what awaited me when I did go home".*

During the early stages of our interview, Nancy became visibly upset when describing the emotions she felt coming to terms with the loss of her home:

> *"The effects were just everywhere. There were clumps of washed up vegetation in trees and fences. And piles of our spoiled possessions lay along the street, waiting to be taken away, or sorted through. There was no movement on the river…*[Teary] *I guess the overwhelming feeling I had at that moment was disconnection. From everything that was normal and real. I was heartbroken."*

While Nancy was unable to face returning to her West End home permanently, she worked closely with Mud Army volunteers to salvage some of her possessions from the street. These objects included a number of pieces of furniture, which were washed to remove the mud stains. These have since been restored. She also salvaged some of her kitchenware including, *"Plates, cups, bits of cutlery, and a metal colander*".

After a period living in rented accommodation, Nancy and her family have now bought a new house in Graceville. This house, *"did flood in '74, but made it through this flood unharmed. The owners wanted a quick sell though, as they have recently retired so we got a good deal".* When I asked Nancy which object she had brought with her to our interview, she produced a beautiful china jug and plate (Figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10 "Kitchenware, things like this, are very important to me" (Nancy) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

Nancy was visibly excited while she discussed the meaning of these material objects. She smiled broadly when speaking of her connection to them. She told me:

> *"We found these in amongst the rubbish on the street. I told my husband it was a miracle they weren't chipped. So we were able to wash them off and take them with us with the rest of the things we salvaged."*

When I asked Nancy why she had chosen these particular objects she smiled again and cheerfully explained:

> *"I've always felt at home in the kitchen. I love to cook for family and friends. So my kitchenware, things like this* [points to jug], *are very important to me. So I enjoy cooking, but ever since the floods it has become even more important to me. It's like an escape of sorts. A time when I can just forget about all the bad things that have happened to us. The jug itself we mostly use for water. Sometimes for milk if we're having brekkie"*.

In the aftermath of the floods, Nancy's kitchenware has taken on a new meaning for her and her family:

> *"These are things that are familiar to us, and that's important during times like this. And I think because they are connected to cooking, and eating, a time for family and friends to come together, these objects have sort of become a symbol of togetherness. In the immediate aftermath, we lived temporarily with friends and I kept saying to my husband that I couldn't wait to have our own kitchen again so I could cook. Now we're in our new home, I enjoy cooking even more. And I'm happy to have some of the objects from our old life here."*

Nancy's narrative is useful in demonstrating the importance of both domestic practices and material objects in post-disaster homemaking. It shows how feelings of belonging are experienced as both sited and mobile, illuminating the complex, personal and affirmative workings of bodies and emotions. Law contends that "food acquires its meaning through the place it is assembled and eaten" (2001, 275). Through the practice of making food and using familiar kitchen objects, Nancy is able to ascribe meaning to this new domestic space. She is able to recreate a sense of 'home' in her new surroundings. The seemingly mundane experience of cooking becomes an expression of Nancy's own subjectivities. Her new kitchen offers a space of comfort and familiarity in a new domestic place. Similarly, her salvaged kitchenware takes on a heightened importance in this new environment.

Other female participants also produced kitchen objects during our interviews. Sue brought a jug very similar to Nancy's (Figure 6.11). During our 2012 interview, she told me: *"I love this little jug. It doesn't have much monetary value – I picked it up at a market years ago – but it's one of the few things we took when we left the old house. So it's one of the few things that is familiar to us".*

Interestingly most responses acknowledged the every-day nature of these items. Rose, for example, told me *"It might seem silly to bring this plate [laughs] but it used to be my mother's and it's really important to me".* In the post-disaster environment, personal possessions with sentimental meaning attached to them become particularly important as displaced individuals attempt to recreate a sense of 'home' following the floods.

Figure 6.11 "It's one of the few things that is familiar to us" (Sue) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

During my follow-up interview with June, she discussed her desire to participate in everyday practices such as cooking and cleaning. As Tolia-Kelly (2004) suggests, these practices transform private space and lend meaning to domestic spaces. When I asked June which object she had chosen to share with me, she presented a well-used frying pan (Figure 6.12). Before she explained this choice

further, we discussed her daughter's relationship with material objects in the aftermath of the floods:

> *"When we left and went to my sister's place, I actually told Emily to take a few things important things with her. She took some photos of school friends, clothes and one of her childhood stuffed animals – a little rabbit. When she was growing up, we couldn't go anything unless she had it with her* [Laughs], *so she didn't want to leave it".*

Figure 6.12 "It's a connection to those memories" (June) (©Stephanie Morrice)

For Emily, the presence of the familiar objects provided a sense of comfort and familiarity during a difficult time. June also spoke of the disruption to Emily's routine, explaining how she no longer needs to get the train to school: *"She can walk from where we are the moment, but she actually misses the train because all of her friends take it".* With her daily routine disturbed by the floods, familiar personal possessions provide a sense of normalcy to her post-disaster daily life.

For June, her chosen object related much more specifically to cooking as an everyday domestic practice:

> *"As I said, I can't wait to get home and do things like cooking and cleaning. The normal things, you know? Of course I've cooked at my sister's place, and it's been nice to have some of my own things to use. But sometimes we feel in the way and so are looking forward to having our own kitchen again".*

She continued:

> *"I always think of cooking as a very happy time. A time for everyone to get together and enjoy themselves. I used to cook with this [frying pan] all the time, so in a way it's a connection to those memories".*

June's narrative places value on cooking as a routine, everyday, domestic practice. Disasters disrupt these practices through destruction of the physical setting of home. As a result, June and Nancy express a desire to participate in these practices, as they become particularly important ways of staying connected with 'home' on a sensory level. The objects associated with these practices also gain new meaning in the post-disaster environment. Their familiarity and connection to a more stable lifestyle offer comfort during an uncertain time. In this environment, cherished objects are experienced as meaningful and therefore powerful agents in (re)construction of the 'home' following disaster.

6.7 Jewellery

Many geographic scholars have documented how people, experiences, places and spatial objects are an important part of our self-identity (see Taylor 2006). So far, my narratives have demonstrated the complexities of the post-disaster landscape. For flood victims, this emotional landscape is an often unfamiliar place, where much of what defines a sense of 'self' is destroyed has been destroyed in a traumatic manner. My narratives have also explored the way in which material objects play an important part in post-disaster homemaking. Where the physical dwelling of 'home' is destroyed, salvaged personal possessions that can be transported easily between different temporary accommodations become explicitly

important to flood victims. They hold emotional attachments, memories and connections to the past.

Figure 6.13 "It's a way for me to express myself" (Alison) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

Two of the women I spoke with in 2012 brought pieces of jewellery to their interviews. Alison brought a number of necklaces (Figure 6.13), which were carefully pinned to a large felt board. These necklaces were particularly important to her during the immediate aftermath of the floods. Similarly to many of my participants, Alison lost most of her belongings when the Brisbane River inundated her West End home. During her interview, she discussed the post-flood period as a *"traumatic time"* and a phase of her life where she felt *"numb, dazed and confused*". Absent of her own emotions during the immediate aftermath, she slowly began to grieve for her lost possessions:

> *"I cried for a long time. I'd think I was okay, and then all of a sudden I'd be sitting there crying. That kind of loss is just*

unimaginable…I still get a lump in my throat when I think about it".

During this period of anxiety and heartbreak, Alison found relief in the personal possessions she did manage to save from the floodwater:

> *"I always think that when you feel bad, you try and make yourself feel better by dressing nicely. I lost a lot of my clothes in the floods, but I took my jewellery with me when we evacuated because I've always liked my necklaces. It's a way for me to express myself."*

In the post-disaster environment, Alison holds a deep emotional attachment to her pieces of jewellery. As she discusses, they offer a way for her to express her sense of 'self' and provide comfort during a difficult time.

Earlier, I discussed the concept of human agency in relation to the post-flood recovery process. I suggested the trauma and negative emotions associated with not only losing treasured personal possession through the floodwater itself, but also when good intentioned volunteers threw out potentially salvable objects. During my interview with Pauline, she presented a necklace as her chosen object (Figure 6.14):

Figure 6.14 "I was so happy to have it back" (Pauline) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

This necklace held special importance to Pauline, who managed to salvage it from the debris around her home in Indoropilly. She spoke this piece of jewellery in an upbeat dialogue and seemed excited to share it with me: *"I salvaged this out of the rubbish on my street! It was my mother's and I was so happy to have it back. I thought it was lost forever.* Pauline went on to explain why she feels emotionally connected to this particular object:

> *"When you lose everything, anything that you manage to keep or save becomes especially special. This necklace was mum's so it was already special to me. When I found it in the debris, I cried!...It's comforting to have those special things around you when you've been through something like this. These 'things', they make it a little bit easier to get back on track".*

Pauline's narrative suggests that in the post-disaster setting, material possessions often represent comfort for those who are struggling to rebuild their lives. Together, my narratives also indicate that comfort seems synonymous with the concept of 'home' in this context. Objects which help to create a feeling of safety and security, help displaced flood victims feel more 'at home' either in their new environment, temporary accommodation, or in their house once they have returned. Jewellery in particular, allows flood victims the opportunity to reconstitute 'the self' in a particularly disruptive environment. This is because it allows for a personal and visible expression of identity.

6.8 Furniture and collectables

So far, I have demonstrated the importance of photographs, artwork, kitchenware and jewellery for displaced flood victims. These material possessions hold emotional attachments for the disaster-displaced and play an important role in post-disaster homemaking. In this final section, I explore narratives of participants who shared small pieces of furniture or collectables during their interviews.

Throughout my interview with Betty, who I introduced in chapter four, she discussed her strong emotional connection to Chelmer. Her heartfelt narrative also discussed the trauma she experienced losing personal possessions and highlighted

her struggle to recreate a sense of 'home' in her house once she had returned. Similarly to many others, Betty discussed the anxiety she felt returning to a place that felt so different to her: *"It was awful coming back. My forty year old house was a new house".* It was not until she began to reintroduce some of the furniture, that she began to recreate her sense of 'home' once again.

Figure 6.15 "It made it feel more like home" (Betty) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

When Betty arrived at our interview, she brought with her a small wooden table (Figure 6.15). I placed this table at the side of the room for the first portion of our interview. When our discussion turned to the loss of her personal possessions, she began to explain:

> *"Like I said, some of the furniture had been salvaged. I knew from the '74 flood that china can be washed and so there were all these boxes of china and linen, and I washed them all and put it where I wanted it and it felt more like home then, Stephanie. When I had bits and pieces around me. And that took a while."*

Betty went on to say that she also found comfort when her garden was restored:

> *"I had lots of plant pots with plants in them and they filled up with mud and then when I came back I went and I'd find these pots and when I shifted the mud off, all these plants that had been hidden under the mud for 11 months – all popped up! It was just amazing. That was really joy making. To find all these plants that I thought had gone. Once the garden came back I felt a lot more – a lot happier".*

I found this particularly interesting, as no other interviewee made a specific reference to his or her garden. Her narrative provides an ironic juxtaposition about the fragility and destructive power of nature.

Betty's decision to share her small side table related largely to her emotional connection to this piece of furniture. She told me:

> *"This is something that's been in our family for years. Things like this make me feel comfortable. I'm happy to have it around me, especially when a lot of my furniture has been given to me by St. Vincent's..and of course I'm thankful for that. But it's nice to have something familiar, isn't it?"*

Again, Betty's narrative demonstrates the importance of having familiar objects present in the domestic space during the aftermath of the floods. She not only values the small table for sentimental reasons, but also because it offers her a sense of comfort after her intensely emotional experience with disaster.

