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**BEING COMFORTABLE: HAVING AND MAKING A COMFORTABLE
COGNITIVE AND ENVIRONMENTAL HABITAT: A GROUNDED THEORY
ON THE MEANING OF HOME**

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Abstract

Prior research on the meanings of home represents a rather fragmented set of studies. The present research utilises phenomenology and aims to create a grounded theory on the meanings of home which is explorative, participant-led and integrates the current state of home research. 15 participants singularly took part in semi-structured interviews, including myself as a participant-researcher. The interviews were audio taped but not transcribed. The interviews were then analysed qualitatively as per grounded theory methodology. Participant's interpretation of the word home was both construed as having a spatial definition, and varying along a continuum from home as a house to a more subjective definition of home. The core code that the data generated on the meanings of home was that home was primarily about being comfortable. The basic social process of making a comfortable habitat was the main axial code. While the idea of comfort held strong between participants there was much individuality as to what was comfortable and which particular strategies were employed to make home comfortable. The result was a grounded theory about person environment interactions in the field of home, a cognitive and a physical habitat. Implications of this theory are discussed in relation to current and future home research as well as suggestions for practical applications.

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Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Contents	iv
List of Illustrations.....	vi
Chapter One. Conversations about Home: Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two. Underlying Conversations: Theoretical Backbones.....	12
Considering Epistemological Complexities.....	12
Phenomenology.....	20
Grounded Theory	27
Summarizing the Theoretical Complexities of this Project.	32
Chapter Three. How the Conversation was Undertaken: Method.	35
Participants.....	35
Materials.....	36
Procedure.....	42
Ethics.....	43
Chapter Four. The Substance of Home: Initial Results.....	44
The Word Home.....	45
The Meanings of Home.....	48
Chapter Five. Being Comfortable: Having and Making a Comfortable Cognitive and Environmental Habitat: A Grounded Theory on the Meaning of Home.....	73
The Core Code: The Comfortable Habitat.	73
The Not Comfortable (Home?).	79
Dialectics, Continuums and the Particular Function of the Substantive Category The Real Home.....	81
Reintroducing the Word Home	85
The Major Axial Code: The Process of Making the Comfortable Habitat.....	87
The Properties of the Major Axial Code.....	89
Further Axial Categories.....	94
Chapter Six. Conversing with Context: Discussion.....	104
Summary.....	104

Discussion.	106
Conclusions.	115
Future Directions.....	116
References.....	118
Appendices.....	125
Postscript.....	128

List of Illustrations

Table 1: Substantive Categories on the Meaning of Home.....	72
Figure 1: Continuums of Comfort.....	82
Table 2: Core and Axial Components of the Full Grounded Theory.....	88

CHAPTER ONE

Conversations about Home: Introduction

According to Moore, one of the earliest “home” references is to the Greek goddess Hestia, who was the “...goddess of the hearth, at the centre of family life, and of household economy...” (2000, p. 208). According to Moore, in the 17th century, home meant village, town or country, specifically of birth place, and gradually after the 19th century, home has been viewed more as about a physical house. Prior historical periods, movements and events have contributed to the evolution of the contemporary sense of home. According to Moore and to Mallet (2004), the industrial revolution was one influence on how the word home evolved in the English language. The industrial revolution meant change in the formation of housing and how people went about their working lives. The main site of people’s work moved from being focused around the home to outside of the home. Industrialisation also meant a larger urban rather than rural culture. The contemporary home thus came to be seen as a private space for a family to withdraw into (Mallet, 2004).

According to Mallet (2004) the media, (newspaper and television advertising as examples) is used to sell real estate and to promote the value of owning ones own home. In this case conflating the word house with home through the media is seen as a useful government strategy to sell houses. Mallet goes on to say that the governments of capitalist countries, including New Zealand, have fostered the conflating of house and home to forward an ideology which intends to better economic situations of such countries. This occurs by shifting the responsibility for citizen’s welfare onto the nuclear family rather than government housing programs. Thus, how the word home is used, has been subject to change as a result of the historical and the socio-cultural, conditions and environment. Brookes (2000), in *At Home in New Zealand*, edited a collection of texts also suggesting that the physical house-as-a-home is a socio-cultural institution, behind which is a set of historic, economic and social conditions.

The Concise English Dictionary (Turner, 1995) defines home as homeland, ones native land such as Britain and the place where a person lives. *The New Zealand Oxford Paper Back Dictionary* (Deverson, 2006) defines home as the place where a person lives, the

person's native land, where they were born or have lived for a lengthy time and where the person feels attached to. The latter dictionary then also defines "at home" as "at ease; comfortable or familiar" (Deverson, 2006, p. 395). Thus dictionary definitions describe a sense of home as a space, and most often a particular building, a house.

Yet while most of the dictionary definitions on the word home, focus on the home as a house, a small credence is given to the idea of being "at home" as a more emotional phenomenon. According to Moore "romantic literature" which focused on the comfort and the romance of the home, has influenced the field of psychology's thinking on home (2000, p. 209). She suggests that there was a strand of early home research that tended to focus on the romantic mythological sense of home. This was frequently represented through phenomenological studies on home, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

The English language has a limited range of words to express the idea of home, usually achieved by the addition of a noun as in *homeland*, or *hometown*. These examples highlight the spatial levels through which home can be experienced. The language we use constructs and defines our reality, home is most often constructed as a physical entity. The current state of home research is multifaceted, covering both the emotional and more physical senses of home. The emotional sense of the word home could be seen as being fostered by a political and ideological agenda. However academic research on home, still tends to conflate house and home as meaning the same thing (Mallet, 2004).

An important part of the present research is to look at how people understand the word home and the extent to which home is interpreted as a physical structure. Current academic research not only assumes that a person's house is their home, but also tends to neglect meanings of home that arise from other definitions of the word home. An example is the spiritual definition of home as a final destination or death (Sigmon, Whitcomb, & Synder, 2002; Moore, 2000). According to Hollander (1991), who discusses language, poetry and literature in the past and present there have been multiple ways of considering home. These different considerations range from legal ways of discussing a person's place of domicile, to a person's body as the home for their subjective self, or even as a religious sense of prison for the soul. Such examples

have ramifications, as could other ways of using the word home, including how other languages express the home concept, for the meanings and experiences of home.

For the indigenous people of New Zealand, the Maori, the word *taiwhenua*, is translated in the English language as, “permanent home, land, district” (“Moorfield,” 2006). *Whenua* is the translation of English language words; placenta and land (“Moorfield”). This reflects the Maori world view of inter-relationships, of the aliveness, the personified, land. The concepts of home, the land and the people who are stewards of the land, are connected through language. Home as ancestral land is also a theme in Maoridom. The Maori word *kainga* also is a translation of home (Ryan, 1999, p. 261). The Maori has two distinct words to express the home concept. They also have the option of adding nouns to enhance the meaning. The Maori language is of course more complex than this and even briefly perusing “Moorfield” will give the reader an idea of this complexity. The Maori language contains within it greater constructive possibilities, than does the English language, for the home experience. The present research thus recognises that there may be variations in perceptions of home due to differences in language as well as differing cultural experiences of home.

In terms of maintaining the distinction between the word home and the meaning of home, I offer the following further justification. There are standard usages of words (to be found in dictionaries and subject to historical change) and there are also the more personal word usages that take into account the context of peoples lives, perceptual schemas, the possession of objects and socio cultural meanings amongst other variables. There may be quite a difference between a dictionary definition of a *pet* for example, and the meaning of a pet for a small boy, a parent, the meaning of a pet for someone who is allergic to animals, or to someone who believes that animals should be allowed the same rights as humans. The *meaning* of home is separate from and yet obviously connected to the *word* home.

Research on *the meaning* of home represents a varying and disparate set of ideas (Sixsmith, 1986; Moore, 2000). Hayward (1975, cited in Case, 1996) categorises research on the meaning of home into five groups. Thus home studies focus on home as: a physical structure (a building); home as a territory (including neighbourhoods and towns); home as located in space (place as a central reference in the world); home as

self identity; and home as social and cultural entity. Most studies on home fit loosely in several of these categories. Most studies refer to home as a particular place-a building and give less kudos to definitions of the word home that are more ephemeral and subtle. Thus studies on home as self identity for example, still define the word home as a particular place or building.

Place attachment is the foremost theory in the literature that explores home. Place attachment is about the emotional bonds people have with physical places (Giuliani & Feldman, 1993). These bonds may be measured through a feeling of belonging, interest in the home environment, length of residence, or commitment to neighbourhoods and neighbours, amongst other measures. Thus place attachment fits into several of Hayward's (1975, cited in Case, 1996) categories of home research. According to Giuliani and Feldman, "...sense of place, belongingness, insiderness, embeddedness..." these are also similar ways home has been conceptualised (p.273).

A further notion, similar but not identical with place attachment and sense of place, is *rootedness* (Tuan, 1980). According to Tuan,

Rootedness implies being at home in an unself-conscious way. Sense of place, on the other hand, implies a certain distance between self and place that allows the self to appreciate a place. For modern and self-conscious Americans, rootedness is perhaps an irretrievable Eden... (p. 4).

Rootedness is about deep emotional attachments to place, this being an instinctual rather than a reflective attachment, being in that place for a lengthy period of time and not thinking of the world beyond that place. It is a feeling and a sense of timelessness, security and permanence. According to Tuan, people no longer develop these time honoured relationships with places, people have become more materialistic and their experiences with place temporal.

Place identity is a substructure of self identity stating that a person's cognitions, memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings and experiences are related to physical settings that define people's everyday existence (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). Just as people define their identity through their relationships with other people, so do they through bonds and relationships with environments.

Israel (2003) explores the meaning of home through the concept of *environmental autobiography*. This is about people possessing an inner source of memories and past relationships with places they have lived, which guide their present responses to places. In this sense our youthful relationships with places are formative psychological experiences. This perspective on home is primarily about place attachment and place identity.

Israel's (2003) general work on environmental autobiography is important because it adds much fullness and integration to the rather disjointed literature on home. However Israel then constructs a theory of home actualisation, based on Maslow's *self-actualisation* theory (Maslow, 1970). For Israel the self actualised *home* is the highest achievement for the home experience. The aesthetic home, the creative experience is pivotal to achieving home actualisation. Underneath this we have satisfaction of social needs, home as satisfaction of psychological needs and home as shelter. Thus these latter needs (at the bottom of Israel's/ Maslow's pyramid) must be met before the peak of home actualisation can be achieved. In interviewing big-name designers, Israel constructs home as about aesthetic architecturally designed houses, thus stressing a socio-cultural framework of home as a materialistic expression of monetary wealth. Interviewing persons of other livelihoods, with other ethnicities or values, may construct different accounts of home. Also Maslow considered the order of the hierarchy of needs towards self actualisation to be "...not nearly so rigid as we may have implied" (p.51). However for Israel's home actualisation theory, the order seems rather more fixed.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) studied 80 Chicago families finding out about their feelings towards household objects, things found inside the home space. They found people creating meaning from their everyday domestic environment. The authors also expanded their research through case studies of some of these families. Their study entails a view of object relations, attachments to material things and self identity in terms of these attachments and relationships. I question whether these perspectives on American materialism are applicable to the same extent for New Zealand people, and if so, why? Returning to the issues discussed in the prior paragraph, I suggest that the visually perfect house, or the creation of a self expressive space, is to some people less important than having a social home, a family home and perhaps in

such homes individual self expression is secondary to how the family expresses itself according to its needs. To some people this social home may be the pivotal home experience.