My interview with Gina also demonstrates the importance of familiar furniture in the post-disaster reconstruction of home. In January 2011, the floods decimated Gina's home in St. Lucia. After a "*long, unstable period of uncertainty and heartbreak*", she and her family decided to move to Nundah in North Brisbane. She reflected solemnly on their decision to relocate, telling me:

> *"It wasn't the same after the floods. It didn't feel right, and so it just seemed like the right time to leave. At the time, it seemed people were leaving our area without any organized goodbyes – sometimes just a sudden disappearance, often without any explanation. I don't think it was an easy decision for anyone to leave. Even if you have it in your heart and you feel you need to move on. And that's because the ties of anyone staying and participating in a community, especially for five or more years, are*

> *like heart strands woven into a community fabric. It's hard to cut them and move away".*

Like those of many others I interviewed in Brisbane, Gina's narrative highlights the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment. Her narrative also suggests how a community is often thought of as an extended family in the post-disaster context. As I explored in the previous empirical chapters, people often hold an emotional attachment to specific communities. This emotional attachment can become a driving force in their decision to return following displacement. For others, however, the floods disrupt and alter this emotional attachment. Negative emotions experienced when present in a now unfamiliar community influence how 'home' is understood in this setting.

Towards the end of our interview, I invited Gina to share her chosen object with me. Due to the size of this piece of furniture, however, she was not able to bring it to the interview. Instead, Gina produced a photograph of her family's veranda day bed, which was retrieved from the mud after the floods. Speaking of this object, Gina told me:

> *"It has been carefully restored by friends. I don't know if you can see from the picture but the bed is covered in vibrant purple and green cushions which are covered in heart notes, signed by friends. For me, this bed is an emblem of permanency and love, to remind the family of all that was wonderful about our time in St. Lucia, one of the worst hit areas".*

Gina's narrative suggests the emotional connection she and her family have formed with this material object. When describing the day bed, Gina explicitly stated that her family were deeply connected to this piece of furniture*: "I think because most of our other furniture was lost* [starting to cry], *this both a memory and a little bit of our old home, so it makes it extra special".* As Gina visibly expressed anxiety through her loss of treasured personal possessions, her tears reminded me of the emotional impact of the floods. Again, as a researcher, I found it difficult to see the level of trauma still so evident. In the aftermath of the floods, Gina and her family have forged a strong emotional connection to this salvaged object. For them, this day bed

represents stability and love. In this sense, it played an important role in their ability to establish a sense of 'home' in the aftermath of disaster.

While a couple of participants shared pieces of furniture with me during the interview process, only one brought treasured collectables. Kim, who I interviewed in both 2011 and 2012, has collected stone eggs for many years (Figure 6.16).

Figure 6.16 "I like to look over and see them sitting there" (Kim) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

During our interview, Kim expressed a strong emotional attachment to these treasured collectables:

> *"I collect eggs. From all over the world. Anybody that travels, they always buy me an egg. And wherever I travel I buy an egg. They're like stone eggs, And I had a whole basket full of them in the house I just said to Colin , 'Oh my god, I've lost my eggs! Why didn't I move them'! You know like. And he went down to the truck beside our shed where they had backed in and there was a basket there and it had a camel pack, drink bottle thing and my eggs! So it was the next shipment to go! So, I saved those!"*

In the aftermath of the floods, these stone eggs help her to recreate a sense of 'home' in her temporary setting. She clearly expressed: *"I like to look over and see them sitting there. It makes it feel more like home".* These objects, therefore, become carriers of Kim's identity and emotions, during a time where her domestic space is undefined.

6.9 Conclusions: The materiality of the post-disaster 'home'

In chapter four, I introduced Russell. His narrative discussed at length the despair he experienced losing his Graceville home to the floods. After 15 months of displacement, he continued to express a strong desire to return to Graceville. During our interview, I asked Russell which object he had chosen to share with me: *"Ah, it's bit of a tricky one!"* Russell wanted to share an object that was too big to bring to our interview. I was intrigued. After a longer discussion about the practicalities of sharing his chosen object, Russell finally told me: "*I'd like to show you my car*".

Figure 6.17 "I didn't want to be stranded" (Russell) (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

At the close of our discussion, Russell invited me to visit his sister's home in Fairview, where his car was parked outside. A few days later, I visited this home to take a photograph of his beloved car (Figure 6.17). During our formal interview, Russell had explained the reason behind his choice:

> *"The car was pretty badly damaged by the floods, because I left it at the house in Graceville. After things died down a bit, I got some mates to help me move it up to Fairfield. It's a bit battered now and most of the time it just sits in my sister's driveway, but I wanted to keep it because it is drivable and I'll spend some time restoring it properly... The floods, they made it difficult for people to move from place to place. So I wanted to have my car with me to make sure I could still go places when I needed to. I didn't want to be stranded".*

To me, Russell's choice was exceptionally interesting. As I have already argued, natural disasters have the ability to cause widespread devastation to both people and places. As Hannam et al. (2006: 7) suggest, they "bring to the fore the outstanding fragility of complex mobility systems". A catastrophic event often causes massive disruption to mobility networks and "effectively immobilizes the most vulnerable" (Cresswell, 2006, 246). Russell's car is representative of his own personal mobility. More specifically, it represents his ability to move within and between different social settings in the aftermath of disaster.

All of the chosen objects discussed in this thesis are useful in providing a deeper understanding of the complexity and emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment. The Brisbane floods caused heartbreaking loss across many suburbs. This loss was not purely felt though the destruction of 'home', but also through the loss of intimate personal possessions. As my narratives suggest, these perhaps taken-for-granted, mundane objects play a key role in the creation (and indeed recreation) of home in the aftermath of disaster. Many of my participants lightheartedly suggested that their chosen object, *"might seem silly".* In this context, although they might not hold a particular meaning to others, they are emotionally and domestically important to the flood victims that treasure them.

Photographs commonly represent a powerful domestic memory indicating a powerful and complex connection to a certain place. In the post-disaster setting, they offer a reminder of a past home but can also help to create a new sense of home for displaced flood victims. My narratives have also placed value on everyday domestic practices such as cooking and cleaning. Disasters disrupt these practices through destruction of the physical setting of home. As a result, flood-affected express a desire to participate in these practices, as they become particularly important ways of staying connected with home on a sensory level. The objects associated with these practices also gain new meaning in the post-disaster environment. Their familiarity and connection to a more stable lifestyle offer comfort during an uncertain time. Finally, my narratives have demonstrated the importance of jewellery, furniture and collectables as a material objects that provide a sense of familiarity to new domestic settings and help victims to reconstitute their sense of 'self' in the post-disaster environment.

For those displaced by the floods, material objects offer a reminder of who they are, where they have come from and the struggles they have faced in the aftermath of tragedy. As Ahmed (2006) suggests, these objects offer comfort to bodies that move. More specifically in this context, they offer comfort to bodies that are *forced* to move by the destructive power of nature. Objects create a physical and emotional continuity with an earlier time and place, acting as companions to our emotional lives (Turkle 2007). In this sense, both the material and emotional aspects of the post-disaster 'home' are understood as equally important and therefore worthy of continued analysis in academic research.

Chapter 7

An alternative disaster context:

Christchurch, New Zealand.

7.1 Introduction: The 'Giving' Disaster

"I'm not numb any more, so I feel anxious all over again. I feel angry that what should be home, the place where I come to be grounded, no longer feels safe for me. It seems to me, at my present state, that there is no-where that I can go on this planet where I will feel safe. I am angry and sad". (Wendy, 2012)

During my first few days in Christchurch, I took a bus from the central city bus station out to the suburb of Lyttelton. Lyttelton is a port town situated on the lower slopes of Port Hills. In 2011, the town experienced widespread devastation as a result of the February 22nd earthquake. This seismic event caused many buildings to collapse, destroying much of the town's architectural heritage.

Figure 7.1 Devastation in Lyttelton (©Stephanie Morrice)

When I arrived in Lyttelton, I took a walk around the steep streets of the city. I noted the broken buildings, rubble and empty plots, which all offered a reminder of the earthquake and the damage this suburb experienced. The streets were quiet and a mist had formed along the surrounding hills. Lyttelton Community House was

situated on Dublin Street in the centre of town. During my time in Christchurch, I visited this community hub a number of times, speaking to local residents in an effort to understand how the centre is involved in post-quake recovery. Lyttelton Community House reopened within 2 weeks of the February 22nd quake, offering residents emotional, social, recreational and practical support in the aftermath of the disaster. During my first visit to the centre, I met Wendy, who volunteered five days a week. She welcomed me warmly and seemed happy to explain the work the centre is involved in. Three days later, I returned to Lyttelton Community House to conduct a formal interview with Wendy.

41-year-old Wendy has been a resident of Lyttelton all of her life. At the time of the earthquake, she was living on College Road with her husband and two children. When she arrived at our interview, Wendy looked worn out, clearly drained by the events of the past year. As our interview began, she spoke happily of her life before the earthquakes, noting the laid-back lifestyle she shared with her husband Chris in this little seaside town:

> *"Life was good, you know. Pretty standard stuff. The kids were enjoying school. Chris was working in the city centre. I was involved in the community. I used to work part-time at the library, just a few days a week. So I was quite in touch with what was going on".*

At the time of the February quake, Wendy and her husband were working in the city centre. During our interview, Wendy discussed the sense of helplessness she experienced as the earthquake hit: *"At that moment, I can remember an acute feeling of total helplessness. We were subjected to a massive earthly jolt, which we had no control over".* She continued:

> *"The street began to bounce, and every building was shaking. Bricks and glass started to crash down from every direction and it was incredibly loud. I was being flung around from side to side and kept trying to stand upright. Some other people on the street were screaming and crying. I just kept willing it to stop but I knew there was nothing to do except hope to God we were going to be ok and ride it out".*

As our interview progressed, Wendy portrayed the scenes she witnessed in the city centre in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. She told me it was a vision she would never forget:

> *"The scene was unbelievable. The road was covered in silt and was partially flooded. It was cold and grey, and there were no cars moving on the street. People were standing everywhere. Some were very still. Some were crying. I saw two German tourists. The girl just stood their while her friend took photos. I asked her if she was ok and she burst into tears. I remember thinking what an awful thing to happen to you while you're on holiday. Alarms and sirens were going off everywhere. To this day, the sound of sirens brings me back to that dreadful day".*

Understandably, Wendy's main concern was to find out if her family were safe. She was worried about husband and daughters and struggled to contact them due to communication breakdowns in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Eventually, Wendy received messages confirming that everyone was safe:

> *"I had my phone on me and I got texts from the girls and from Chris to say that they were all ok. I couldn't send any messages – I guess the networks were overwhelmed. When I got back to Lyttelton, they were all waiting for me a few streets away from our home. When I saw them I ran and gave them all the biggest hug. I was so relieved everyone was OK* [Teary]".

That afternoon, the family were unable reach their Lyttelton home. Military personnel had zoned the surrounding area as unsafe and so they were forced to find refuge with friends in a nearby suburb. A week later, Wendy and Chris were finally able to return to view the damage to their home for the first time. This, she told me, was a deeply upsetting experience:

> *"The earthquake left cracks on the interior of our house, uneven floors, a leaking roof and unsustainable retaining walls. But that was just the physical damage. The earthquake altered our lives ways we didn't think were possible. I was devastated to see my home like that. Shattered and unrecognizable. It was horrible* [Cries]."

At the time of our interview, Wendy and her family were in the process of moving back into their Lyttelton home. Their desire to return and rebuild their house related largely to their connection to their home and to the suburb they have always

lived in: “We love this community”. Despite nearing the end of their displacement, Wendy acknowledged the emotions she has experienced since the earthquake:

> *“I’ve felt a lot of things over the past year or so. Shock and disbelief at what is happening. I’ve also felt numb, as if things are unreal. I’ve felt fear…of reoccurrence mainly, but also fear for the safety of myself and my family and friends. Anger, at what caused this to happen, as well as anger at the senselessness of it all. Sadness, about the losses, both human and material. And about the loss of feelings of safety and security. And shame, at having appeared helpless or emotional. Shame for not being as strong as I would have liked to be”.*

Together with these emotions, Wendy has also experienced a shift in her everyday life:

> *“I do feel constantly on edge. I find myself doing like ‘the scan’, where you go into a building and check where your nearest exits are. And I always make sure I have my phone on me and fully charged”.*

Still, at the close of our interview, she expressed the hope she holds for the future of Christchurch and Lyttelton:

> *“Christchurch is, and always will be, home. It will never be the same again, but it will be beautiful again. Lyttelton lost some of its people and most of its town, but it found its resistance. Christchurch is strong, and the heart of the city remains as it always was”.*

Like my Brisbane interviews, the interviews I conducted in Christchurch were emotionally powerful and astute, offering a unique insight into the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster displacement experience. This chapter presents narratives from my interviews with earthquake-affected residents of Christchurch. Due to the short time frame of my fieldwork in New Zealand, I only conducted four interviews while in the city. All of my participants are women who were living in a suburb of Christchurch when the earthquake hit. As a result, the comparisons discussed are below are intended merely to offer a point of reflection, allowing for the beginning of a deeper consideration of the emotional character of different natural disasters. My work in Christchurch offers a stepping-stone for further research that might consider the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster ‘home’

and, ultimately, the way in which emotions lend meaning to specific places in the post-disaster environment.

7.2 The Canterbury earthquakes: (Re)Placing everyday life

As outlined clearly by Swaffield (2013), the Canterbury earthquakes dramatically disrupted everyday life in Christchurch. For the many people who worked in the city, their workplaces were suddenly inaccessible. For surviving victims and the families of those killed or injured, life changed forever. Life also changed for the thousands of residents across the wider city and nearby suburbs, whose homes were damaged. Some communities rapidly emptied out, as people abandoned their quake-devastated homes. Some relocated to friends or relatives. Others were left with little choice but to stay, camping in their damaged homes. While power was restored to the city relatively quickly, water and sewage was widely disrupted. In the low-lying areas, liquefaction spread grey silt across streets, gardens and into houses (Swaffield 2013).

Over time, many Christchurch residents have succumbed to a 'new normal' way of life. They live in suburbs where roads appear cracked and inaccessible, still closed for infrastructure repairs. Services such as libraries, shopping centres and sporting grounds also remain closed. More recently, however, there has been an effort to re-envision and plan for the future, through a range of temporary and longer-term projects to reconstruct familiar places.

The city's Re:START Mall (Figure 7.2) is an example of one of these projects. Re:START is a shopping experience situated in the CBD on Cashel Mall, Christchurch. Constructed out of old shipping containers, this pedestrianized shopping precinct includes a mix of old tenants, big brands and pre-quake central city stalwarts. Proudly supported by the Christchurch Earthquake Appeal Trust, this retail hub opened in November 2011 and was the only retail outlet open for business in the inner city at that time (Restart 2013). For many residents of the city, the vacated and deserted city centre has been sorely felt. The presence of projects such as the

Re:START Mall attempt to restore a sense of normalcy in a city that remains largely broken. The very name of this project, however, acknowledges that the earthquakes have irreversibly changed the city. While the Re:START Mall allows residents to shop and participate in 'normal' everyday practices, Christchurch is not, and will never be, the same place it was prior to the Canterbury earthquakes.

Figure 7.2 Christchurch Re:START Mall (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

Since the earthquake, employment in the city has also dramatically changed. Many central city hospitality industries and small businesses were forced to close as customers dissipated. Widespread damage also impacted the previously vibrant social and cultural scene. Christchurch has long been hailed the 'most English' of New Zealand's major city's. Pre-quake Christchurch offered weekly farmers' markets in Cathedral Square, punting on the willow-lined River Avon and tram rides across the city. The city was an attractive mix of heritage features, parks and modern buildings. It oozed an addictive historic presence and a uniquely comfortable

familiarity for residents. On February 22nd, 2011, much of this cultural identity was lost. Galleries, theatres, cinemas and cafes all closed immediately after the February 22nd quake. City centre hotels also shut, leading to a devastating effect on city-based tourism.

One of the most unique aspects of this particular case study is the implementation of post-earthquake zoning regulations. In the aftermath of the earthquakes, the government condemned and zoned liquefaction-prone land. These zoning regulations forced many residents to relocate after the earthquake, as they were legally unable to return to their damaged homes. Red zones are areas where there is area-wide damage and an engineering solution to repair the land damage would be uncertain, disruptive, not timely nor cost effective. Those living in these areas are given an offer by the Crown to buy their property. While residents can legally choose not to accept this offer, services in the area will not be restored and insurers may also cancel insurance coverage. Perhaps most importantly, however, CERA also has powers (under the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act 2011) to require residents to sell their property for its market value at that time (CERA 2013c). For some, then, the decision of whether to return 'home', or relocate, is no longer their choice to make. Complete neighbourhoods and suburbs have dispersed, as their residents are scattered across the country. Their freedom to return 'home' is entirely controlled by larger political realities that restrict access to their domestic space.

7.3 Researching emotion ***in*** a disaster context

In chapter 2, I discussed the challenges associated with conducting emotional research in a post-disaster context. Many of these challenges related to the emotional intensity of my research situation and the difficulty I experienced separating my own emotions from those I was interviewing. Chapter 2 also acknowledged the value of my own emotions, recognizing how my emotions play an important role in knowledge production and the way that they continue to influence

my work throughout my analysis and write up. I would like to return to these debates here, reflecting specifically on my research experiences in Christchurch. I aim to draw attention to the challenges of conducting research in a city that continues to experience aftershock events.

By my own admission, I set of towards Christchurch extremely apprehensive of my upcoming fieldwork. After the emotional intensity of my research experience in Brisbane, I was anxious about conducting research in a situation that was still very emotionally raw. I was equally anxious about working in a disaster setting where aftershocks are ongoing. I wondered whether I would experience an earthquake and felt nervous about this possibility.

During a previous visit to the city in 2008, I was enamoured by Christchurch's quintessential English charm. I spent time punting on the River Avon, browsing the markets in Cathedral Square and riding trams across the city. At that time, the city was vibrant and full of culture. Visitors were welcomed with open arms. Before arriving in Christchurch in 2012, I booked a room at a hostel on Barbadoes Street, close to the city centre and inaccessible Red Zone. During my first morning in Christchurch, I walked down recently re-opened Gloucester Street (Figure 7.3), which runs directly though the centre of Christchurch CBD. As I navigated my way between orange 'No access' signs, metal barriers and piles of rubble, I was simply astounded at what I saw.

Many of the buildings were totally destroyed, streets were deserted and there was an eeriness in the air that made me feel deeply uneasy. Gloucester Street was unnervingly quiet. Construction workers used machinery to repair earthquake damage and clear away rubble from destroyed buildings. I stood with a small group of people and watched one of the multi-storey buildings get torn down in the distance (Figure 7.4). Every one of us was silent, mesmerized by the image of falling rubble and glass.

Figure 7.3 Gloucester Street (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

Figure 7.4 Demolition in Christchurch CBD (Stephanie Morrice 2012)

Halfway down Gloucester Street was Cathedral Square (Fig 7.5). The square itself was inaccessible, guarded by military personnel. I was, however, able to walk up to the metal barrier and view the Christchurch Cathedral from a distance. A gathered crowd looked on in stunned silence, humbled by the scene before them. The Cathedral was broken, cracked and torn apart, offering a chilling reminder of the power of nature and the fragility of humanity. Next to me, stood a resident of the city. This man tearfully told me that this was the closest he had been able to get to the Cathedral since the February earthquake. His emotion was visibly evident, demonstrating the ongoing trauma associated with life in the city. Together with this resident, I observed the damage in stunned silence, humbled by the level of destruction.

Figure 7.5 Christchurch Cathedral (©Stephanie Morrice 2012)

During the next two weeks, I spent time observing the city. I visited Redcliffs, Sumner, Avonside and Lyttelton (towns notably affected by the February earthquake). The most notable reflection of my time in Christchurch relates to

damage levels. The city centre and surrounding towns and suburbs presented levels of devastation that I was not expecting. Christchurch was a sea of broken houses, abandoned businesses, empty plots and broken communities. It was a deeply moving experience to walk amidst the traumatic remains of a city and feel the sorrow in the air. I found myself holding back tears as I viewed the tattered remains of houses, businesses and local amenities.

During my short time in Christchurch, I experienced four earthquakes. The most powerful one occurred while I was sitting preparing to present my doctoral project as part of a seminar series at the University of Canterbury. As I sat preparing for my presentation, I suddenly felt the building start to shake violently. The aftershock caught me totally off guard. As the shaking continued, I found myself gripping my chair anxiously and silently willed the tremor to stop. I felt a real sense of powerlessness in that moment. This aftershock allowed me to experience the disaster myself, which on reflection was useful for knowledge production. The following is a small excerpt from my Christchurch research diary, reflecting on this experience:

> *"I remember before I arrived I felt apprehensive and curious about how it feels to be in these quakes. It turns out, it's a rather horrible experience. Even though today's lasted only a few seconds, I felt my heart fall into my stomach. You've got no control of what is going to happen and that isn't a nice feeling. I felt scared, and sick… I've noticed more and more that people here look completely worn out. Depressed. Speechless. Some look like the life has been sucked out of them. And everyone looks so, so tired. No wonder. I can't imagine what it must be living in constant fear, anxious about when the next one might hit". (July 2012)*

The Monday after I arrived, I visited the Christchurch museum on the day that it re-opened to the public. At the end of an excellent earthquake exhibition was a counter, tracking the number of aftershocks recorded since the 2010 September earthquake. The day I visited, this number stood at 11,489.

The ongoing nature of the earthquakes has left the city deeply traumatized. All of the participants in my research were extremely emotional during their interviews. They discussed feeling scared, isolated, anxious and helpless. The

ongoingness of the earthquakes also disrupts their post-disaster recovery. Unlike in Brisbane, where my participants have been able to progress through recovery since the January 2011, each aftershock in Christchurch becomes an emotional blast for those in the city. Effectively, this setting is both a disaster *and* a post-disaster environment. In this sense then, participants' emotions are incredibly raw and indeed representative of the trauma still present in the city.

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7.4 The ongoing nature of disaster: Fear

"They call it the giving disaster, because it just keeps giving". (Christine, 2012)

Our contemporary world is one of heightened concern of risk. As Hyndman (2007, 335) suggests:

> "This expansion of fear seems to arise from many sources: threats of natural disasters, global climate change, and health pandemics now occur alongside geopolitical fearmongering and growing apprehensions about inequality, social injustice, and political instability".

As a result, much contemporary geographic research investigates the myriad of threats we face in the realm of natural disasters, with studies exploring fears associated with natural and technological hazards (Chang 2000; Cutter 1993; Kasperson et al 1990; Palm 1990). Studies of fear have incorporated the practical realities of nature, offering an understanding that nature can be both a source of fear and a protector against fear (Kaika 2003). Nature inflicts destruction when it acts beyond the control of human society. In this sense, there becomes an important interrelatedness of nature and emotion. As Little (2008, 87) suggests, "nature does not simply create an emotional response but is, in turn, a construction that emerges from our emotions".

Nature-society relations have been a key area of academic attention within recent human geography (Brugger et al. 2013; Kaika 2004). Within emotional geography, the deconstruction of accepted binaries such as mind/body, nature/culture and rational/emotional, has been important in developing a holistic

approach to subjectivity, troubling the binaries between the environment and the individual (Bondi 2005). Nature as beyond the control of humans has the greatest power in terms of the ability to induce fear (Little 2008; Kaika 2004). Both of my case studies remind us of the fragility of society, vulnerability of humans and destructive power of nature. Here, fear is about helplessness of humans against nature.

Hyndman (2007) draws on Lopez's 2005 plenary AAG talk, during which he urges Geographers to "confront the geography that is to be feared – if we don't do this, we should all go home" (Lopez 1995, in Hyndman 2007). If we are to do this, Lopez suggests that we must understand fear's affects and transcend them by theorizing and enacting hopeful alternatives (Lopez 1995, in Hyndman 2007). I find Lopez's words particularly ironic for this thesis. What if, in fact, 'home' is the very place that is feared?

In chapter 2, I explored debates that conceptualise 'home' as a safe place. Home is often rendered as a secure, reassuring place, characterized by trust, togetherness and familiarity (Blunt and Dowling 2006). In chapter 5, however, I explored the negative emotions individuals experience viewing their flood-damaged homes, challenging this oversimplification of the concept. These homes no longer offer comfort and safety, but instead evoke feelings of anxiety and unease. Interestingly, most interviews with residents in Brisbane did not discuss fear explicitly. While there was some mention of fear in situations where participants had to be rescued from the floodwater by SES authorities, fear was not an emotion that the flood-affected discussed in any real depth. This begins to suggest the differences between these two settings, justifying my use of Christchurch as an alternative disaster setting.