From a slightly different angle, Korpela and Hartig (1996) say that adolescents use their favourite places, those they are attached to (such as their home), to emotionally stabilise themselves, to regulate their feelings, to feel calmer and to clear their thoughts. These *restorative environments* are about experiences of beauty, control, freedom of expression and escape from social pressures (Korpela, 1989). Korpela and Hartig (1996) consider how people evaluate their favourite places. *Place identity* is created through using the physical environment to adjust pleasure, pain and inner experiences to *restore* the self. Yet how much of the home experience is about restoration? Does everybody think of home in this way? Do New Zealand people? Are these constructs relevant? Or are they passing, changing, fluid? These are questions to consider.

Both the following studies are about peoples relationships with their houses, how people use space, and the events that happen there. Is home simply a place where certain events happen? Korosec-Serfaty (1984) undertook a study of the psychological role of specific areas of the home, namely, the attic and the cellar. These hidden spaces were associated with seasonal shelter, accumulation of household supplies and resources, security and time. Case (1996) found support for the phenomenological concept of *being at home*, which was captured in daily routines, doing familiar things, with familiar objects. Case contrasted being at home with trips away. Freedom from home routines was about a sense of personal renewal, an emotional release, focused time for personal relationships (as opposed to distracted, divided time during normal routine) and this freedom also helped to define comfort and security in the home, on return. Neighbours, friends and family nearby were also found to be an important part of daily home life. Home (a house) is divisible into smaller and smaller spatial units.

Continuing by discussing phenomenological studies on the meaning of home, Tuan (1975) writes about home in terms of nurture and shelter. Home is thus about being ourselves, taking care of our bodies more private needs and processes, such as for rest, washing ourselves or eating. For Tuan, a geographer, home is understood through our bodily sensations in a strongly visceral manner. Bachelard (1969) similarly explores

home as a small and protected refuge for people. Busch (1999) discusses the nostalgia, the memories and the social and architectural history of the home (house), how we use the home space and her own experiences of home.

I consider that Busch (1999) provides some of the most beautiful examples of phenomenological writing that I have found, “I write about the places in which they (people) live, attempting in some way to interview their houses and offices, the gardens they cultivate, the rooms they arrange ... eventually, some truth about how we take up space is revealed” (p. 16). This indicates home as having a definite space and place and yet Busch also gives credence to the emotional and sensual aspects of home and goes on to say,

I have come to realise that it (home) does have a language of its own, one that includes not only the slight sounds, hums and vibrations of all the electrical appliances that keep it going, but a host of other interior systems, a network of social and cultural currents, those habits, beliefs and values that also make it function. And I realise, too, that it is by being attuned to all these systems that we might arrive at some genuine understanding of what it is that gives power to the places we live (p. 163).

A phenomenological study by Sixsmith (1986) used the multiple sorting task and an interview procedure. Firstly participants themselves provided descriptions of past, present and possible ideal homes. Then the participants ordered these into categories and prioritised them according to what home was for them. This gave the participants freedom to express the most relevant places and feelings for them. Home comprised of many different types of *places*. Home *meant*, belonging, responsibility, self-expression, important experiences, permanence, privacy, the type and quality of relationships, friends, available services and architectural style amongst others. Sixsmith then grouped these ideas into the personal, social and physical home. The understanding of the *term* home however was not questioned. Thus the meanings that could be gained from other ways people understand and use this word were not encountered.

Parting from specifically phenomenological studies, Sigmon et al., (2002) created a standardised measure to assess people’s *psychological sense of home*. On a positive note this measure of home is multifaceted having cognitive, affective, behavioural,

manifestation and functional components. According to Sigmon et al., the mainstay of psychological home is altering physical space so that it better reflects self identity. They say that this space is not necessarily a physical structure, or a tangible plot on a map. However I disagree with these researchers where they then conflate *the terms* house and home. Their experimental situation consisted of participants arranging furniture and objects within a physical space. The longer participants took in rearranging the space, the higher the participants scored on the psychological sense of home. A higher score was an indicator of a participant having a stronger psychological sense of home.

This measure has also been correlated with scores on mental health scales, indicating that persons with a high psychological sense of home are more likely to experience positive mental health and score lower on tests concerning their negative effect, compared to those with a low psychological sense of home (Sigmon et al., 2002). According to Sigmon et al., and to Moore (2000), more home studies need to be done on diverse cultures and populations, yet *the word* home is continuously defined as a house, or a place where one has lived. This can lead to perpetuating negative stereotypes of populations who do not define the word home primarily as a physical building.

In contrast with the previous researchers and in line with my own thinking on the differing cultural perceptions on home, Jackson (1995) found that for the Warlpiri people of the Tanami Desert (Australia), home is not bound by the conception of home as a house. The home is rather where "...one hails from (*wardingki*), but it also suggests the places one has camped, sojourned, and lived during the course of one's own lifetime" (p. 122). Thus for nomadic people and possibly for those who travel frequently, home has a different meaning. Jackson, an anthropologist originally from New Zealand, offers numerous examples of the differing meanings of the word home, such as for the conductor Bruno Walter, to whom classical music was home, rather than his physical home of Austria. Jackson leaves me with the impression that home is not only a place, but it is a culture, a habitat, a way one lives. Taking this contextual perspective renders much research on home very limited.

Hay (1998) makes an important contribution to the research on home in New Zealand though the concept of *sense of place*. He describes this as more broad than place attachment, including subjective qualities such as the feeling of dwelling, the creation of

personal meaning, the social context of a community and people's spiritual and ancestral connections to places. These ancestral connections are also briefly pointed out by Jackson (1995) where for Maori, "...home is the land whereon one's forefathers lived, fought and were buried. Noku te whenua, o oku tupuna (Mine is the land, the land of my ancestors)" (p. 120). Hay's participants were Maori and Pakeha residents and out-migrants on the Banks Peninsula, near Christchurch, New Zealand. This large scale study contrasted differing cultural perspectives, looking at the participant's residential status (long term residents as opposed to short term visitors), and their age stage as well-thus taking a developmental perspective on the sensing of place. The inclusion of Maori people in Hay's research makes this work particularly relevant for the New Zealand situation.

The meaning of home has also been specifically looked at in terms of women's experiences. In the work of Strait (2005), we encounter ethnographic essays and stories about the meaning of home to women of various nationalities and ethnicities. According to Gonzalez (2005) home for women can be a conflicting source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Home can mean alienation, work, the feeling of being confined, imprisoned, yet also pleasures and joys. However, perhaps the meaning and experience of home is not exactly or specifically gendered. Each gender is more likely to be perceived in a particular way, or be in a particular situation in a particular socio-cultural environment (an example is whereby a woman is more likely to be the sole caregiver for a young child, though either gender could be) yet sex roles are not rigidly set in contemporary New Zealand society.

While from an anthropological angle rather than a psychological angle, as with Jackson (1995), the works of Strait (2005) and Gonzalez (2005) show how context and culture affect the meaning of home. As Brookes (2000) suggested house and home are both cultural institutions. Rapoport (1969) focusing on house form, says that physical house form will vary according to "...the interplay of social, cultural, ritual, economic, and physical factors." (p. 46). It is not only matters of climate or available building resources and technology that determine how a culture makes their physical houses, it is also that the house is created to suit the social groups way of organising themselves, their lifestyle. Thus physical house form is a cultural institution reflecting meaning on multiple levels. What people define as home is also thus as complex and multifaceted.

Yet it is important to remember that there is also often more variation within groups of people, than between groups of people (Wiesenfeld, 1996). Thus who any person is, is more than one particular stereotypical account of what belonging to any particular culture, ethnicity, gender or subgroup should prescribe for them. Not only will people of different ethnicity, culture, gender, socioeconomic status, or country, vary, so will people who are brought up living within the same family or whanau. My hope for the present study is that it uncovers meanings that are not *culturally* homogenous and that it avoids shallow stereotypical understandings. My hope is that living in a multicultural society, New Zealand people, to some extent, have a little of the 'other' in who they are. I recognise that the present research may not be transferable to people of other ethnicities and cultures. In the end the present research may only be specific to the sample of people interviewed.

Continuing the survey through the literature on home, Wright (1993, cited in Moore, 2000) says that there is an ideology about home. This ideology involves our expectations, hopes and wants, our cultural and our individual ideals. This ideology portrays home as the perfection and satisfaction of our every desire. Home is also an economic and political ideology (Mallett, 2004). This ideology guides people how to think and feel for their homes. Home is thus a socio-culturally constructed phenomenon. Yet how we understand home is often more of an ideal more than a reality. According to Manzo (2003) this ideal home is certainly where much academic research has focussed. Yet there may be quite a gap between people's ideal meaning of home, what they claim it is about and their actual experiences of home. But perhaps the meaning of home contains elements of emotion, idealism and fantasy that are important in people's perceptual reality. The meaning of home is certainly perceived through our contextual environments and as such this includes socio-cultural fantasies about the ideal life.

Finally in discussing the meaning of home Dupuis and Thorns (1996, 1998) from a sociological angle, researched home *ownership* for elderly New Zealanders. They found that owning ones own home is crucial to a sense of stability and security for people. Dupuis and Thorns interpret this in the light of the social and economic situation in New Zealand, particularly in terms of the impact of the great Depression and the consequent lack of physical stability and security. However Dupuis and Thorns do not say that the Depression was the only social and economic issue which led to people believing in the

positive experience and goal of owning ones own home. The elderly people in the Dupuis and Thorns studies saw the younger generation as less committed to home and family as a source of *ontological security* and continuity.

Ontological security was defined by Dupuis and Thorns (1998, p. 27) as having "...a sense of confidence and trust in the world as it appears to be." Having a stable social and material security is related to having a stable self identity. To Giddens (1990, cited in Dupuis & Thorns, 1998) this is an emotional phenomenon, ingrained in the subconscious. This is created from childhood and manifests as the continual maintenance by people towards constant familiar routines, habits and material environments. Along with ontological security Dupuis and Thorns also discuss the importance for their participants of a sense of routine and ritual that occur in the home space, being able to control and change the particular home space as required, the importance of family and home, a sense of privacy and refuge and a sense of identity connected with home. This last mentioned sociological study is particularly important because it reflects upon the historical context of New Zealand. The socio-cultural and historical context people live within, effects people's relationships with their environments. Thus the meaning of home occurs within such contexts.