As already stated, the purpose of this secondary case study is to begin to investigate the variations between different natural hazards. In Brisbane, residents were advised about the potential of widespread flooding in the days leading up to the flood peak. While many have criticized the poor communication of these warnings, residents in Christchurch were subjected to sudden, unpredictable and

uncontrollable earthquakes. As literature recognises, earthquakes in particular have the capacity to evoke a wide range of acute and chronic psychological responses, largely due to their sudden, unexpected aggression and potential for damage and loss of life (Neria et al 2007; Sattler et al 2006). Furthermore, tremors and aftershocks following the initial quake event have also been associated with anxiety, leading to greater post-traumatic responses to the disaster (Bodvarsdottir and Elklit 2004). Justifiably then, many psychologists have explored the levels of psychological distress experienced by Cantabrians following the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes (see for example Dorahy and Kannis-Dymand 2012). These studies explore the post-traumatic distress among affected communities and individuals.

Earlier, I discussed the ongoing nature of the Christchurch earthquake. This also differs from my Brisbane case study. Since the floods occurred in 2011, Brisbane residents have slowly recovered, reestablishing emotional stability in their lives. In Christchurch, each uncontrollable earthquake and subsequent aftershock represents an emotional blast for city residents. These ongoing events perpetuate the anxiety and fear they feel. Psychological studies illuminate the way in which this ongoingness leads to acute stress, fear and anxiety among people living in these areas (Dorahy and Kannis-Dymand 2012; Scott and Stradling 1994). In my own research, fear became a prominent emotion throughout my time in Christchurch. It was the emotion that I experienced as a researcher, anxiously conducting research within an ongoing disaster setting. It was also the emotion that punctuated all of my interviews. Narratives demonstrate the fear residents experience living in Christchurch when an aftershock might occur at any moment. With residents experiencing multiple scales of 'home' (their house and Christchurch itself), narratives demonstrate how fear is an important influence on how the earthquake – affected relate to places in the post-disaster environment.

During informal discussions and observations, fear was also visible. People *looked* scared. During one of my first mornings in the city, I walked through the Re:START mall toward the metal barriers that separated shoppers from the

inaccessible CBD red zone. I watched people startle when cranes banged pieces of metal loudly against each other and as construction workers drilled holes in the ground. Everyone seemed on edge, wary of distant silences and loud noises. Conversations with city residents also suggested the levels of anxiety experienced in the city. These conversations all identified the stress of 'living in fear' in post-quake Christchurch. This fear transgressed from my observations and informal discussions to my interview process.

During my interview with Wendy, I discovered that her sister and brother-in-law temporarily relocated tp Australia after the February 22nd earthquake. She told me this decision was largely due to her sister's anxiety at the ongoing nature of the earthquakes: *"She couldn't deal with it".* In December 2011, Wendy hosted her sister and their family, who had returned to Christchurch for the holidays. This trip was an opportunity for the family to gauge post-earthquake recovery and decide whether to remain in Australia. Wendy told me:

> *"I was so happy to have them come back to share in this beautiful environment for Christmas, but so sad that they left with just another bunch of quake memories and a greater resolve not to return here to live".*

With continuing aftershocks, Wendy's sister and her family decided to relocate to Australia permanently. Wendy continued:

> *"I asked her about her decision once, and I remember her telling me something like 'of course my heart goes out to my home, but at the minute I just can't come back with the kiddies'. She didn't want them living like this".*

Wendy's narrative not only suggests the multi-scalarity of home, but also the influence fear plays on how residents ascribe meaning to places. For Wendy's sister, this fear ultimately defines her conceptualisation of the post-earthquake city.

During the other interviews, participants expressed similar anxiety about the continuing earthquakes. I met Christine at Sumner Community Centre when I visited the suburb in 2012. Sumner, like Lyttelton, is a coastal seaside suburb of Christchurch. Much of this suburb was badly affected by earthquake related liquefaction, lateral spreading, rockfalls and landslides. At the time of the February

earthquake, 55-year-old Christine was living alone at her property in Sumner. During our interview, she talked extensively about the day the earthquake occurred:

> *"My house shuddered and groaned, and it felt like the world outside was destroying itself. The noise from outside was terrifying, and I heard glass and china falling and breaking all around me as I held on tightly to my kitchen table. I had a weird sense of stillness in the chaos, and suddenly everything became very quiet. After the shaking stopped, I ran out onto the street. People were holding onto one another, some crying, some shaking, others trying to call loved ones. I remember looking up at the cliffs and noticing that part of the cliff had fallen away".*

Christine's words depict a terrifying situation. Indeed, this was, *"the day that changed my life forever*".

In the months that followed, Christine experienced great heartbreak watching her city and suburb struggle to recover in the face of continuing aftershocks:

> *"Once manicured, tree-lined streets are now scruffy, and cracked in places. Footpaths are pot-holed and many homes have been red-stickered, meaning the building is unsafe and needs to be demolished…The physical scars and empty lots of a battered city are plain to see, but the mental anguish lingers here like a bad smell, because of the possibility of more big ones to come. The shaking is relentless. Chaos, even in everyday life, is the norm. Sumner once had three churches, now they are gone. The corners shops, florist, clothing shop and local supermarket are no longer operating. Roads remain blistered and twisted. The mood and atmosphere around the streets and suburbs of Christchurch is one of anxiety, as we live not knowing if and when more big quakes will come".*

Christine went on to discuss her own personal trauma as she lives in fear of aftershocks and the possibility of subsequent major earthquakes:

> *"I'm terrified. My house was red-stickered, and so I am living in temporary accommodation in Avonside at the moment…I don't want to have a shower in the house alone. The experience with the earthquakes is just constant. I'm constantly checking in with my own emotional response, you know? Like, 'Am I ok today?'…There is so much grief, and you know it's still there, that emotional blast. Living with continuing quakes and aftershocks – they bring*

> *everything up again. They make me feel woozy and my heart starts to shake."*

Since the earthquake, Christine has decided move closer to her daughter in Wellington. While the CERA zoning of her property would make a return to her earthquake damaged home impossible, she equated her ultimate decision to the fear she experiences in her day-to-day life. Contributing to debates within emotional geography, Christine's narrative suggests that emotions are grounded by specific places. They present themselves in response to certain spaces in the post-disaster landscape. These emotions also play a key role in the construction of places (Pile 2010a). Christine's narrative demonstrates how Christchurch now evokes feelings of fear and anxiety among earthquake victims. This once familiar and safe city is now a place of anxiety and unfamiliarity. Christine continued:

> *"The city centre's red zone is like a ghost town. I can't remember what buildings stood where. There has been some progress there though. There's a small precinct of shipping containers that has been converted to a shopping area, so the rebuild has begun cautiously. But we still can't see inside our inner central city. Our office blocks, cafes, shopping streets, they've all been cordoned off for over year. And much of the inner city is being torn down. Landmark buildings have vanished. It's so sad, and it's not what it used to be".*

Christine's interview also exemplifies how disasters can distort and alter places and routines. The negative emotions she experiences in Christchurch lend meaning to this specific place. In this respect, relocating to Wellington offers Christine an opportunity to escape from her experiences with disaster, the traumatic memory of the earthquakes and the unfamiliar 'home' she no longer feels an attachment to.

In this post-disaster context, fear extends to the multiple scales of 'home'. Christine's narratives explores the fear she experiences in Christchurch and Sumner in particular, although also discusses the anxiety she feels in her temporary domestic space when showering and cooking. My interview with Jenny also specifically speaks of the fear she feels in her earthquake-damaged domestic space. I interviewed Jenny at Lyttelton Community House during my second week in the city. She, like so many others, looked exhausted when she arrived at our interview. She was also clearly

nervous. Sitting on the edge of her chair, she twiddled her hair nervously. Her anxious disposition again suggests the stress associated with living with continued aftershocks.

Jenny and her husband were living in Lyttelton at the time of the 2011 February earthquake. When the earthquake hit, they were in a café in the city centre on Moorhouse Avenue. During our interview, she talked me through returning to her house for the first time:

> *"Our house looked OK from the front, but on closer inspection we saw that the concrete foundations had split and parts of it had sunk into the ground, separating from the wooden structure, leaving gaps between the house and foundation big enough to stick my arm into. The brick archway in the living room was at the point of collapse, so we got into our car and drove up to Nelson to be with our family that night. When we finally arrived, we were shattered and numb. We barely slept that night, reliving the shake and jumping with the slightest sound".*

Jenny's narrative picked up on the continuing nature of the aftershocks and the distress they cause Christchurch residents:

> *"The aftershocks are very distressing* [starts to cry]. *We are extremely jumpy. The smallest sound send the body into flight reflex and you have to force yourself not to scream or run away and cry. I always feel it like a kick in the gut. Experiencing this 10 or so times a day leaves everyone drained, exhausted and tired. My husband and I have been through every one of the so called 'acute stress disorder symptoms': numbness, tiredness, irritability, insomnia, disconnectedness and recurring flashbacks".*

This particular section of our interview was extremely emotional for Jenny. The traumatic experience of not only dealing with the initial earthquake, but also subsequent aftershocks, has lead to a challenging and stressful post-quake lifestyle. Much literature in emotional geography argues that emotions are not simply rooted in the individual, but move and are negotiated between bodies and places (Ahmed 2004). Jenny's narrative builds on these arguments, demonstrating how the fear she experienced in the initial aftermath moves within the post-disaster landscape and remains influential in her everyday life. Emotions, then, are clearly not static.

Instead, they cross boundaries between people and places circulating through contemporary life.

Although fear was prominent in all of the interviews I conducted, narratives did suggest that some residents were beginning to embrace the aftershocks as a 'normal' part of their everyday life. Wendy discussed:

> *"On the fourth day, I said, 'I just can't do this anymore'. So we went and rented a camper van. The campervan was bliss because whatever you do in the van it moves, so if there was an aftershock you really didn't notice, so it helped us all calm down. Now we're home – or almost home - we're feeling more settled. I even sleep through some of the aftershocks now. It seems weird to say they have become normal, but they have. It's a new sort of normal* [Laughs]".

Again, this narrative highlights how emotional responses to natural disasters can change and alter over time. Initially traumatized by the continuing aftershocks, Wendy retreated to a mobile home, which offered her a physical escape from her experience with the disaster. As time has elapsed, her emotional response is no longer one of fear, but one of acceptance.

Together, my narratives demonstrate that fear is a prominent and influential emotional response to the Christchurch earthquake. Ongoing aftershocks intensify emotions by heightening stress, anxiety and fear in the post-quake city. These emotions are a key influence on how the earthquake-affected relate to specific places in the post-disaster environment. The post-disaster 'home' is often defined by these negative emotions. Anxiety experienced in Christchurch, for example, distorts the attachments held to this once vibrant and culturally significant city, prompting residents to relocate elsewhere.

7.5 Restricted access to 'home'

In chapter two, I suggested that geographers have been actively involved in rendering visible large-scale disruptions to home though the wrath of natural disasters. As Brickell (2012) notes, these studies illuminate the way in which the intimate spaces of home are closely connected to wider power relations.

Geopolitical work on urbicide (Hewitt 2009) explores attacks on the domestic foundations of a city, considering both physical damage to home and the dehousing or forced removal of residents (Hewitt 2009). These studies discuss this loss of home in terms of restriction of freedom, loss of identity and loss of security and ownership (Porteous and Smith 2001). While this thesis offers a different context in which to consider access and denial to home, my research in Christchurch contributes to these arguments in more depth.

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed the unique nature of Christchurch post-earthquake zoning. CERA is the agency established by the New Zealand government to "lead and coordinate the ongoing recovery effort following the devastating earthquakes of September 2010 and February 2011" (CERA 2013c). Following these earthquakes, all of the land in Greater Christchurch has been progressively mapped into zones. According to CERA, green zones are generally considered to be suitable for post-earthquake residential construction (CERA 2013c). In contrast, residential property was zoned red where the land was so badly damaged by the earthquakes that it is unlikely it can be rebuilt on for a prolonged period. Red-zoned land has significant and extensive area wide damage and offers engineering solutions that are limited and may be unsuccessful. Any repair to the land is therefore deemed disruptive and protracted for landowners.

Residents of Christchurch who own a red-zoned property receive an offer from the Crown to buy their house. This offer is based on the most recent rating valuation of for the land/property. Legally, residents can decide not to accept this offer. If they do not, residents are warned that the council/utility providers may not install new services or continue to maintain existing services in the residential red zone. Furthermore, while no ultimate decision has been on the future of the land in the areas, CERA has powers to require residents to sell their properties to CERA for its market value at that time (Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act 2011). If a decision is made in the future to utilize these powers, this value could be substantially lower than the amount initially offered by the Crown (CERA 2013c).

CERA's land zoning is an interesting dimension to this case study. If their home is zoned red, residents are unable to return to their property, regardless of their desire to do so. In this sense, their access to home is dictated by the local government. Informal discussions with residents in the city explained this reality in depth. While unable to stand in their properties, residents with red-zoned homes often hung precariously through windows or cracks in order to grab personal possessions within reaching distance. Property zoned white or orange requires further inspection, leading to months of uncertainty for residents who await the fate of their domestic spaces. In this sense, there is something to be noted about the difference between losing 'home' through earthquake destruction itself and a lost 'home' that is essentially still physically present, but untouchable due to zoning. The emotions attributed to the latter scenario were not encountered in Brisbane, where land was not zoned following the flooding.

During all of the interviews I conducted in Christchurch, residents discussed the challenges associated with CERA's land zoning. Many of these discussions related to a sense of helplessness, as residents were no longer free to make a decision about whether or not to return to their earthquake damaged property. During my interview with Jenny, she discussed CERA land zoning in great detail. In the initial aftermath of the earthquake, Jenny's home was white stickered, meaning that complex geotechnical issues relating to landslip and rockroll required further assessment and observation before a final land decision could be made (CERA 2013c). During our interview, she explained that waiting for this final verdict was emotionally draining:

> *"The loneliness I felt at that time was a loneliness I've never felt before. It was different. I felt quite helpless just waiting for someone else to make a decision on the fate of my home".*

Throughout our interview, Jenny also discussed friend's responses to CERA's zoning, *"My friend's house got red-stickered and then the land was red and few weeks ago the poor house got demolished. She was devastated. She wanted to go back, but she*

had no choice". Her narrative interestingly anthromorphizes her friend's home, giving the domestic space a human character.

Christine shared a similar story. After the February 22nd earthquake, her home in Sumner was red-stickered and therefore unsafe to return to. While much of her interview focused on the fear she experienced in post-earthquake Christchurch, she also noted the anxiety she experienced dealing with CERA zoning:

> *"It's bad enough you have to walk around and see signs and barriers everywhere, but getting a red sticker was just heart-wrenching. Like a kick in the teeth. There was something final about it too. I remember reading the letter with tears streaming down my face and I just thought, 'well, that's it then'. There was nothing more I could do."*

Christine's emotions contribute to the levels of anxiety and stress residents experience in the aftermath of disaster. These narratives also contribute to critical understandings of 'home', highlighting the way in which 'home' is a nexus of power (Blunt and Dowling 2006). In this situation, residents of Christchurch are restricted of their freedom, left to hopelessly wander along a broken path in search of somewhere new to call home.

7.6 Human agency and community networks

In the previous empirical chapters, I noted the way in which post-disaster communities commonly come together in crisis. While the section above highlights the helplessness Christchurch residents experience as a result of CERA zoning, I find it important to note that interviews also acknowledged the resilience of certain communities. Wendy, for example, discussed the way in which Lyttelton residents found comfort with each other:

> *"Sometimes I get tearful thinking about the kindness of others. A few days after the earthquake, my friend and I set up a gazebo on the grassy flat in Lyttelton, with tables and chairs, water and snacks, and a sign that said 'Join us, have a chat'. She also brought down bits and pieces of felt and wool and buttons and material and started to sow and embroider little hearts and hand them out to people passing by. There was people there the whole day, people walking dogs, families. We handed out the little hearts to*

anyone and everyone. Some of the kids were making their own too, hearts for their mums, it was wonderful and heart warming…Its been like that ever since. I've met volunteers from around the world who have come to help. People who have helped enormously with clearing broken buildings and tidying up and securing unsafe spots and just talked to everyone, you know? There was even the navy boats anchored in the port who created a makeshift small field hospital on board for people who got hurt. They cooked lunches and dinners for everyone and it turned into a social occasion".

This narrative highlights how disasters can strengthen existing community networks. The community support in Lyttelton offered residents comfort and support during a time of heightened anxiety. This feeling of comfort is evoked by the presence of others within the complex post-disaster environment (Bissell 2008). Wendy's narrative also touches on knitting as an embodied and materially mediated practice. Academic research on emotion and its relation with material conditions suggests that emotions are not simply located in the individual sphere, but also closely connected to the characteristics and qualities of social practices (Sheller 2004). In this context, knitting solidifies socialization and comfort throughout the emotional post-disaster landscape. Furthermore, knitting seems to establish a sense of connection (and indeed identity) among earthquake victims.

Other narratives likewise discussed the emotional and community support in the aftermath of the earthquakes. For Christine, this community support contributed to her emotional connection to her earthquake-damaged neighbourhood:

"We have a little network here. So when an aftershock hits, we call each other, or text, 'Me ok. You ok?' We look out for each other because we know what it's like to go through it. Sometimes we'll have coffee mornings here [the community centre] and just sit around and talk. Someone might be having a bad day, so we rally around and give them a bit of comfort… There's a sense of connectedness here – a knowledge that you're not on your own. The community network that has come out of the earthquake, that's the silver lining. Yes, it really is. Everyone's been through the same thing so there's an immediate bond".

Christine's narrative highlights the creation of a bond between earthquake victims. This bond is forged through shared experiences and compassion. As in Brisbane,

community support networks play an important role in post-disaster recovery. They offer residents emotional support and stability within the post-disaster environment.

7.7 The materiality of damage

"This experience has heightened our appreciation of life, our loved ones, and lessened the need for material possessions, or the silly little fickle things in life."

Throughout chapter 6, I explored the materiality of the post-disaster home. During this analysis, I demonstrated the trauma associated with losing treasured personal possessions that are emotionally and domestically important to flood victims. These objects provide comfort and familiarity to those who experienced the floods. Furthermore, they play an important role in the (re)creation of home in the post-disaster environment. Unsurprisingly, there are clear parallels between my two case studies, as earthquake victims acknowledge the comfort and familiarity found from keeping certain objects with them after the earthquake. Christine, for example, told me:

> *"At first when you survive the initial terrifying event, you're happy that you have your life intact. Then, as things start to move on, you miss your environment, your familiar things. I went back into my broken home to retrieve cherished and familiar items. They're not an unnecessary luxury. These objects become important comfort in these strange times. So much is continually changing around us – buildings are always being brought to the ground, so I'm comforted by what is familiar".*

Christine's narrative suggests the importance of material objects in the aftermath of disaster. Contributing to literature that acknowledges the importance of material culture in homemaking practices (Miller 2008), Christine's narrative explores how objects lend meaning to dwellings. Here, we see how treasure personal possessions represent domestic memories and life experiences. My research in Christchurch, however, also highlighted a number of key differences in relation to the materiality of damage and in the way that earthquake victims view personal possessions.

Firstly, I think it is appropriate to acknowledge the different types of damage caused in my two case study settings. While both the Brisbane floods and the Christchurch earthquake caused extensive damage to houses in the city, the levels of damage differ. Water damage commonly causes extensive and irreversible damage to certain possessions that are particularly important to Brisbane residents, such as photographs. As acknowledged through the narratives discussed in chapter 6, photographs are particularly important in the post-disaster environment as they represent powerful domestic memories. Simultaneously, they facilitate and represent the transport of 'home' across both space and time. While the Christchurch earthquake caused structural damage to homes in affected suburbs, objects that might have been irreversibly destroyed by floodwater (such as photographs and birth certificates) were spared from destruction. Of course this is not to say all material possession from the domestic space were spared. My narratives do acknowledge the damage caused to furniture (in particular china kitchenware, glassware, wooden tables) and in turn the emotions associated with this loss: *"all of our dishes lay smashed in the kitchen. It was very upsetting".* Still, the type of damage in Christchurch differs substantially to that experienced in Brisbane.

These observations all contribute to studies of post-disaster environments, as well as research on the materiality of 'home'. This section in particular paves the way for future research that will further explore the materiality of damage in the post-disaster environment. While researching, I began to reflect on the 2009 Victorian bushfires in Australia. On 'Black Saturday' (7th February 2009), Victoria was devastated by the worst bushfires in Australian history, when 173 people lost their lives. With 78 communities affected, these bushfires burnt more than 2,000 properties, leaving entire towns unrecognizable (Australian Government 2013). Similarly to water and earthquake damage, fire damage can destroy a home's structure, making it unstable. Smoke from the fire is the most toxic part of this scenario as it leaves a pungent colour and odour that can be incredibly difficult to

remove. I am also reflective of the recent 2013 Oklahoma tornado, which ripped through the city of Moore, causing 24 deaths and destroying approximately 12,000 homes (Lord 2013). Watching news footage of the damage, I was stuck by the total devastation caused to houses in the affected area. Unlike in Brisbane and Christchurch, where the shell of most houses remained following the catastrophic event, the Oklahoma tornado left little more than the shredded remains of bricks and wood. News footage of victims' responses conveyed the emotional responses to this disaster. While this representation of trauma is obviously mediated by TV coverage, footage was full of tearful reactions to the tornado damage. Considering Christchurch and Brisbane, as well as other disasters such as the Victoria bushfires and the Oklahoma tornado, highlights how the materiality of damage differs in each disaster context.

In my Brisbane case study, I utilized object elicitation as a secondary method during my fieldwork. This method was used as a way to explore how everyday objects play a key role in post-disaster homemaking. By inviting research participants to bring an important object to our interview, I explored the feelings and emotions bound up in material possessions. Due the much shorter duration of my fieldwork in Christchurch, I did not incorporate object elicitation as a method while in the city. This would, however, be an interesting route for future investigations. Interestingly, although unprompted, some of the Christchurch residents did discuss material possessions during their interviews.

While victims did acknowledge the sadness associated with losing certain objects in the earthquake, Christchurch narratives overwhelmingly suggested that material objects hold less importance than they did before the earthquake. Many Christchurch residents experienced great personal danger when the earthquakes hit the city. As a result, objects became less important than their own personal safety. During my time in the city, I interviewed Sarah, a young woman who had been living in Redcliffs at the time of the February earthquake. At our interview, Sarah admitted feeling "*emotionally drained*" by the events of the past year. Sarah's story was

particularly challenging to listen to because of the intensity of her experience. At the time of the earthquake, she had been on her lunch break in the city centre. Her narrative tearfully depicts what happened to her on that unforgettable day:

> *"I was sitting in a café on Colombo Street when the earthquake hit. The building shook so hard it started to fall apart. All I could do was watch in horror as windows smashed and the roof started to fall in. People were hurt and bleeding, and I had to duck to stop rubble falling on me…And then all of a sudden, I was knocked off my feet and there was a cloud of dust around me. I wasn't badly hurt, but I was trapped by a portion of ceiling plaster that had fallen on top of me".*

Sarah waited almost an hour until two men managed to pull her from the rubble. By her own admission, this near-death experience was deeply upsetting: *"When they pulled me out I was in a state of shock…I thank God every day for protecting me that day, and for bringing me through this traumatic experience".* Today, her life remains hugely altered, as she continues to deal with her own emotional response to her near-death experience. Sarah's house was also red-stickered due to earthquake damage. Viewing this damage was also an emotional ordeal, as she struggled to come to terms with the loss of her first home:

> *"I had lived in Christchurch all of my life, except when I went to Dunedin for University. But I just can't do it anymore. I am so, so tired. Like everyone else. There's just this overriding tiredness. Even on a good day, it's still there. I have days where I cry, days where I feel an aftershock and I scream and call out. I'm moving south to be with some old University friends."*

Unable to deal with the emotional stress of living through constant earthquakes, Sarah decided to relocate to Dunedin.