While there is a large body of research on home, there is a smaller body of recent research from a phenomenological point of view. Generally speaking many of the studies mentioned in this introduction do not define their epistemological backbones and can be only assumed as frequently objectivist and quasi scientific. I did not find research particularly defined as social constructionist, nor research from a grounded theory methodology (the backbones of the present project), with the exception perhaps (for both these styles of research) of the more anthropological rather than specifically psychological studies. Thus the present research picks up where the state of current research leaves us; in the midst of a rather disjointed and un-integrated body of research which is also lacking in epistemological and methodological variety. The present research represents a return to the core of what home is about, what it means for people and especially important what home means for New Zealand people. The present research explores, the word, the meaning, the experience of home and the connections between these. Yet the present research will focus mostly on what the involved participants reflect about home.

CHAPTER TWO

Underlying Conversations: Theoretical Backbones

This study presents a grounded theory on home, which integrates prior research and is relevant to the context of people's lives. The aim of the present research is to explore two things: first, what *home means* to people, to look at the meanings of home. Secondly I consider what the *word* home means in order to discover whether this adds to our understanding of the home concept. The objective of the present research is to look at the ways home is constructed by New Zealand people specifically, questioning if home is partly about materialism, yet giving the questions back to the people to answer, in order to integrate the current state of home research.

This chapter discusses the theoretical backbones underpinning the current research. This chapter is informed by my own personal reflexivity in juxtaposition with authoritative texts covering various ontological, epistemological, methodological and practical research issues. The present research is guided by a social constructionist epistemology. The theoretical framework that I am using is phenomenology. The methodology I am using is grounded theory. This chapter is set out in three sections covering each topic respectively. The first section introduces broader epistemological issues as well as discussing social constructionism. I am seeking to explore, discover and create knowledge, not to lock it out by any restrictive manner of thinking, but rather to remain open to possibilities. Thus while drawing on social constructionism, I attempt to avoid *rigid* epistemological and ontological claims. Phenomenologists suggest an epistemological and an ontological openness. In grounded theory it is also important not to preconceive the data and interpretation. The largest formal influence on what this research offers is via phenomenology and *most crucially* grounded theory. A brief fourth section follows summarising the complexities inherent in this project.

Considering Epistemological Complexities

The issue of epistemology is one of importance. Crotty (1998) separates epistemologies into objectivist, subjectivist and constructionist epistemologies. I have tended to follow Crotty's categorisations in labelling the backbones of the present research. It is

important to set the stage for the following research by defining the epistemologies, focusing mostly on social constructionism and then also discussing the epistemological complexities involved in doing phenomenological research. I then discuss other theoretical frameworks and paradigms and the reasoning behind the choices made for the current project. Finally I discuss the indistinctness of categorisations of the backbones of research and what the consequences of this are according to phenomenology.

So to begin, objectivist epistemologies assert that objects and reality (and this is meaningful reality) exist separate from our consciousness of it. Objectivist epistemologies are defined this way also, because researchers are directed to look at things objectively, restraining from personal biases. Objectivist epistemologies imply a *realist* ontology. Realists consider that physical objects exist on their own, independent from our observations. Researchers focus on the *reality* of the object and attempt to place aside biases resultant from the act of perceiving. Research using an objectivist epistemology is object focussed, rather than subject focussed (Crotty, 1998).

Subjectivist epistemology rejects objectivism and realism, stating instead that there are only the subject's meanings which are placed onto an object. Meaning is not about the reality of objects in themselves. Subjectivism implies an idealist ontology and thus focuses on the subject's perception rather than objects. Idealists believe there is no external reality aside from our mental representations. Thus subjectivism says meaning does not come from interaction between the internal and the external world. Meaning may come from dreams, archetypes from the collective unconscious or even from religion, just not from an interaction between subject and object (Crotty, 1998). Such epistemologies, according to Crotty, can be found in structuralist, post structuralist and postmodernist research. Subjectivist epistemologies have to contend with the charge of solipsism which I will return to when discussing phenomenology.

Constructionist epistemology provides an alternative to the prior two opposed epistemologies. Constructionism is best defined as a set of assumptions and approaches to which those adhering to the orientation are likely to ascribe (Burr, 2003). The first major assumption is that we are critical towards our taken-for-granted view of the world. Constructionism entails questioning the assumption that how we view the world

accurately represents reality. Constructionists claim to deny ontological essentialism (realism): that when viewing the world there is one corresponding essential reality. While this could certainly be applied to mean the doubting of what we think of as real, it does not mean we only exist as interpretations without physicality, merely that is impossible to find such reality, if it does exist, outside of our socio-cultural and historical account of it (Crotty, 1998). It puts aside the issue of ontology (though hints at reality in itself not existing in any essential and singular form) and instead focuses on how we create knowledge.

The second major assumption is that constructionists understand knowledge as socially created and sustained (Burr, 2003). This is why constructionism is frequently called *social* constructionism. Humans create meaning between each other, through communication in language, in social, cultural and historical conditions (Gergen, 1985). Knowledge is thus a communal and cooperative activity of people in relationships. This negotiated meaning is a crucial assumption about knowledge in a constructionist epistemology (Burr, 2003). Meaning thus does not exist separate from human meanings making systems.

The third assumption of constructionism is that scientific knowledge (such as is psychological knowledge) is historically and culturally specific (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1985). What is considered knowledge is historically situated and changes over time as social processes change. Whether we accept or reject theory is dependent on how that theory is of use within the community. Communities proliferate concord and crucial to this is the exclusion of non-conforming and thus disruptive ways of looking at the world (Gergen, personal communication to Misra, 1993). Thus knowledge is not considered real in the objectivist and realist sense of truth, rather knowledge is specific to a socio-cultural and historical situation.

I use social constructionism in this research to suggest that how we perceive the world, and home in particular, is a constructed reality. It would have been possible to construct a different version of psychological reality through a different research process. Jackson (1995) and Strait (2005) show the fluidness of perceptions of reality in their examples of cultural and gendered perceptions respectively, on the present topic: the meaning of home. How we view reality is a pluralistic affair of negotiated and relative

meanings. The goal of constructionist research is not to uncover reality or truth, but rather to make known the processes through which people describe, explain or understand the world.

These three aforementioned epistemologies however do not have impermeable boundaries around them (Crotty, 1998). Crotty says that a researcher must work consistently within one such epistemology. However perhaps it is more fruitful to consider that researchers should rather lean towards one epistemology, while acknowledging these are not distinct entities but rather mental categorisations that are at times less distinct. This is particularly relevant to the present research so I will begin discussing the epistemological complexities involved in doing phenomenological research.

According to Crotty (1998) phenomenology is completely constructionist. Yet Crotty also claims constructionism and subjectivism are complicatedly entwined. In using phenomenology as a theoretical framework, I am not working purely within one epistemology. This study of the meaning of home is about people and how they interpret home. It is thus also about the subjective, private, inner perceptions of people. Phenomenology is about tapping into people's private world in order to find the essence of the phenomenon under study. This essence is thought to exist throughout the social world. Yet it is not only about the socially constructed reality, but also the subjective depth of these meanings and their importance to people. Such crucial subjectivities indicate the essence of the phenomena under examination. I do not claim the results of my study are anything more than my own subjective position, though it is my intention that the results will be more than this, because although phenomenology is constructionist it is also partly subjectivist.

Phenomenology is a theoretical framework that is concerned with looking for the vital essences of phenomena, a goal similar to research with an objectivist orientation. Yet I do not claim that the results of the present study are universal, generalisable, objective or unchanging (objectivist and positivist goals). In phenomenology such discovered essences are not necessarily evermore generalisations. According to Spiegelberg (1971), Edmund Husserl (an important phenomenologist who I will say more on later) never stated that general essences were unchanging or real. The present research is not

objectivist or positivist and the results are rather treated as constructed and subjective and interpretive and therefore subject to change over time. Yet phenomenology has allegiances with objectivism.

It should be clear by now that I do not consider that phenomenology is able to be clearly categorised and I want to continue with this idea a bit further. While phenomenology is partly constructionist (and constructionists and objectivists tend to clash at times) this does not take away the possibility of an essential underlying structure to psychological or tangible phenomena for the phenomenologist. Possibly such essential structured realities are more organic and evolving, involving a process of change, construction and adaptation. Phenomenology is able to accommodate such views on the nature of reality. Constructivism is an epistemology which explores this changing and constructed nature of organic reality.

Chiari and Nuzzo (1996) consider constructivism an ontology (rather than an epistemology) that provides an alternative to idealist vs. realist ontology's. Constructivism is not to be confused with constructionism. Constructivism is an account of the nature of reality as objective and organic. Constructivism is a reorganized version of Piagetian ideas on the nature of cognitive development and biologically limited perceptual schemas. This is claimed by Chiari and Nuzzo as the new hope for a metatheory integrating previous ontological. Constructivism is in a sense, constructionism for the realist. However to my thinking it is perhaps more useful to consider constructivism an epistemology bridging constructionism and subjectivism on one side with objectivism on the other side.

A combination of objectivism and phenomenology not only hints at a constructivist epistemology but may also contain within it the possibility of a post phenomenology. According to Ihde (2001) a post phenomenology is pragmatic, concrete and experimentalist and also does not claim transcendence or absolutes. Such a phenomenology is relational, evoking the interaction of organism with environment. I think such arguments, though it is highly important to be aware of them, are side issues: rather phenomenology is the study of consciousness which is also sensitive to context and societal changes. According to Chiari and Nuzzo (1996) phenomenology is a complicated philosophy which tries to overcome the idealist vs. realist opposition

through reorganising the subject vs. object duality. Phenomenology tries to avoid rigid ontological and epistemological assumptions because of the very reason for their tendency to restrict and limit the possibly of new knowledge, new understandings and new interpretations. Thus it is wrong to say that phenomenology is purely categorisable. Phenomenology does not fit easily into an idealist nor a realist ontological camp, nor does it fit simply into one particular epistemology. It rather defies strict definitions on its essence and contains fluid boundaries with objectivism, subjectivism, constructionism and constructivism.

I will now bring other theoretical frameworks into the discussion and look at the values of these for psychological research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) categorise epistemologies into objectivist vs. constructionist and the relevant theoretical frameworks into positivism and post-positivism. Lincoln and Guba's preferred "naturalistic" (p. 7) paradigm is constructionist, post-positivist, interpretive and qualitative.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) thus pre-prescribe the ontology, epistemology, theoretical framework, methodology and frequently the specific methods to be used in a research exercise. They mesh these background theoretical positions together, rather than consider them as separate parts of research that may combined in other ways, or combined with other ways of thinking about the nature of reality, what we can know and *doing* actual research. These authors main division is thus between this naturalist paradigm and the objectivist/positivist/ quantitative research paradigm.