Towards the close of our discussion, Sarah reflected upon the changes to her life since the earthquake. Specifically, she noted her altered reaction to material objects. At first, she acknowledged the sadness she experienced losing certain treasured personal possessions: *"A lot of my furniture was destroyed, including a wooden table that was a moving in present from my grandparents and I was sad about that"*. As the interview progressed, however, Sarah went on to discuss her relationship with material objects in the aftermath of the event:

"I guess when you go through something like this, where your life is in danger, things change a bit. I don't really have any attachment to things inside my home now. And when you lose a lot of stuff, you realize that 'things' are just unimportant. Even things like housekeeping – I used to be meticulous, now if there's a bit of dust, I don't care as much. It's just meaningless stuff. You start to realize what's important."

This sentiment was echoed during my interview with Wendy. She told me:

"I've evaluated a lot of things since the earthquake, as far as my priorities go I guess. Like realizing that it's people that are important, things can be fixed or repaired or replaced, so long as everyone is OK".

Together, these narratives acknowledge how disasters can lead to personal evaluations. For those who felt their lives or the lives of loved ones were in danger, material objects become less important. Again, this highlights the different responses to different natural disaster. In Brisbane, narratives placed great importance on personal objects, as they became a symbol of a more stable time before the floods and a hope for future stability. While my Christchurch narratives do acknowledge the way in which salvaged objects can provide comfort and familiarity in the post-disaster environment, they also suggest that these objects become less important when lives have been placed at risk.

7.8 Conclusions: A different disaster context

The discussions presented in this chapter are included largely as a point of reflection. My two-week time period in Christchurch proved fruitful in terms of both 'doing' emotional fieldwork and in understanding peoples' emotional responses to different disasters. There are clear parallels between my two case studies. As in Brisbane, interviews in Christchurch demonstrated the heartbreak and distress associated with losing one's home to disaster. All of the displaced Christchurch residents initially expressed a desire to return to their damaged house. This desire relates to their emotional connection to a specific place. Narratives also explicitly demonstrate the importance of community networks in the aftermath of the earthquake. These networks offer residents comfort and support during an anxious

time. My work in Christchurch also reinforced the unique nature of natural disasters. Each disaster setting offers different complexities and subjectivities. This realization suggests the need for further research that will continue to tap into the emotional dynamics of different disasters.

In the 1970's and 1980's, humanistic geographers understood home as place of belonging, safety and joy; "a place liberated from fear and anxiety, a place supposedly untouched by social political and natural processes" (Kaika 2004, 266). Supporting more recent understandings of home as a potential site of alienation and exclusion, this chapter highlights what happens when 'home' becomes a place of fear and anxiety. No longer a protective space, the domestic space lacks comfort and safety amidst continuing earthquakes and subsequent aftershocks. On a larger scale, ongoing earthquakes distort the familiarity and indeed safety of Christchurch, as resident are fearful of staying in the city. As a result, fear becomes a central emotion within the disaster experience. This emotion motivates some residents to move away from Christchurch and the ongoing aftershocks. Furthermore, fear also becomes important as residents reflect on the loss they experience. My narratives suggest the differences in the materiality of damage between Christchurch and Brisbane. In Christchurch, fear for one's safety or for the safety of loved ones, lessens the importance of material objects in the aftermath of disaster.

This chapter also highlights how access and denial to home can be dictated by political institutions. Unlike in Brisbane, post-earthquake homes are zoned in accordance with damage levels. For some, this zoning restricts their access to 'home' and ability to return and renovate following the earthquake. This added stress also exacerbates residents' emotional responses, as they feel helpless and unable to dictate their own fate.

As in Brisbane, Christchurch recovery efforts are ongoing and determined. Residents who have stayed are confident that their great city will rise once again. As Wendy told me: *"We love this community and are sure that Christchurch will rise again. The people are strong and resilient".* Of course, neither setting within this

thesis presents a simple recovery process. Together, my empirical chapters suggest that the structural, economic and emotional consequences of disaster are complicated and long-term. These chapters also demonstrate the complicated emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment. My narratives show how, through emotions, places and objects become meaningful in this environment.

Chapter 8:

Conclusion

8.1 Returning 'home'? Emotional geographies of disaster-displaced people

"It's not an easy choice. And it's really hard to think straight, and make the right decision, when you know you've lost everything." (Kim, 2011)

The traumatic effects of the Brisbane flood and the Christchurch earthquake remain quietly visible across these two cities. While the media moves on and disaster recovery reports focus on 'successful' progress levels, many residents continue to feel the long-term effects of losing homes and possessions to disaster.

Towards the end of my fieldwork in Brisbane, I interviewed Caroline, an elderly woman who occasionally attended the Sherwood Flood Support Group. At the time of our interview in June 2012, she had still not returned to her flood-affected home in Toowong. During our meeting, Caroline broke into tears when she discussed her anxiety and sadness watching the city 'celebrate' flood recovery progress:

> *"They keep putting on these celebrations…*[Crying]. *I don't know why, I certainly don't feel like celebrating. I think a lot of people feel very forgotten. As if the floods are over. Yes they are but we're still struggling. It's an uphill battle every single day".*

As Caroline's narrative suggests, many affected individuals are still struggling emotionally and financially to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of the floods. These are people who feel forgotten, neglected amidst happier stories of recovery.

The 2011 Queensland floods shattered lives, dislocated families and caused heartbreaking loss to thousands of individuals across the state. In early 2013, the city flooded again. While the Brisbane River peaked at half the level it did in January 2011, areas of the city and state suffered even more damage. Undoubtedly those who were affected in 2011 experienced another emotional blast as the memories of the earlier floods surfaced again. In Christchurch, aftershocks continue to shake the city. These ongoing events impact the everyday lives of those who live in the city, continuing to make life extremely challenging.

Immersing myself within two post-disaster environments has explicitly highlighted the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster landscape. While there are

a number of emotions that circulate within and between people and places in the post-disaster landscape, these emotions are negotiated in different ways by different people. There are also variables that undoubtedly affect the emotions of the displaced. These include gender, financial constraints, displacement length and community/family networks. In this sense, my intention here has not been to suggest a model of the experience of disaster. Instead I have used narratives from the disaster-displaced, together with observations and object elicitation, as a way to begin to tap into the emotional effects of living in the aftermath of catastrophic events. Drawing from two different case studies has also allowed an opportunity to explore whether emotions differ in different disaster contexts.

The chapters so far presented in this thesis have contributed to a deeper understanding of the complexities of people's emotional response to disaster. This final chapter draws together those preceding it to consider the contribution they make to academic knowledge, theory and discussion. I begin by breaking down the research aims as outlined in chapter one as a way to highlight how this thesis has contributed to literatures and theories on emotion and the critical geographies of 'home', the materiality of 'home' and methodological debates on studying emotion within a post-disaster environment.

The third section of this chapter will consider the implications of this research beyond its academic contributions, highlighting its potential importance for disaster planners and policy makers who are dealing with the practical implications of disasters in terms of both recovery and resilience. I see a need to bridge the gap between academic understandings of the social impacts of disaster and the work of those who are preparing for future catastrophic events.

Finally, this conclusion will acknowledge the limitations to this research and reflect on possible modes of further enquiry. While I have begun to investigate the emotions present within the post-disaster environment, a deeper understanding of the spatiality of these emotions is, I believe, crucial knowledge that will help to inform future disaster mitigation and preparedness policies. There also remains

great scope for further investigation into the relationship between emotions, home and disasters. While this thesis considers two separate case studies, there is a need for geographers to continue to research different forms of disasters (and also different forms of displacement and resettlement) in order to more fully understand the emotional geographies of the disaster-displaced.

8.2 Academic contributions

This thesis explicitly highlights the impact of crisis on domestic geographies of the familiar. As stated in the introduction, this work is unique in its location at the intersection of geographical work on home and disasters; environmental work on hazards, preparedness and recovery; and psychological research on trauma. Throughout my fieldwork and during my subsequent analysis and write-up, I have presented the results of my research at a number of interdisciplinary seminars and international conference in Australia, New Zealand and Europe. These events reflect the interdisciplinary nature of my work, highlighting the different academic audiences to which this thesis is relevant[1].

In my empirical chapters I produced and presented in-depth empirical material on the everyday nature of emotions within the post-disaster environment. Narratives presented throughout this thesis document a number of different emotions that are present in both the immediate aftermath of disaster and months after the event. These emotions influence how places and objects are made meaningful in the aftermath of disaster.

This thesis draws from two separate case studies to explore these emotions in depth. Offering data from two separate case study settings allows for a consideration into the emotional character of different natural disasters. While the different time scales of my research in Brisbane and Christchurch make a full

[1] As of October 2013, the results of this project have been presented at Royal Holloway, University of London, The University of the Sunshine Coast, The University of Sydney, The University of Western Sydney, Griffith University, The University of Canterbury, The Fourth International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Emotional Geography (2013) in Groningen, The Netherlands, and the 2013 RGS-IBG Annual Conference.

comparison impossible, parallels and differences can be drawn between narratives from both locations to explore the emotions present in the post-disaster environment. Analyzing narratives from both of my case study locations remind us that each disaster context is unique.

8.2.1 The emotional geographies of the post-disaster 'home'

Together, my narratives have explicitly demonstrated the underlying trauma associated with life after disaster. Trauma is raw in all of my settings. It is expressed visibly through tearful narratives and verbally through in-depth discussions. This highlights the intense levels of grief, melancholia and anxiety caused by the impact of catastrophic events.

In psychology, the connection between disasters and trauma is widely acknowledged. While these studies are useful in gauging the mental health effects of catastrophic events, they tend to overlook a deeper understanding of the complexities of people's emotional response to disaster and the way emotions are spatially defined. Through an analysis of the narratives of the disaster-displaced, I contribute to work in emotional geography by broadening our geographic knowledge of the emotions present within the post-disaster environment. Feelings of loss, nostalgia, fear, hope, anxiety, joy and love influence how those affected by disaster relate to specific places in this context. The diverse stories shared during my interviews also suggest the different ways in which people negotiate these emotions. Ultimately, my in-depth analysis highlights the connection between emotional geography and nature-society relations. I show how emotions coalesce in and around certain spaces in the post-disaster environment. At the same time, narratives illustrate how emotions play a key role in the *creation* of places.

Chapter four begins to illuminate how those affected by disaster relate to 'home' in this environment. In this chapter, I drew specifically from narratives that demonstrate how displaced individuals hold a strong emotional attachment to the place they perceive as comfortable and safe. For displaced flood victims, 'home' is

understood as a place of memory and connections. Those who are forcibly separated from the home they lost during the floods create a nostalgic and romanticized view of this place. In this environment, home is often positioned as a refuge or 'haven' from the problems of the world (Hinchliffe 1997).

In Christchurch, informal discussions and interviews presented a similar scenario. Those who had been separated from their 'home' expressed a strong connection to this domestic space. This emotional connection is particularly strong in Christchurch, as ongoing earthquakes heighten feelings of fear in the city. In other words, in an unstable environment, displaced residents of Christchurch equate 'home' as a place that will offer them safety in a dangerous environment.

This thesis also contributes to critical understandings of 'home' as multi-scalar. Throughout my empirical chapters, I have reinforced an understanding of the post-disaster home as a space embedded with personal feelings and emotions. Narratives demonstrate that 'home' can be understood as a physical setting, a community or neighbourhood and a psycho-spatial entity. For example, while narratives discuss the emotions attached to the physical structure of home, they also acknowledge 'home' in terms of the community or suburb they lived in. An emotional attachment to this specific community or neighbourhood becomes a heavy influence on how they relate to this place.

This thesis, however, acknowledges that the concept of 'home' is dynamic and complex. Bridging a problematic gap in geographic literature that fails to fully explore the connection between home and disaster studies, this thesis goes on to consider how disasters can disrupt and alter conceptions of 'home'. For those forcibly displaced by catastrophic events, 'home' is often understood at a distance. Conflicting tensions and disappointment therefore occur when home feels different upon return.

It has been previously acknowledged that disasters have the ability to cause widespread disruption to the physical settings of home. With over 22,000 houses inundated during the January 2011 floods, Brisbane's residents saw first hand the

devastation disasters can inflict upon physical domestic dwellings. Contributing to geographic literature on 'home', as well as emotional geography literature more broadly, these narratives demonstrate how disasters can also disrupt and alter our emotional attachments to domestic space. 'Home' has the potential to be rendered 'uncanny', making clear the multiple materialities and networks that go into its construction (Gibson et al. 2011; Head and Muir 2007; Kaika 2004).

Chapter 5 explicitly highlights how the post-disaster 'home' might evoke feelings of disappointment, anxiety and fear. Again, this underlies how meaningful senses of space emerge through the interaction of people and places. The negative emotions experienced when present at the post-disaster home often motivate flood-affected individuals to relocate to a new suburb.

Loss features prominently in the narratives explored in my empirical chapters. Discussions expressed the despair associated with losing one's home and the subsequent loss of routine, familiarity and feelings of safety. In Christchurch, this latter point was explicitly highlighted through narratives that spoke of the anxiety victims felt living in a city where earthquakes were ongoing. The fear associated with these ongoing earthquakes impacted the way earthquake-affected individuals conceptualise 'home' in the aftermath of disaster. While once understood as a place of familiarity and safety, the meaning of 'home' has been so disrupted by the disaster that its meaning has altered. The fear, anxiety and discomfort they experience while present in Christchurch also motivates decisions to relocate away from the city.

Ultimately, this thesis advances literature on critical geographies of 'home' by presenting empirical material to highlight the dynamic, ever-changing nature of the post-disaster domestic space. This emotive space can change over time as it is reassessed and reinterpreted in a number of different ways. Finally, then, my empirical chapters also contribute to our geographic understanding of how homes are constantly in process by engaging with ideas of materiality. While social scientists have long been concerned with the relationship between people and

objects, there remains limited work that explores the importance of objects in a post-disaster context.

In chapter 6, I employed object elicitation as a method to understand how objects play a role in post-disaster homemaking. In the post-disaster environment, objects become particularly important to displaced flood victims. They become representations of the 'self' and companions to participants' emotional lives. Photographs, for example, are extremely valuable possessions in the post-disaster environment. They represent domestic memories and help to maintain a powerful connection to a certain place. By keeping familiar objects with them, the disaster-displaced can recreate home wherever they are. Disasters also commonly disrupt routine everyday practices, such as cooking and cleaning. Disaster-affected individuals therefore place value on these practices, as they become important ways of staying connected with home on a sensory level. While the same was true in Christchurch, narratives from earthquake victims indicated that material possessions become less important in the aftermath of disaster. When personal safety was endangered, objects become less significant.

This thesis demonstrates the usefulness of object elicitation as a method in researching emotion. Asking participants to share an object with me gave them the opportunity to express emotions that might have otherwise been difficult to articulate. This method is therefore a useful research tool for understanding people's emotional responses to disaster and should be privileged during further research in this context. In the post-disaster environment 'home' can be recreated and reestablished in different ways. In this sense, home is not necessarily what has been left behind, but can in fact be a destination, or some other place.

8.2.2 Researching emotion in a post-disaster context

At a time of lively debate in the field of emotional geography, this thesis also contributes to methodological debates on how to research emotion. Focusing on the multiple subjectivities of emotion required a methodological agenda that facilitated

an in-depth engagement with those who experienced disaster displacement. Using semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore the complicated emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment (Easthope 2009). Ethnographic methods also enabled a consideration of the people's lived experience of disaster and the varying tempos and rhythms of movement individuals face as they move within the post-disaster landscape.

This thesis also illuminates the challenges of conducting research in emotional geography in a post-disaster environment (Lund 2012; Bennett 2009). In chapter 2, I reflected on the emotional struggles I experienced during my time in the field. Mostly, these challenges related to the emotional intensity of my research. Some of my participants had particularly harrowing stories to share. Many talked me through their heart-wrenching experiences of losing their homes, loved ones and personal possessions in the floods. Their narratives also reflect on the ongoing stresses they continue to encounter today. I shared excerpts from my field diary as a way to acknowledge the importance of my own emotions during fieldwork. Engaging with these emotions enhances debates in literature concerning the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Bondi 2005). My own positionality and biography play a central role throughout this process. Recognizing this dialectic is important for studies in this context where I myself am not affected by the disaster.

Together, the methodological challenges explored in this thesis suggest that emotion provides researchers with a methodologically sound way to deal with narratives. Highlighting the struggles I experienced during fieldwork and throughout my writing-up process is also useful for other researchers conducting work in emotional geography and in the post-disaster environment.

8.3 Informing disaster planning and policy

As the section above demonstrates, the research presented in this thesis has the potential to contribute to a wide range of academic disciplines well beyond geography. As well as academic contributions, this thesis also has many practical

implications for planners and policy makers who are actively involved in post-disaster recovery strategies. As a researcher conducting grounded research, I have long been critical of policy makers for their tendency to forget those affected by disasters. This is because these are the very people who lie at the centre of the disaster story. During my engagement with those affected by disaster, I spoke with many victims who felt very forgotten. They were critical of those unaffected, the government and insurance companies for failing to acknowledge the ongoing nature of their struggles, and ultimately, the long-term nature of disaster recovery.

My research therefore notes this problem and brings those affected to the forefront of this enquiry. By acknowledging the social and emotional impacts of disasters on a personal and intimate scale, we can more clearly understand the challenges associated with long-term disaster recovery. This understanding is relevant not only to migrants themselves, but also to planners and policy makers who are dealing with disaster recovery. By understanding people's emotional responses to disaster and how victims relate to certain places in the post-disaster environment, disaster management agencies and individuals can work to provide victims with useful practical solutions in the aftermath of disaster. My research is particularly timely, as research begins to raise fresh questions about the social and cultural geographical dimensions of climate change (Gibson et al. 2011).

It is my intention, therefore, to share my research findings with all stakeholders who are actively involved in post-disaster planning and mitigation. This includes those affected, disaster and emergency management agencies, urban planners and architects and non-profit organizations. While in Brisbane, I was invited for an interview with Brisbane's local radio station. This interview offered an invaluable opportunity to disseminate my research to a broader audience. Before I left Australia, I shared the preliminary results of my research to Sherwood Flood Support Group and Connected. I also intend to send a final report to these organizations. In particular, I aim to demonstrate the importance of domestic space, and the influential emotions associated with losing home to disaster. The

importance of these emotions should not be neglected by disaster planners or non-profit organizations, but instead must be acknowledged and understood. Only then can we hope to inform post-disaster planning and policy in an effort to lessen the social impacts of future catastrophic events.

8.4 Areas for future research

As with any academic piece of research, this project has a number of different limitations, which need to be acknowledged and discussed. As I mentioned in chapter three, I encountered a number of challenges recruiting participants for this research project. These challenges were exacerbated as I was attempting to establish research contacts from the UK before beginning my fieldwork. Ideally, I wanted to recruit a good range of participants. I intended to recruit participants of varying ages and socio-economic statuses. Psychological literature on emotional response between men and women suggests that, typically, women are more emotionally expressive than men. In order to investigate this argument in my project, it was my intention to have a relatively even balance of men and women. Since I encountered challenges identifying displaced flood victims, I was unable to obtain the variety of participants I desired. My results are therefore based on interviews where 39 of my 51 participants are female. While this is not necessarily ideal, it does suggest that women were more willing to share their emotional experiences of disaster.

Time constraints also limited my research. I carried out the majority of my fieldwork between January-June 2012. This time frame did offer a good opportunity to engage with flood-affected individuals and communities. I attended flood support groups for the duration of my stay in the city. This allowed me to create a trusting relationship with those who attended because I met them every week. I also volunteered with Connected throughout the duration of my fieldwork in 2012, which provided a wonderful insight into the long-term nature of disaster recovery. Again, volunteering also provided chance to establish a relationship with other

volunteers and flood-affected individuals and families. In this sense, six months of fieldwork in Brisbane allowed me to immerse myself into the post-disaster community. While a longer period of fieldwork would have potentially provided an opportunity to recruit more participants for this research, my time in the field was limited by financial constraints. These financial constraints resulted in a six-month time period in Brisbane and meant it was not possible for me to spend longer than two weeks in Christchurch.

A shorter time in Christchurch also meant it was not possible to conduct object elicitation with my post-earthquake participants. Although they were not explicitly asked, residents still discussed material possessions in their interviews. As already highlighted, narratives differed with those in Brisbane suggesting that material objects are less important following the earthquake. Further research in Christchurch with visual methods would be needed to strengthen this argument with empirical evidence. While this thesis clearly highlights the emotional complexity of the post-disaster displacement experience, a longer-term study would further deepen our knowledge of the post-disaster environment. Furthermore, an equal time spent in my two locations would have allowed for a more in-depth comparison into the emotional character of different natural disasters.

While this thesis has begun to uncover the influence of emotion within the post-disaster environment, I acknowledge that there remains much more to be done in order to fully understand the emotional dynamics of catastrophic events. In August 2013, I organized a session at the Royal Geographical Society- with IBG Annual Conference. My interdisciplinary session, sponsored by the Social and Cultural Geography research group, was entitled, "The Emotional Geographies of Natural Disasters". This session explored the emotional turmoil associated with the post-disaster environment and the complexities of people's emotional response to disasters. The response to my call for papers was encouraging, particularly in terms of the range of papers submitted. This reflects the growing popularity of this topic

within academic research and the different questions and methodologies researchers are using to engage with the concept of emotion in disaster settings.

My enquiry is explicitly based on those who were forcibly displaced from their home as a result of the floods and earthquake. I do, however, recognise that there are many different types and scales of displacement. As I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the global estimates report published by the IDMC (International Displacement Monitoring Center) revealed that 32.4 million people were forced to flee their homes a result of disasters in 2012. When the 2011 Queensland floods inundated Brisbane's suburbs, most residents were displaced to unaffected neighbourhoods in the city. In this sense, the displacement scale was relatively small. In Christchurch, earthquake residents were commonly displaced to neighbouring suburbs. There are, however, many different scales of displacement ,, extending far beyonf neghbouring suburbs and cities. The 2011 Japanese tsunami, for example, caused the forced displacement of 300,000 residents across the country. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina also caused the forced displacement of approximately 1 million Gulf Coast residents. Notably, victims found refuge in Houston, Texas, although displacement scales ranged across the country. Further research into how emotions might differ with these different scales of displacement is necessary in order to more fully understand the emotional dynamics of the post-disaster environment.

Comparing two disaster settings was useful in highlighting the differences and similarities between different disaster contexts. In particular, these two settings demonstrated the different emotions present in different disaster contexts. For example, the stress of living in fear of ongoing earthquakes in Christchurch is specific to this type of disaster. Seismic events are ongoing in the city and therefore elicit fear among residents. Fear was much less evident in Brisbane, as the flooding was relatively confined to one specific event. Further research into different types of disaster would explore this argument further. For example, research that explores whether the same are emotions are present and influential following catastrophic

fires, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, landslides and avalanches. Furthermore, research could move forward to consider the emotional dynamics of 'non-natural' disasters. By 'non-natural', I refer to catastrophic events that are typically the consequence of human or technological hazards. These might include nuclear accidents, chemical explosions, civil unrest and transportation accidents..

The Brisbane floods and the Christchurch earthquake both caused extensive damage to houses in the city. Still, as I acknowledged in chapter 7, the level and type of damage differ in these two contexts. Water damage commonly causes extensive and irreversible damage to certain possessions that are particularly important to Brisbane residents, such as photographs. While the Christchurch earthquake caused structural damage to homes in affected suburbs, objects that might have been irreversibly destroyed by floodwater (such as photographs) were spared from destruction. Of course this is not to say all material possession from the domestic space were spared. As depicted by my interviews, the earthquakes did cause damage to furniture and kitchenware. Further research in different disaster contexts would deepen our understanding of the materiality of disaster damage. For example, research that considers disasters that cause the total destruction of both the structure of a house and the material possessions inside, such as damage from fires, volcanic eruptions and strong tornadoes/hurricanes.