Interpretivism is a post positivist theoretical framework. Phenomenology is interpretive. Interpretive theoretical frameworks often use qualitative methods and inform research that is focussed on understanding people and their experiences as subjective and meaningful (Bryman, 2001). This is contrary to describing casual relationships between variables as objectivist/positivist and quantitative research tends to do. Objectivist epistemologies, positivist research and quantitative methods are said to be more appropriate for the natural sciences and less appropriate for the study of humans (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Constructionist epistemologies, post positivist and interpretive frameworks and qualitative research provide a subject appropriate solution to the science of studying humans.

There are multitudes of reasons for choosing a naturalist paradigm for studying humans. I do want to stress however that such a paradigm does not need to so rigidly follow the designated epistemology, theoretical framework, methodology and *specific methods* as Lincoln and Guba (1985) prescribe of it. We should rather think of Lincoln and Guba's preferred paradigm as more likely to represent the complexity of people in context. However there are many ways of achieving this, depending on the goal of the particular study, other than sticking rigidly to one way of thinking about and doing research. I want to outline briefly some further reasons for favouring the naturalist and importantly thus qualitative paradigm however before turning to the issue of the differing categorisations of theoretical backbones of research.

The following paragraphs therefore summarise much of what I have previously said when defining various epistemologies and theoretical frameworks yet with a different purpose, to provide reasons for the appropriateness of a more constructionist and interpretive orientation for the present study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer assumptions of their respective paradigms, more can be found in research method works. The reason for adopting such an orientation follows from the logic of the assumptions. Lincoln and Guba contrast the objectivist/positivist paradigm with their naturalist/constructionist/post positive paradigm.

Firstly consider the positivist position on the nature of reality. Positivism assumes reality is singular and exists in a touchable way that we can study in isolated parts. The naturalist paradigm suggests the opposite, that reality is multiple and constructed and can only be studied as a whole, not as isolated parts. Secondly positivism suggests the relationship of the researcher and the researched is independent. The researcher can explore the subject without changing the person's responses through being studied. The naturalist position however states that this is not possible, the researcher and the researched always interact and as such affect the outcome of the study. The third major difference is that positivism attempts to make time and context free generalisations to other subjects. Naturalism suggests that research results are always context bound related to specific incidences. The fourth major difference is that positivism treats causes and effects as linear and temporal. The naturalist paradigm rather looks for constant of cause and effect. Finally positivism suggests that the research should be

value and bias free whereas the latter position suggests that this is not possible and in fact research is always full of values and biases.

While much of this has been introduced earlier in this section, studying humans is about studying them in the context in which their behaviour is considered meaningful, the natural context and the social context. This context is complex and rich and people are always *embedded* in relationships with such contexts. When isolating parts of the subjects under study, this becomes less relevant to how humans function in contexts with interdependent causalities. Qualitative methods may be more workable to represent the multiple realities of people. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) these are some of many values of naturalist research. It is not my intention to take the discussion into justifying or arguing for any particular paradigm but in the present research such a naturalist/interpretive paradigm matches my subject, the meaning of home for people, the essence of home.

Now that I have set the context for where the current research fits theoretically, defined the relevant positions and offered reasons for using a more naturalist paradigm I will return briefly to the way in which different researchers categorise the theoretical backbones of research. This should fill in some gaps concerning the complexities of epistemological issues and conclude this section. Different writers treat the divisions between ontology, epistemology and theoretical frameworks differently. This can be shown by briefly comparing the accounts of Crotty (1998) and Bryman (2001) and Lincoln and Guba (1985).

I have introduced epistemology through Crotty's (1998) three fold division. Crotty gives vague mention of the issue of ontology, except to say that particularly directed epistemologies imply particular inferences about ontology. Bryman (2001) categorises objectivism and constructionism as the primary oppositions in ontology. Bryman offers no mention of subjectivism. Constructivism is less commonly mentioned again. Bryman poses positivism and interpretivism as epistemological considerations. Crotty places positivism and interpretivism as theoretical frameworks, a level below epistemology. However importantly, both Bryman and Crotty agree that phenomenology is interpretive, whether interpretivism is seen as an epistemology or a theoretical

framework. Lincoln and Guba (1985) tend to favour the aforementioned naturalist position that is interpretive but complicatedly meshed together.

The reason I have been considering the varying categorisations of the backbones of research in the latter paragraph and through this chapter, is to make the reader aware of the implications of this. Labelling and categorising leads to restrictions, leads to only being able to make inferences acceptable within the particular orientation used, thus restricting interpretive possibilities. However these categorisations are not distinct entities. Phenomenology seeks to open up the possibilities for inferences, not to close it down. This is the goal of phenomenological research. The epistemological openness and complexities of phenomenology are crucial to what phenomenology is. But to make the reader aware of the current project's backbone considerations, as I have previously said, it is *at least* constructionist, interpretive, phenomenological, qualitative and grounded in the data.

The present study is then much of a philosophical hybrid. While I have layered the backbones that inform my study, it is rather a case of how much each layer influences the study. The greatest influence is that of an enquiring mind using a grounded theory methodology. Now I will move on to discuss phenomenology.

Phenomenology

The present study is guided by a phenomenological orientation which seems appropriate for a rich, qualitative and contextual account of peoples lived experiences. In this section I define and discuss the phenomenology movement and phenomenology in general. Throughout this section I draw heavily on the seminal work of Spiegelberg (1971). So I will begin by defining phenomenology through the philosophical movement.

According to Spiegelberg (1971) the phenomenological movement is an evolving and changing collation of ideas that is more likened to an evolving plant, than a river that flows along a specific channel. This refers to the idea that there is not a singular phenomenology but rather multiple versions by differing philosophers whose ideas

intersect at some points and diverge at other points. Even in the theories of particular philosophers within the movement there is much development over time.

Phenomenology is perhaps best defined as an evolving perspective for looking at (via subjectivity) the essences of phenomena *as they are*. The first definition Spiegelberg (1971) offers about phenomenology as a movement, is that the variations of the movement share essential elements and the pattern centres around descriptively investigating phenomena, fully and deeply, objectively and subjectively.

Spiegelberg (1971) separates adherence to the movement into four categorisations of commitment levels. I will relate Spiegelberg's categorisations here. The first category is for people who fulfil such criteria yet do not consider themselves subjectively as phenomenologists. Secondly, as the first phenomenological platform of 1913 defined phenomenology. The third categorisation is where the person also pays attention to the way in which essences appear in the subjectivities of people's experiences. The final and strictest sense of adherence, is whereby the researcher also uses the phenomenological reduction (I will come back to this point further on) and because of this focuses on the way the consciousness directs the appearances of the object under study. Thus while for the purposes of the present research I am *using* phenomenology in the strictest sense, I am not a phenomenologist *per se* but rather belong to Spiegelberg's first categorisation and thus the widest definition of phenomenology in terms of thinking like and belonging within the movement itself.

Yet in defining phenomenology even phenomenologists were reluctant to define their position in a way that might limit possibilities for new knowledge. So while such boundary making exercises of Spiegelberg (1971) is useful in terms of the inclusion and exclusion necessities involved in the writing of a history of the development of phenomenology, they are not rigidly definitive of what phenomenology is. In fact Spiegelberg spends much time in asserting that phenomenology is not definable in such a strict manner. According to Spiegelberg, for Husserl phenomenology was at first considered a philosophy for describing phenomena. Later Husserl developed his ideas beyond phenomenology as description and it instead became "... the study of the essential structures of the acts and contents of consciousness, a study to be based not on mere empirical generalisation but on the intuitive grasping of the essences of the

phenomena” (Spiegelberg, 1971, p. 118). So this is the starting point for a general definition of phenomenology.

Spiegelberg (1971) then states that the best way to explain and describe a singular general phenomenology is via the commonalities in method between the different phenomenologies of different philosophers. Spiegelberg says that the purpose behind using the phenomenological method is to widen our view and give the phenomena we are studying a greater importance. Accordingly this means avoiding preconceptions that come in the form of recognised knowledge, our knowledge traditions. Instead phenomenology requires us to be sceptical of such traditions and turn “...to the things themselves” (p. 656). According to Spiegelberg, the “...principle of simplicity, or economy of thought” (p. 657) is also to be treated sceptically. In more positivist research sense data is highly valued and abstract, simplified and coded language is used. Phenomenology instead questions whether such restrictions are wise. According to Spiegelberg, restricting the question asked and the conditions of an answer is a sure way to restrict knowledge. Thus phenomenology is looking for the more contextual and complicated experiences of phenomena as part of their essence. Thus the aim of phenomenology is also partly a reaction against reductionism and positivism (Spiegelberg) and restricting knowledge traditions such as culture (Crotty, 1998).

Next I will discuss Spiegelberg’s (1971) phenomenological method. But first it is important to say that this method is general and does not exclude the possibility of using other methodologies and methods that are more prescriptive such as grounded theory along side the phenomenological method. The specific method Husserl describes for doing phenomenology according to Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) is a philosophical rather than a scientific method and is less useful for doing actual research. Giorgi and Giorgi set out a detailed prescription for carrying out phenomenological research, however in the present phenomenological study I follow the method of grounded theory for doing my research.

Yet grounded theory methodology has similarities to the phenomenological method. Wertz (2005) describes phenomenological data analysis such as the preparation of thematic “meaning units” (p.172) which is similar to the thematic grouping of concepts into categories and codes in grounded theory. Wertz also describes how the researcher

should focus on relations between thematic parts, and parts to the structural whole. Wertz also mentions the concept of “saturation” (p.171) which in grounded theory indicates a stage of data collection, in which codes and categories feel completed, in that more data collection just encounters already elucidated themes and understanding. Thus phenomenology is the search for the more general essence and theory the individuals represent together between them. This is same intention of grounded theory. Martin and Thompson (1997) say that more frequent use of prescriptive methods such as grounded theory in phenomenological psychology, has created a more contemporary phenomenology and an alternative interpretive and hermeneutic approach to phenomenological and psychological research. At the least, the use of grounded theory with phenomenology offers a thoroughly specified prescription for doing phenomenological research.

It is Spiegelberg’s (1971) general phenomenological method that I now turn to in order to define a core phenomenology amongst the many variants. Spiegelberg describes seven steps to the method, of which only the first three are essential for those ascribing to do phenomenology and the later steps are less practiced. I will describe Spiegelberg’s first three steps. The first step is to investigate phenomena. This is divisible into the intuitive grasp of, the analysing and then describing the phenomena. Thus researchers should look and listen, and also can compare the phenomena with similar phenomena, looking at similarities and differences. The researcher can also compare different subject’s experiences of the same phenomena. The aim of intuiting is to focus on the phenomena as it is and avoid preconceptions. The analysis refers to looking at the parts of, the structure of the phenomena and the relationship to other phenomena. Describing phenomena is about defining and classifying the phenomena within a particular pattern of other classifications. It is about looking at the boundaries of where the phenomena under consideration begin and end and also involves concentrating on essences and not the outward and non essential parts of the phenomena.