At time of heightened threat from natural disasters is it critical that environment-society scholars remained focus on the emotional geographies of natural disasters. Future research agendas, for example, might also consider the emotional aspects of resilience. While there is a growing body of work that recognises the place of emotion in disaster recovery (Whittle et al. 2012), further research could continue this work and consider how understanding people's emotional responses to disasters can play a role in informing local and national disaster resilience strategies.

While a widespread definition of resilience remains unrefined, I use the term here to refer to how well people and societies can adapt to a changed reality and

capitalize on new opportunities created in the post-disaster environment (Cutter et al. 2008). In recent years, disaster literature has placed strong focus on the concept of resilience as an adaptive capacity (Norris et al. 2008). Research into community resilience also stresses the need to understand the interdependencies between people, communities and societal institutions and organizations (Cutter et al. 2008). Recognizing that effective and coordinated communication between emergency management organizations (both local and national), NGO's and affected community members is a key element in the post-disaster recovery process, it is crucial that further research privileges a practical engagement with all of the stakeholders involved in this process.

Within literature on resilience, scholars have also acknowledged how disasters can generate a stronger sense of community among those affected than had prevailed prior to the event. In this sense, disasters become a catalyst of social change (see Cutter et al. 2008). Throughout my fieldwork in Brisbane I attended a number of community development events. These included community BBQ's, storytelling workshops, and local recovery meetings attended by members of Queensland Health, Ozcare and The Red Cross. These locally organized efforts placed explicit emphasis on post-disaster resilience and on maintaining a strong sense of community in the aftermath of the floods. This thesis therefore acknowledges the need for civic agencies and institutions with a role in emergency management and community development to nourish and sustain this newly strengthened community network in disaster affected areas. This is important as it can facilitate the development of a societal capability to draw upon its own individual, collective and institutional resources and competencies to cope with, adapt to and develop from the demands, challenges and changes encountered during and after disaster.

As this section has highlighted, then, there are a number of way in which this project could be expanded. Ultimately, however, I argue that research in different settings, with different types of disasters (both 'natural' and man-made) is the most

helpful way in which further research agendas should progress. If we are to fully understand the emotional geographies of disasters in the contemporary world, geographers must continue to engage with those affected in a way that recognises the long-term nature of disaster recovery. Policy makers, practitioners and researchers must, as Whittle et al. (2012) suggest, remain attentive to the long-term timescales associated with emotional recovery following catastrophic events.

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8.5 Concluding comments

This thesis presents a geographical understanding of the emotions present within the post-disaster displacement experience. Exploring the concept of 'home' in this context has underlined that places are never truly bounded. Instead, they are always experienced and understood by other places. This understanding of places as relational and interconnected informs ideas of what exactly the post-disaster 'home' is. As those affected by disaster move within the post-disaster environment, they build relationships with one another and with particular places. These relationships are grounded in emotion. Feelings of anxiety, despair, love, happiness, joy, nostalgia, loss, and discovery are a central part of human experience and indeed the post-disaster context.

This research makes important contributions, both theoretically and empirically, to our geographical understandings of 'home' and emotion. Presenting in-depth empirical material from the disaster-affected provides a rare insight into the *experience* of disaster. Narratives expose the complicated emotional challenges people encounter throughout their recovery, providing a unique snapshot into traumatic affects of disasters.

As I conclude this thesis, I remain reflective of the resonance of my own emotions during my writing up process. My emotions were a key analytical resource throughout my analysis. On the one hand, people were keen to participate in my research and wanted me to share their stories. On the other hand, I grappled with their emotions, often worrying how to handle and present them in a piece of

academic research. At times, this reality was preventative in my writing, as I found myself struggling during this process. As I conclude my write-up process, I still often wonder about my research participants. I think about where they are now and wonder whether they are still struggling. At Lund (2012) acknowledges, researchers often suffer guilt when they leave the field. This is particularly the case after research in a post-disaster environment, where researchers must leave crisis-affected people behind. Although dealing with this guilt was challenging, I have remained focused on my aim to construct knowledge of the emotional effects of disaster that can be used to inform future disaster planning and resilience strategies.

Methodological challenges in researching emotion should not prevent geographers from thinking more closely about how to research emotions in different contexts. Qualitative work in geography should continue to develop experimental approaches that move beyond conventional data and report methods, and formulaic discussions of policies and texts, towards research that pushes "further to the left, touched and embodied constitution of knowledge" (Crang 2003, 501). Struggles to define and conceptualise emotions are necessary obstacles if the emotionality of life is to be fully understood. We must, therefore, continue to bring emotions to the forefront of our research, recognizing that emotional relations shape society and space. To do this, geographers must continue to explore methodological techniques that involve direct experience and focus on research that deals not just in feelings, but also privileges an emotional involvement with people and places. Again, in all of this, the body is key.

As Thrift shrewdly suggests, perhaps the greatest methodological importance is to acknowledge that, "this is a world which we can only partly understand" (2008, 19). There exists a possibility that we are surrounded by innumerable hybrids, only a few which have been identified and even fewer which have been fully understood. With this knowledge, comes opportunity. There will always be more to investigate in terms of human emotions and new methods that attempt to explore the connection between the body and places. In this sense, this thesis is by no means exhaustive in

its investigation into the emotional dynamics of the disaster experience. Much further research on the topic is needed to fully understand the complexities of people's emotional responses to catastrophic events. The individuality of emotions suggests that this research will undoubtedly be extensive. Analysis of the social and cultural dimensions of post-disaster environments is nonetheless a vitally important avenue for further enquiry. Only with continued investigation into the emotional dynamics of natural disasters and the geographies of the post-disaster 'home' can we hope to share scientific knowledge between academic audiences, victims of catastrophic events and those planning for disasters in the future.

Appendix 1

Information Sheet

Dear participant,

My name is Stephanie Morrice. I am a PhD student in the Department of Geography at Royal Holloway, University of London conducting my thesis research. My supervisor is Dr. Katie Willis.

You are invited to participate in my study on migration experiences. I will interview you regarding your migration experiences (including the emotions you have experienced in the aftermath of the flooding/earthquake) and opinions concerning your decision to return home since the flooding/earthquake. The interview will last approximately than one hour. Your interview will be audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed (by myself). Interview audiotapes and transcripts will be kept in a secure location for a maximum of five years. After this time these materials will be destroyed. Your name will not be associated with your responses. Your participation in my research is voluntary, you may decide not to answer a question if you prefer not to, and you may withdraw from my study at any time without reason.

It is unlikely that you will directly benefit from participation in this study. The knowledge gained from this study, however, may contribute to a greater understanding of the post-disaster migration experience. This is particularly relevant during a time when disasters are becoming increasingly more frequent.

There are no predictable mental or physical ill effects associated with participating in this study. Answering some questions about your migration experiences may cause some form of emotional discomfort. If participating in this study causes you any problems, I can refer you to professional assistance. You are free to decline to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. The

generalized results of this study may be presented at professional conferences or published in articles describing the results of this research.

If you have any further questions about my study please contact me at:

Stephanie Morrice
Department of Geography
Royal Holloway, University of London,
Egham TW20 0EX

Thank you for your participation. I am very grateful for your help and hope that this will be an interesting session for you.

Consent form:

Researcher: Stephanie Morrice

Title of project: Returning home? The Emotional Geographies of the Disaster-displaced in Brisbane and Christchurch

Please delete as appropriate

I have read the information sheet about this study (YES/NO)

I have had the opportunity to ask questions (YES/NO)

I have received satisfactory answers to any questions(YES/NO)

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason (YES/NO)

I agree to participate in this study. (YES/NO)

Signed……………………….

Name ………………………..

Date ………………………..

NB: This Consent form will be stored separately from the responses you provide.

Appendix 2

Participant details: Brisbane

Participant	Pseudonym	Suburb	Notes	Returned?
1	Jane	Ipswich	42 years old, married, mother of 2, covered by insurance	Yes
2	Kim	Ipswich	Married, rescued from her house, no insurance.	No
3	Julie	Mt Omanney	Single-mother of two, originally from Melbourne	No
4	Judith	Goodna	No insurance, helped by HFHA	Yes
5	Meg	Chelmer	No insurance, helped by Connected	Yes
6	Russell	Graceville	Built house from scratch in 1988	Yes
7	Andrea	Goodna	Moved to Goodna in 2001, volunteers at community centre	Yes
8	Rob	West End	37 years old, married, teacher.	Yes
9	Janelle	Chelmer	Lived in Chelmer all her life, family also live in the community	Yes
10	Natalie	Oxley	Single, no insurance payout, lost job in aftermath	No
11	Luke	Graceville	Married, received insurance pay out	Yes
12	Sylvia	Graceville	Lived in Graceville all her life	Yes
13	Bill	Ipswich	Married, two children, still in temporary accomodation	No
14	June	Ipswich	Single mother, one teenage daughter, no insurance pay-out	No
15	Angela	Taringa	No insurance pay-out, financially struggling	No
16	John	East Ipswich	Married, one deceased daughter, one granddaughter living with him, retired carpenter	Yes
17	Jo	Ipswich	Aided by Connected	Yes

18	Betty	Chelmer	Lived in the same house for 40 years, experienced the 1974 flood	Yes
19	Ashley	Toowong	35, married with one son, received insurance payout	Yes
20	Jennifer	East Ipswich	Single, aided by community support networks	Yes
21	Rose	Goodna	Mother of 1 daughter, aided by Connected	Yes
22	Shelly	Sherwood	Single, Attended Sherwood Flood Support Group	Yes
23	Michael	Oxley	Moved often while growning up, moved to Oxley in 1990. Single, dog owner	Yes
24	Joanne	Ipswich	Married, still wants to return to old community	No
25	Tom	Graceville	Tradesman, restored own home, no insurance pay out.	Yes
26	Liz	West End	Watched flooding unfold on the TV from Ipswich, aid from HFHA	No
27	Catherine	Ipswich	30, married, mother of two, relocated to Sherwood	No
28	Pauline	Indoropilly	Lived in bungalow, relocated to Mt Omanney, no insurance payout	No
29	Hannah	Oxley	Lived with her 84 year old mother, did not evacuate, rescued by the SES	No
30	Sarah	West End	Married, mother of teenage son, husband and son both severely traumatised	No
31	Neil	Sherwood	Felt he must be strong for his wife	No
32	Marie	Graceville	Lived in old Queenslander, since relocated to Corinda	No
33	Michelle	Rocklea	Originally from Sydney, moved to Rocklea in 2004	No

			with husband	
34	Fiona	Graceville	Lived in Graceville all her life	No
35	Anelle	Graceville	Married, lived in Graceville all her life	Yes
36	Joshua	Oxley	Widowed, father of two, electrician	Yes
37	Jack	Ipswich	Married, two dauthers, aided by HFHA	Yes
38	Holly	Northgate	Since relocated to Peregian beach with her young family	No
39	Margaret	Graceville	Relocated to a granny flat, most furniture donated	No
40	Laura	Corinda	Since relocated to East Ipswich	No
41	Megan	Graceville	Married, familiar objects made her old house more comfortable on return	Yes
42	Chris	Oxley	Married, aided by Connected	Yes
43	Nichola	Chelmer	Married, grateful to the Mud Army	Yes
44	Emily	Goodna	Aided by HFHA who were providing a new house in East Ipswich	No
45	Andrew	Toowong	51 years old born and raised in Toowong	Yes
46	Leanne	Ipswich	Married, stayed with parents temporarily in the aftermath	Yes
47	Nancy	West End	40 years old, mother of one, since relocated to Graceville	No
48	Sue	Toowong	Married, aided by Ozcare, no insurance payout	Yes
49	Alison	West End	Lost most personal possessions, no insurance	Yes
50	Gina	St. Lucia	Since relocated with her family to Nundah	No
51	Caroline	Sherwood	Aided by Connected, since relocated to East Ipswich	No

Participant details: Christchurch

Participant	Pseudonym	Suburb	Notes	Returned?
1	Wendy	Lyttelton	41 years old, married, mother of two, lived in Lyttelton all her life	Yes
2	Christine	Sumner	In the process of relocating to be closer to her daughter in Wellington	No
3	Jenny	Lyttelton	Initially fled to Nelson, experiences acute distress order symptoms	Yes
4	Sarah	Redcliffs	Rescued from the earthquake rubble, currently relocating to Dunedin	No

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