The second part of the method Spiegelberg (1971) defines as looking at and investigating the general essences of the phenomena. This means that researchers are to look for the universals, the general, the “eidetic” (p.676) intuition. However this does not mean that phenomenological researchers are against the idea of specific or distinct entities, instead these are considered less perfect versions of the general essences. When

the researcher is searching for this general essence the researcher seeks this through studying specific instances. The method by which this is achieved is called the “ideating abstraction” (p. 677).

The third part of the method that Spiegelberg (1971) claims as the phenomenological way is the understanding of essential relationships. These relationships are twofold; the relationships within an essence, the components of it and secondly the relationship of the phenomena with the essences of other phenomena. In the first case Spiegelberg is talking about the essential, necessary or defining parts vs. the non essential parts of the phenomena under study. According to Spiegelberg, Husserl used a procedure called “free imaginative variation” (p. 680). This involves thinking about cases whereby we leave off parts of phenomena or replace some parts to see if the phenomenon is still the same. These are called essential insights. The phenomenologist researcher can also look at the essential relationships between external essences through using this procedure. Thus this entails looking at combining essences in ways that show essential natures and relationships.

The other four parts of Spiegelberg’s (1971) method are not practiced by all phenomenologists and so are lesser points of agreement in terms of defining phenomenology. Therefore I will only name them without describing them and leave the reader to follow these if they choose. The fourth step in the phenomenological method is to watch the ways phenomena appear. The fifth is to watch how the phenomena appear in consciousness. The sixth step is to hold back on believing in the existence of a phenomenon. This final step is concerned with understanding the meanings of the phenomena.

Now that I have discussed the phenomenology movement and general essence of phenomenology, it is appropriate to look briefly at some basic contributions of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), who according to Spiegelberg (1971) is the founder of phenomenology. This is necessarily a simplified description of only a few of Husserl’s contributions and is by no means exhaustive or definitive. For a more detailed account the reader would be best referred to Husserl’s (1999) *Cartesian Meditations*, translated by Cairnes. Welton (1999) edits a translated selection of Husserl’s works. These

together provide a starting point. The ideas I will cover in my brief description are Husserl's intentionality, the reduction, the lifeworld, solipsism and intersubjectivity.

To Husserl consciousness is always directed, it is always consciousness of something. Directing one's consciousness in such relationships with objects is called intentionality (Husserl in Crotty, 1998; Spiegelberg, 1971). The acts one directs include emotions like wanting, feeling or willing. These acts are also called "noetic" or meanings. The object referred to in the acts is called the "noematic" ("Wikimedia Foundation," 2006b). According to Spiegelberg, these intentional acts can be divided into those of "...mere intention and acts of intuitive fulfilment" (p.109). The first of these reflects our subjective, personal and fluid engagements with objects. The second set of acts is about intuitions relating the essence of the phenomena to which the consciousness is directed towards. Thus according to Spiegelberg both types of intentions together point at objects, offer objects to consciousness, interpret those objects, intuit objects essences and together thus create the object. The intentionality of meanings is the essence of consciousness and is thus crucial to the phenomenological task, the description of the essences and structures of the phenomena of consciousness. Drew (2001) puts this clearly when she says that phenomenology is about meaningfulness and shared understandings but also transcending simple understandings using the imaginative variation technique to discover essence.

The second idea I wish to discuss is the phenomenological reduction. The reduction occurs in two parts both aiming to bracket assumptions, preconceptions and biases and hypothesis about the seemingly given world. This is about leaving behind thinking, turning towards the objects themselves and moving towards a transcendental subjectivity not usually available (Spiegelberg, 1971). The first epoch, called "*eidetic reduction*" (Spiegelberg, 1971, p. 135) requests the dropping of reference to particular cases and individuals and instead turning towards generalities and essences. The second epoch requires us to put aside our beliefs in theories of science, our knowledge traditions and focus rather on our intuitions. This is called "*bracketing*" (Spiegelberg, 1971, p. 135) putting aside such theories rather than thinking of them as real and committing our minds to them. This reduction not only allows us access to the pure unadulterated essence of the phenomena but also to the phenomena in relation, as humans' essence is always an embedded structural consciousness.

The third idea I wish to discuss is the lifeworld. The lifeworld was an idea in Husserlian phenomenology that was unpublished within his lifetime (Spiegelberg, 1971). The lifeworld is the world of everyday lived experience. The lifeworld is also the essential structures underneath humans lived experiences. It is the unscientific, undefined, the sensory and empirical reality that holds the essence of organisms in their relationships (Spiegelberg).

I will finish this section by introducing the problem of solipsism and Husserl's idea of intersubjectivity. Then I will be in a position to discuss the details of the methodology and method used in this particular study, thus how I have put these ideas into action. A difficult part of the phenomenologist philosophy, which occurs in subjectivist epistemologies, is that of solipsism. Thus in bracketing the existence of the external world, evidence of the existence of other subjects is under doubt (Spiegelberg, 1971). Solipsism was defined originally by the Greek Gorgias (483-375) BC through philosophical axioms. These were "1. Nothing exists. 2. Even if something exists, nothing can be known about it. 3. Even if something can be known about it, knowledge can't be communicated to others" ("Wikimedia Foundation," 2006a). Metaphysical solipsism asserts that only the individual philosopher exists and the external world does not truly exist. Methodological solipsism states that the self is the true best position to start philosophising from (Wood, L, 1962 as cited in "Wikimedia Foundation," 2006a). It is via the problem of solipsism that truth becomes relativistic and unsure. However Husserl's way out of this problem is by the idea of the intersubjective community of egos.

Intersubjectivity refers to the notion that people experience shared ideas, definitions and meanings when they communicate. Such agreement of language between people is important because otherwise we could not communicate and experience our lives in community effectively. According to "Wikimedia Foundation" (2006c) language is considered as a social rather than a private set of constructs. In several complicated passages in Welton's (1999) edited selection of Husserl's works, Husserl philosophises the acceptance of the existence of other humans and avoids solipsism. Husserl, in Welton, concludes in one more strait forward particular passage "...I understand and accept each of them as an Ego-subject just as I myself am one, and as related to his natural surrounding world" (p. 62).

Even though each ego-subject is human they each subjectively experience the world differently. However Husserl (in Welton, 1999) goes on to say that this is not a solipsism either because, “For all that, we come to an understanding with our fellow human beings and in common with them posit an Objective spatiotemporal actuality as *our factually existent surrounding world to which we ourselves nonetheless belong*” (p. 62. Italics in original). Thus the intersubjective world may not be exactly *factual* or *real* but rather socially constructed. It is however though, all we know and as we are part of that world, it is through our intersubjectivity we can come to know essence beyond such individual subjective constructions.

Thus it is seen that the focus on the present lived reality for people, does not exclude the historical and socio-cultural context that people live within. On the contrary, this is particularly important because our present reality is informed by how we interpret the past, and the world around us. Full knowledge of the human being includes the intersubjectivity of the collective community as well as peoples own individual subjectivity. Culture exists as the context of people’s lives (Spiegelberg, 1971). Spiegelberg says that according to the phenomenologist Merlaue Ponty, researchers should study neither the individual nor the environment alone but rather both as an interconnected whole. Thus phenomenology focuses on the essence of relational lived experience and embeddedness, and rethinking dichotomies such as subject/object, individual/collective, and person/environment. Thus closing the discussion on phenomenology I will now turn to grounded theory.

Grounded Theory

In the present research I am using a grounded theory methodology. Such qualitative methodologies are often accompanied by a reflexive and flexible process. When using grounded theory, one may not even know the specific research question until much data is collected. According to Glaser (1978) the researcher should more appropriately choose an area of study and then let the research question come forward. While the present study does not have such complete openness, there will be an element of refining the research topic as the field experience dictates. Grounded theory is an integrative process whereby research decisions about data collection and analysis are constantly entwined with reflexivity. Reflexivity pervades the entire process of the

present research. Ethics are also an integral part of the process of doing such research, of listening to accounts of personal experience, of respecting these stories and of discovering and creating a grounded theory.

So what is grounded theory? Grounded theory is a methodology that uses specific methods to create a theory in a particular area (Glaser, 1992). A grounded theory is a moving and growing hypothesis (Glaser, 1992). Grounded theory is research from the ground up. It is not theory and hypothesis driven in any quantitative sense, rather it focuses on creating theory to fit data. General hypothesis are formed through the fieldwork and integrated into the research process, but they are only considered as possibilities that are to be further explored (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus a grounded theory remains firmly knitted to the field work.

In terms of the actual process of data analysis and the creation of a grounded theory the initial stage consists of open coding, that is forming substantive categories that explain what is happening in the data (Glaser, 1978). Specific sentences, general ideas and themes are fractured and coded into categories. Specific instances may be coded under multiple categories. Constant theoretical comparison of categories formed from participant's cases and between participant's cases, allows the researcher to fully cover participant's ideas in robust substantive categories.

Glaser (1978) states there are three questions that a researcher must ask during open coding. "What is this data a study of?" (p. 57). This is to remind the researcher that a pre-formulated question might not be what is most important to the participants. In grounded theory the theory created must come from the participants. The second question is "What category does this incident indicate?" (p. 57). The final question is "What is actually happening in the data? What is the basic social psychological problem (s) faced by the participants in the action scene?" (p. 57).

Secondly Glaser (1978) states the researcher should analyse the data one line at a time. Reading data in an overall manner means a researcher is more likely to create a weak theory favouring already preferred ideas and interpretations. However my analysis will not always focus on line by line analysis of the data. I will use a process of matching the analysis of the overall to the analysis of the specific to avoid bias. I will try to avoid

only using line by line analysis and attempt to consider the words and the sentences within the context of the whole.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) the next stage begins to put the data back together to create the theory. This consists of coding centred on how the categories and subcategories are related to one another. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) this middle stage or axial coding utilises a complicated coding system, involving, "...casual conditions, phenomenon, context, intervening conditions, action/interactional strategies, and consequences." (p. 99). Thus axial coding puts the data back together in subtle and complex ways.

Glaser (1978) uses the term theoretical coding to delineate this process and lists 18 coding families of which Strauss and Corbin's (1990) coding paradigm is only one particular coding family. Glaser's opinion is that by focussing on only this coding family Strauss and Corbin are likely to force preconception onto the data. I will list a select few of Glaser's common coding families here to illustrate the idea of axial codes. One of coding these families is the process family. This family includes "Stages, staging, phases, phasings, progressions, passages, gradations..." (p. 74), amongst other processes. A process axial code must consist of a minimum of two stages. Another common coding family is the strategy family. This includes "Strategies, tactics, mechanisms, managed, way, manipulation, manoeuvrings, dealing with..." (p. 76) and so on. If an action is a conscious act to manoeuvre people then this is the fitting code.

The 18 coding families of Glaser (1978) are not final and restricting coding families. These coding families are suggestions and possibilities discovered by prior research. Glaser (2005) offers a further list of coding families and says their function is to sensitise the reader to possible emergent codes. Coding is only limited by the researcher's imagination and the available data. Such coding families' describe meaningful action sequences, axial categories, linking the substantive categories into the beginnings of a grounded theory.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) once the substantive and axial categories are discovered, developed and linked together, then selective coding begins. During selective coding these categories are further refined and meaningfully interrelated into a

full grounded theory. The main process is deciding on a core category. A core category is a particularly important substantive category. According to Strauss (1987) there are six criteria a core category must meet. Firstly a core category has to be central with all the important substantive categories related to it. Secondly a core category has to appear often in the data. Thirdly the core category explains the other substantive categories relationships logically. The fourth criterion is that the name used for the core category should be abstract enough to be useful in other research areas and in more general theory. The fifth criterion is that as the core category concept is refined the theory grows in explanatory strength. The final criterion of Strauss is that the core category is robust and the theory gained through that category still holds under varying conditions. Glaser (1978) lists 11 such criteria for a core category. However the most important criteria are that the category is central and that it also explains the crucial problem that the participants are dealing with.

Glaser and Strauss (1967), who invented grounded theory together, later came to disagree over the process of grounded theory. One such disagreement was about where axial coding ends and selective coding for a core category begins. Strauss and Corbin (1990) say that coding for a core category begins during selective coding, the final stage of coding. Selective coding is much like axial coding, only at a more abstract level. However according to Glaser (1978) coding for a core category in reality, occurs throughout the whole process and it is incorrect to separate these stages so distinctly. For the sake of clarity I have reported the method in sequential stages. However I agree with Glaser that the actual process of the research is fluid and cyclical and involves frequent doubling back to prior stages of analysis to check promising hypothesis against data, rather than researching in a singular linear motion.

Glaser (1992) stresses that trust in emergence has to be central to the theory created. It is important to let go preconceptions over how to analyse the data. Glaser heavily criticized Strauss and Corbin (1990) for not sticking to the original formation of what grounded theory should be. Strauss (1987) stressed that the grounded theory methods are to be used as guidelines in a flexible manner, dependent upon the nature of the data and the phenomena under study. However according to Glaser, Strauss and Corbin appear to have drifted from this suggestion. Within the process flexibility has to be fostered enough to allow creativity to benefit the research. Together the originators of

grounded theory provide a multitude of tools and techniques for use. However the tools they offer are best used without rigidity in order to foster creativity, listen to what the participants offer and truly ground the theory.

So other than generally sorting ideas into substantive and axial categories and a core category, what are the tools and techniques that grounded theorists use? The main technique of grounded theory is constant comparative analysis. This technique is used in all parts of the research. Constant comparative analysis means that the researcher should constantly compare "...similarities and differences which exist between instances, cases and concepts..." (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997, p. 261-262). In this manner the researcher compares incidents of themes discovered, to see if they belong to the same category or belong to different categories or subcategories. The researcher compares indications of concepts and through this process the level of analysis moves towards more abstract and general categories and their relationships. Categories are moulded and remoulded into shape until they sit still or fit the data. This may mean categories break up, join together and are lesser used or become particularly important. This can happen repeatedly in the beginning of the analysis.

A related method is that of theoretical sampling. This means selecting participants who will fill gaps in the data and emerging theory, provide disconfirming evidence, or widen understanding. Participants are selected to enable the researcher to follow up ideas, memos, hunches and hypothesis or to contradict ideas about incidences or themes and create a robust theory from the data gained. Thus while I seek to find variation between participants, this is in the hope of finding more general themes that people share in common and also to find what is more unique for participants within this generality.

Another crucial technique in grounded theory is keeping memos. Memos are the idea bank of the researcher's responses to the data. The researcher writes memos throughout the various stages of the research process. Memos are simply ideas sparked during data collection and analysis. The researcher should create a memo bank so these sparked ideas can be temporarily put aside to refer back to later as formulated and coded ideas (Glaser, 1978). According to Glaser there are four general goals for memo-ing. These are to "...theoretically develop *ideas* (codes), with complete *freedom* into a memo *fund*, that is highly *sortable*" (p. 82).

Firstly a memo is a briefly written idea, which captures the researcher's thoughts. These memos raise the conceptualisation to abstraction (Glaser, 1978). Secondly, these memos are written with complete freedom which is opposite to normal academic theory writing. Thirdly the memo fund is a source of everything relevant going into the final theory. Finally the memos should be easy to access and sort through. According to Glaser, this occurs by using titles on each memo and highlighting or marking emerging categories or properties. Also relationships or hypothesis between and about categories could be highlighted or marked as well. In short the memos are going to be used as a major part of the theory formulation and so these memos need to be made as accessible as possible. The memos are kept separate from the data and the analysis. Memo-ing is a key technique of grounded theory.

Another particular useful technique is writing the storyline (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This entails writing simple descriptive sentences about what is going on in the data. With this technique re-reading data may assist the process. The researcher reads for the main issue the participants are dealing with. This process allows the researcher to link categories into their relationships and connections. According to Strauss and Corbin this storyline then becomes the core code. Yet this technique may be useful in itself, without this expectation.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) also suggest drawing and making use of diagrams as an analytical technique. Glaser (1978) suggests diagrams are a particular theoretical coding family. I will use diagrams throughout the process to help formulate the relationships between the categories and create the grounded theory. It is important to realise also that the aforementioned techniques can be used throughout the various stages of analysis and not limited to being useful in only one stage.

Summarising the Theoretical Complexities of this Project

My intention in this project was to create a grounded theory on the meaning of home while also fostering respect for the people who were offering their stories and their thoughts. The originators of grounded theory often focus their discussion of the methodology on raising the conceptual level of the analysis. However in the current project to *abstract too much* from the participants seems thus less ethical, given that

they offer this information on the trust that it won't be misinterpreted in meaningless or inappropriate ways. Thus it should be made clear here that this project is both abstract and general and also personal and less abstract. Grounded theory offers this possibility of supporting people's personal and perceptual reality with creative and abstract theory.

The current project is presented as a grounded theory rather than following the more typical presentation of a phenomenological study. My initial chapter is not a personal story as is more common with phenomenology studies. I conclude with a Postscript representing with my personal stories and reflections. I placed this in the final chapter so as not to overly draw the reader towards my personal subjectivity. However, according to Crotty (1998) such personalised (by the researcher) initial chapters are more an indicator of contemporary phenomenological research rather than historically prior styles of phenomenological research. Crotty says that contemporary phenomenological research is tending to slide into subjectivism and impure phenomenology. My presentation is that of a more general traditional research project in psychology and a grounded theory.

A purist grounded theory methodology driven without an exact research question also does not fit with the context of the current study and my situation as a postgraduate student with time limits and guidelines as to what I should and should not be doing within the project. Thus such idealistic notions of grounded theory are not always practical. The present grounded theory is guided by specific questions to be answered. Yet, I offer the participants freedom over what they chose to focus on within the general topic area.

In terms of the difficulty of combining social constructionism, phenomenology and grounded theory, perhaps at times my participants will speak less viscerally than perhaps is the hope for phenomenological research. My intention is to allow the participants to ground and guide my research. The use of grounded theory as a methodology partly resolves some of the difficulties inherent in the combination of my chosen epistemology and theoretical frameworks. One particular difficulty is trying to capture the 'present sensory experience' (a phenomenological orientation), through the interview procedure where language is the focus (social constructionism). Yet grounded theory can provide a structure for analysing such theoretical frameworks.

Any manner of project is necessarily impure in some ways from the originators (of the chosen epistemological, theoretical frameworks and methodologies) guidelines as to how it should be undertaken. Yet the idea of a *pure* study is only in relation to any particular researcher's ideas on how it should be done, on what such purity of background assumptions and methods entail. The current project on home is a pure version of myself as a researcher, what I take from the blending of the epistemology, theoretical frameworks, methodology and methods I chose with a particular goal in mind. While hints of epistemological and ontological assumptions can be found in the research, I note that I am using these theoretical backbones to a particular effect. There are clearly many ways of undertaking research. The epistemology, theoretical perspectives and the methodology of the present study were chosen with the intention to add variety to the body of current research on home and to be able to remain open to explore what home means in a rich and non restrictive way for participants and to bring research back to people, the subject of psychology.

CHAPTER THREE

How the Conversation was Undertaken: Method

Participants

There were 15 participants in the present study: 14 recruited and one participant-researcher, with an age range of 27 years, the youngest being 30 years old. There were seven women and eight men. They have a range of demographic life experiences. Five of the women work part-time. Two were full time mothers. Two of the women study part time. Six of the men work full time. Two of the men study full time. Two of the men who work full time are also self-employed. All the women have children. Three of the eight men have children, but do not live with them. Two of the men see their children regularly, the other does not as he does not live in the same vicinity as his children. There was a tendency for the women's lives to be focused around their children while fewer of the men were in this position. Three participants only are in couple relationships, while the remaining participants are single. Two of the participants are one couple. Two participants are brothers who live together. I interviewed myself as a participant researcher in the study, being the 15th participant.

The inclusion criteria was for persons over the age of 18 and under an age for whom care situations might be an impending concern. While the participants were selected using a snowball procedure, I was also looking for variation between people in terms of their lifestyles and personal variables. However it was not assumed that any particular participant's personal details/variables would have a particular effect. These personal variables were only to be explored to the extent of relevance for the participants. Thus if the topic of the persons education, job status or marital status (as examples) come up in the interview then these variables may have been explored. Participants were also selected in accordance with theoretical sampling. This means that I was purposely selecting participants to advance, qualify or find contradictions to emerging theory. Within the confines of the project not all emerging ideas could be explored. Yet with data collection and analysis proceeding at the same time participant selection is crucial. Finally the present research is about what my particular participants offered for emerging theory, not what other participants might have added.

Materials

The study consists of semi structured interviews approximately one and a half hours long. The only materials will be, for myself; an interview schedule, audio recorder, audio tape and a pen; for the participants a sheet of paper with “home” written on it in the centre and a pen.

The interviews are to be loosely structured around four sections, the final section merely involves asking the participants to briefly sum up their ideas. These sections are to some extent flexible and in some cases certain stages are likely to be completed naturally as the conversation deems it appropriate. The interview schedule accomplishes several tasks. These tasks are not accomplished in a particular set order, with the exception of the opening exercise, but rather overall throughout the entire interview. The first task is an opening exercise to trigger the participant’s ideas. The second task is to discuss the content of the participants meaning of home. The third task is to check my understanding of the participants meaning by reflecting back or questioning further on bits I may not have understood. The fourth aspect is to probe for more information. The final task is to ask what else is important in the meaning of home for participants.

The initial and amended interview schedules follow this section, along with a copy of the sheet of paper on which the participants were to complete a brain storm. The italicised words are the instructions for the researcher. Following the interview schedules I continue by discussing the procedures undertaken in the research.

Interview schedule. First I will introduce the topic as regards the information sheet.

The interviews are to be loosely structured around three stages. Within each stage there is room for the participant to lead the discussion. The nature of the research is to be grounded in what is relevant to the participant so this interview structure will vary slightly depending on the participant's responses.

The first stage of the interview will be an exercise to aid the ease of discussion. To start the discussion I would like you to do a brainstorm for me. On this sheet of paper I would like you to write down any thing that comes to mind when you think of the word home. Write down anything even if it seems unrelated.

I will then ask the participants to discuss each of these ideas in turn and what relation these ideas have to home. The participants will be encouraged to write down any other ideas they think of while we are talking.

Task oriented questions for this exercise are: So can you tell me more about.....? What is about in relation to home? Would it still feel like home if you didn't have? Sois very important for you in defining home? Which of these oris more important to your meaning of home?

The second stage of the interview consists of flexible questions that may or may not be used depending on the quality of the data attained in the first stage. Some of these questions may be used in the first stage where appropriate. The first stage of the interview is to be participant led.

Thus questions to clarify the data, may include a number of the following:

What does the term home mean to you? Is it a physical place? A building? Is it more than one place?

Have you used the word home in ways other than to refer to a house?

In talking about your meaning of home (what is important to you in defining home, privacy and control as an example) is this the same as talking about your actual experience of home?

Questions to trigger discussion and to probe for in-depth meaning may include:

What would you mean if you said you were 'going home?'

When would you feel like you are 'at home?'

What would be the opposite of home?

What would your ideal home be like?

Does the meaning of home change? Has it changed to you over your life?

Do you think of home differently in the different seasons?

Have there been events that have changed the meaning of home for you?

Do you think other people have influenced the meaning of home for you?

Do you think your ethnicity has a bearing on the way you think of home?

In the final stage of the interview I will summarise what the participants have said is most important in talking about home, and present any of the following ideas that they may not have mentioned. As the interviews proceed this list may change, thus it is

intended to find out which of the ideas related to the meaning of home are most important for that particular participant, and which are less relevant.

Comfort/nurturance.	Attachment (building/land/possessions or other)	Social/family/friends/people.
Identity.	Security/safety.	Home as a base (in terms of family or security or other).
Control.	Sanctuary.	Privacy.
Belonging.	Satisfaction of needs (physical, ascetic, or other).	

So if you were to sum up this conversation in a few words what would be the most important part of the meaning of home for you?

Amended interview schedule. First I will introduce the topic as regards the information sheet.

The interviews are to be loosely structured around three stages. Within each stage there is room for the participant to lead the discussion. The nature of the research is to be grounded in what is relevant to the participant so this interview structure will vary slightly depending on the participant's responses.

*The first stage of the interview will be an exercise to aid the ease of discussion. To start the discussion I would like you to do a brainstorm for me. On this sheet of paper I would like you to write down any thing that comes to mind when you think of the word *home*. Write down anything even if it seems unrelated.*

I will then ask the participants to discuss each of these ideas in turn and what relation these ideas have to home. The participants will be encouraged to write down any other ideas they think of while we are talking.

Task oriented questions for this exercise are: So can you tell me more about.....? What is about in relation to home? Would it still feel like home if you didn't have? Sois very important for you in defining home? Which of these oris more important to your meaning of home?

The second stage of the interview consists of flexible questions that may or may not be used depending on the quality of the data attained in the first stage. Some of these questions may be used in the first stage where appropriate. The first stage of the interview is to be participant led.

Thus questions to clarify the data, may include a number of the following:

What does the term home mean to you? Is it a physical place? A building? Is it more than one place?

Have you used the word home in ways other than to refer to a house?

In talking about your meaning of home is this the same as talking about your actual experience of home? *Follow these questions with my personal examples if needed as they are awkwardly worded and often difficult for participants to understand.*

Questions to trigger discussion and to probe for in-depth meaning may include:

What would be the opposite of home?

What would your ideal home be like?

Does the meaning of home change? Has it changed to you over your life?

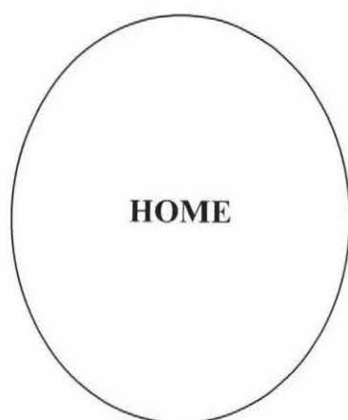
Have there been events that have changed the meaning of home for you?

Do you think other people have influenced the meaning of home for you?

In the final stage of the interview I will summarise what the participants have said is most important in talking about home, and present any of the following ideas that they may not have mentioned. As the interviews proceed this list may change, thus it is intended to find out which of the ideas related to the meaning of home are most important for that particular participant, and which are less relevant.

Comfort/nurturance/satisfaction of needs (physical, ascetic, or other).	Attachment (building/land/possessions or other).	Social/family/friends/people.
Identity/ who a person is.	Security/safety/physical or other type of security. Owning vs renting.	Home as a base (in terms of family or security or other).
Control.	Sanctuary/retreat/restore.	Privacy vs being processed in public/escape.
Belonging.	Home as work/ working on home.	Changing the home/creativity.

So if you were to sum up this conversation in a few words what would be the most important part of the meaning of home for you?



Procedure

The participants were recruited through a snowballing procedure. This entailed asking friends and acquaintances if they or if anyone they knew would consider taking part in the project. In this way the potential pool of participants generates outwards in larger concentric circles from my own immediate contacts. This procedure enabled me to gain participants who had a certain amount of trust in me already, so gathering rapport with participants was not a difficulty. This also meant I did not have to advertise for participants or put myself in any situations whereby risk could occur, thus minimising the likelihood of harm. The potential participants were given an information sheet and I explained that there was a consent form that was to be signed if they chose to participate. A copy of the information sheet and the consent form are provided in Appendix A and Appendix B respectively.

After recruitment, the interview procedure consists of first settling the participant in the interview situation, re-explaining the study and making sure the information sheet and consent forms are read, understood and signed before commencing the interview itself. The interview starts with switching on an audiotape. I then hand the participant a sheet of paper with the word home circled in the middle. I ask the participant to complete a brain storm of all the things that came to mind when they thought of the word home. In this first stage of the interview the ideas the participant has written down are then explored until exhausted. This is accomplished by asking “Could you talk a little bit aboutfor me”, “Do you think this is related to the meaning of home?” and similar questions.

In the second stage of the interview there are a series of questions that can further explore what the connection was between the word home, the meaning of home and the experience of home. If the occasion arises these questions will be, sometimes asked in the first section. Some initial questions were dropped in later interviews and some were added.

For the third stage of the interview I have a list of general themes and if they have not been discussed I ask if they were relevant to the meaning of home for participants. If the participant understands these themes differently from how I intend, we will discuss their understanding rather than mine. Finally the fourth stage of the interview involves

asking participants to sum up what was most important in the meaning of home for them.

In terms of the interview schedule this is to be a flexible and an evolving process. Themes that arose in prior interviews will be presented in the third stage of the interview schedule in later interviews to see if the themes were relevant to other participants. The flexible interview schedule means to some degree that its structure is robust enough to cover my changing understandings as I proceed.

Finally I ask the participants to summarise if they can, what they thought the most important thing was in the meaning of home, from all that we will have talked about. The audiotapes are not going to be transcribed as I felt that this would de-contextualise the information, possibly leading me to focus on less relevant parts simply because they were there.

Ethics

This project was reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, ALB Application 05/038.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Substance of Home: Initial Results

Here I introduce the structure of the remaining chapters which focus on results and discussion. In Chapter 4, I discuss how participants understood the word home. I then talk about what home means to participants and set up the substantive categories to which I have grouped participant's responses into. Then in Chapter 5, I bring in the core code and present the full grounded theory. The full grounded theory shows how the substantive categories and subcategories, the core code, and the major axial code and its categories and subcategories fit together in an explanatory manner. To aid understanding, these chapters contain several tables and a figure which outline the basic framework of the theory. The style of writing in these chapters is that of the story or conversation so far. The tables and figure are there as a clear map to refer back to as needed, where the story is necessarily more flowing and complex emulating the course of the research itself.

Chapter 6 starts with a brief summary of the findings which also functions as a clear map simplifying a complicated landscape. I then discuss how the present research sits with prior research on home. Next I discuss the general body of theory the present research fits with. Obviously not all of my own or participant's ideas are represented here and there are many subjective opinions influencing the data. I discuss biases, limitations and influences, including the effects of my particular research decisions on the data gained, in Chapter 6. I then conclude and offer suggestions for future research. Finally I offer some my own stories and discuss my journey in this project. The Postscript represents my *personal* reflections and conclusion to this research.

Pseudonyms have been used in reporting direct quotes and paraphrases. Permission has been granted for the use of quotes. I have included my own perceptions as the participant Charlotte. My personal data was collected on tape similar to other participants and presented *per se*. The participant Helen, whose data was corrupted due to difficulties with the cassette recorder after the interview, is only discussed in a general manner in Chapter 6. I have used a mixture of direct quotes and paraphrases in this report. This is because the data gathering occurred through conversational talk,

which was often fluid and unclear, with participants rarely expressing their ideas using neat and concise language. I found that participants tended to build pictures and stories with words, circling back at times, developing their own thoughts and making further connections between ideas. This occurred not within a single sentence, but sometimes over the entire space of the interview. Sometimes participant's ideas could thus only be understood and interpreted, within the light of prior parts of the interview, or within the shared language and understanding that was created in the interview. Thus I have tried to present participant's ideas in a language that is faithful to their words and themes, which is also clear for someone outside of this particular data gathering experience.

The Word Home

There were two particular ways in which participants defined the word home. All participants defined home as firstly *existing in a place or a space*. Thus home was defined as locatable, as existing somewhere. Thus on a continuum of where the particular place and space was located, participants defined home as a bedroom in a house, a house, section, caravan, batch, land, neighbourhood, town, country, planet and in one case heaven. Though the latter spatial definition is seemingly not a space, according to the participant who defined home as such, it was a locatable place. Singularly participants often used multiple spatial locations to define home. Angela illustrates the theme of the word home as defined by existing on a continuum of place or space,

The idea of home can shrink or expand, can't it? It can be your dwelling, it can be the little area you live in, it can be your town or it can be your whole country [italics added]...I think it depends on where you are.

The second definition of the word home that participants identified, varied along a continuum from the very practical idea that home is a house, towards a more subtle account of what home is. I have not labelled categories, rather I have located meaningful points along the continuum. Remembering of course that all home definitions included some idea of space although where and what that meant varied. Participants also often referred to multiple and interconnected reference points on this continuum when defining home.

According to Maria, in a way, *a home is a house* built up with rooms, windows, stairs and furniture. It is a very physical and basic building constructed out of materials such as wood and glass. Malachi also echoed that a home is always a house. He discussed how a home is practical and when we are talking about all the things home means we shouldn't forget that we are always still talking about something we define partially as a house. This was also echoed by William who also hints that home is a house yet may be something as well, "*Home is a house* [italics added], but there's other things that go along with this..."

The second meaningful point along the continuum is that a home is *a house or a place that we live and dwell in*. As John says "Home is the place where you feel the safest and the most comfortable...*the place at the particular time where you stay* [italics added]." According to John some people can stay at a place for only a day and it will feel like home. But for him, he has to live there for a longer period of time and the longer it is the more it will feel like home. According to Malachi staying in a hotel when travelling cannot feel quite the same as, or be called home, because it is temporary, you don't really live there. A house becomes a home because it is your own house or the house you dwell in.

The third point along this continuum is where an *emotional component* comes to the fore. To John one of the most important things about home is the affection people hold for their homes. To John, that people feel like their home belongs to them and that they have sentimentality towards it, defines home. Thus people's emotional connections partially define where and what they consider a home. As Lisa also says "*Home is where your heart is...and you don't really need to have a house or anything to have a home. Home is where your happy being where you are* [italics added]." Thus what participants define as home is about what and where they decide home is in terms of their attachment or affection for place.

The fourth point is that, as according to Shane and Larry particularly, *home is something that is within people and is then placed in a house or a space*. Larry deals with this, and the prior points, when he says

Home would be a place, where one is truly at peace to be themselves...freedom...it's not a place, it's not a building, it would be, an

emotional, holistic kind of place, emotional, mental, the whole being. The house is just a house...*the home then is the people that, in the house, they make it a home...The home is that which dwells in the house. I guess it could dwell anywhere* [italics added].

Thus to Shane and Larry the home is something that is placed in a house but is not the actual house. Thus for this meaningful point home may be anything, and then that, is placed somewhere. Thus the person to an extent carries their home with them, in their feelings, ideas, and selves, with possessions they are attached to and most importantly places these in a space or house.

Finally home is also defined personally, with subtlety and individuality. It may be defined differently in different cultures. It is thus *a cognitive and abstract idea*. Larry says “Everybody has an idea of what home is. I think home is generally a place that *people really equate personally with, real personal issues with* [italics added].” According to Mark home is “...*more of a concept...a concept of what is, where it is* [italics added]. It’s somewhere where you want to live, somewhere where you feel comfortable, somewhere where, like I said, where you want to hang your hat...*It’s a bloody abstract thing really* [italics added].” According to Michael the word home can mean whatever you personally and culturally associate with home. But whatever home is at this point of the continuum there are no restrictions on how it could be defined, including whether it is a place, a space, a house or simply a word and an idea. Here the word home may become entwined very complexly with the meaning of home. Thus without the feelings, things, experiences, and abstract and cultural ideas that they associate with home, the word home would not be defined in a dictionary. It would have no meaning.

Thus I have not placed participant’s ideas on the definition of the word home into specific categories. Rather I have found two basic continuums through which participants defined home. Firstly all participants mentioned home as existing in space, radiating outwards in larger concentric circles from the participants. I have also located meaningful points along a continuum of home defined as a house, towards home as something more subtle. These meaningful points are; a home is a house; a home is a house or a place that is lived in; home as defined by affection for the home; as something within people then placed somewhere; or as a cognitive and abstract idea.

The Meanings of Home

I have grouped participant's ideas about the meanings of home into categories. These categories are not identical to the individual brain storming process participants completed in the interviews, rather they are themes which participants commonly mentioned, elucidated by much analysis of the data. The reported categories showed up most frequently in the data. While there are other possibilities for how the data could be coded, the present arrangement seemed most robust and fully representative of participant's ideas. Initially there were over 20 categories. These were reduced via an upward abstraction process to the final categories. Lesser represented categories frequently fitted as subcategories of the major categories.

Some of the themes discovered are on occasions represented in two categories, for example the theme of privacy is about having this for the subjective self and also about having physical space separate from other people. The two types of privacy are not the same, though often linked and so have been represented as subcategories of the differing categories; The I/Self Home and The Spatial Home respectively. A category of privacy alone did not appear warranted, as privacy is not *a thing in itself*, but rather a part of something else, the self and the way a self is in space. While the following themes are substantive and encompassing in terms of what participants in the present research offered, other smaller themes appeared at times. I have not reported on some of these themes whose specificity was for few participants. Further research with different participants could perhaps elicit additional themes.

The I/Self Home

All participants expressed themes that fitted into the category The I/Self Home. This category consists of several subcategories. These are; the outward expression of personal subjectivity and identity; the investment of self in home; the need for privacy for this subjective self; and that a home is primarily ones own place-a place for the I/Self. All ideas where the I/Self is central to the meaning of home are subsumed within this category. I will follow the prior mentioned order of subcategories.

All the participants mentioned that home *expresses a person's subjectivity and identity*. Mark, who lives on a farm, surrounded by farm animals, having previously been unhappy living in the city, says, "Well the animals are important to me cause *that's part of what I am* [italics added], part of what I do..."

For some participants, personally owning the home was crucial to whether it was considered home or not, to others this was not important. Ownership was represented in this category as about limiting or enabling possibilities for expressing oneself through home. William, for example, does not own the home he lives in and therefore he feels he cannot fully express his identity. Here is a small sample of such a theme from William, "If I was in my *own place* [italics added] that it would be, it would be set up a bit differently, in terms of my friends would perhaps feel like they were, *the home was more of an extension of myself* [italics added]."

The home as an outward expression of the I/self was articulated by Larry in a complex manner. Larry does not own his physical home and sees home rather as heaven. To Larry, his Christianity defines who he is, and home is as an expression of who people are, their spirituality, their values, what they love, their treasures, what they enjoy doing, their failings and their beliefs. For Larry home is, "*A working out* [italics added] ..." of the subjective person and who a person is equals what is in their heart. Larry continues,

The bible even says, your heart, *your treasure is where your heart is* [italics added] and I think that defines the whole thing. If you take your house to be your home, then that is your treasure, if your heart is in heaven where god is and you love that, there too is your heart.

Thus how participants interpreted the word home *and* what the meaning of home was to them *and* where they (if they did at all) located this home, showed who the participants were. How participants live within the physical home expresses their physical situations, the things they own and how they organise themselves through time, is according to who they are. So the word home and the meanings of home, manifest as an outward expression of subjective human beings.

Several participants also articulated that the *investment of self* in creating how the home is arranged in space is important. As indicated in a comment by Shelly, how much a place is called home, “*Depends on how much of your self* [italics added] you put into it.” Thus for some participants when they were able to invest their selves, having the freedom to chose their particular home, how it looks and is arranged, they were more likely to think of the place as home. To some participants being able to work on, renovate, improve or change the home to suit changing needs defined the home, and many changes to the home are only possible if owned by the person rather than tenanted.

Several participants also voiced that they needed *privacy for the subjective self*. This meant being safe from the effect of other peoples ideas about ones subjective self. This was mentioned by several participants. Charlotte says, “I’m obsessed with privacy. I couldn’t live with another person because of that. *I don’t like other people interpreting me or telling me what or why I do things, who I am* [italics added].”

Larry also talked about privacy for the subjective self, the home being within the person. He also talked about his flatmate, who invaded his subjective self,

Yes, I think privacy is a central part of this as well, not in the paranoia sense. But in that we are all cautious in who we let into our home and that is, open doors up to, *what we say to people, who we trust and who we don’t trust ... No we are talking about the person* [italics added] ... she’d just try to reorganise my home, *of who I am as a person* [italics added].

Most participants also expressed the need for something personal, belonging to, and controlled by themselves only, *ones own place*. As Michael says about home, “*It’s mine. It’s my place. I can go to it, do what I want, when I want* [italics added].”

The meanings of home thus manifest in several categories. The I/Self Home is also further divisible into subcategories. The subcategories discovered in the data were; the outward expression of personal subjectivity and identity; the investment of self in home; the need for privacy for this subjective self; and that a home is primarily ones own place-a place for the I/Self. All participants expressed such ideas yet each participant

differed in the degree to which they focused on this particular category and its subcategories.

The Intimate Home

The category of The Intimate Home embraces the role of other people in the meaning of home. All participants mentioned family and friends as important to the meaning of home. Within this category, which is in dialectic with The I/Self Home, participants negotiate intimacy and relationships through choosing the levels to which they will or will not share their selfhood with other people within home. The Intimate Home manifests with subcategories that are; sharing; trust; intimacy-family and relationship status; and the people-less peopled home.

The importance of *sharing* a home with family and friends was frequently mentioned by participants. According to John, “When you are with someone, *you are sharing your home. It means a bit more, sharing* [italics added].” When Mark’s partner moved in with him, while they wanted to be together, they also knew each other and trusted each other enough, which suggested to them that they would gain by sharing the home, “You lose parts of privacy, but then *you share your home, so you gain someone* [italics added] in your life that you trust.”

It is important to be able to *trust* the other people sharing the home. Different rules apply for how to negotiate the home environment, depending on the levels of intimacy and relationship status with the people sharing the home. According to Shelly, “Families are different (to having strangers or boarders in the house). *You know them well and trust them* [italics added] so there are different rules for sharing the space.” So as trust levels change the rules for people living in the same house change. If Shelly had a long term boarder of perhaps 10 years she says, “...probably wouldn’t have to have rules by then. You’d fall into a pattern because obviously you’d *trust that person* [italics added].”

Thus *intimacy and family and relationship status* is the keystone of the peopled home. Intimacy levels change through time and with trust. According to Michael, family is intimately connected with the I/Self because, “A family is part of you ... *this is a wife*

and children, not siblings [italics added].” Maria also qualifies the particular type of relationship status within the intimate peopled home that is important in home to her, “Family are important in a home but *it’s the immediate family, husband, children and small intimate families* [italics added].”

While The I/Self Home category includes privacy for the subjective self, crucial to most single participants, in The Intimate Home category the I/Self expands to include couple relationships and for some participants relationships with other family members. Thus privacy does not diminish in importance to participants if they become partnered, rather it expands to include privacy for the couple or family. To most participants, yet most clearly articulated by Mark, home is, “... *belonging to a unit* [italics added].” Yet how big that unit is and who this includes depends on each individual.

According to Mark significant relationships happen within the home. This is also the case when *the peopled home is people-less*. Thus when family members do not live within the same physical home, participants often included family in the meaning of home, as expressed through the décor of the home, *things* that made the home special. According to Shelly part of the meaning of home is, “...*things the children have made, flowers from your garden, personal things, meaning something* [italics added] also it’s about intimate areas, you can close off cosy, *objects hold connections* [italics added].”

This idea of ‘things’ being imbedded with personal meanings associated with significant people was echoed by most participants. Larry describes this when he says that if there was a fire in his house, “I would grab my kids out ... *photos then, my phone* (Larry’s mobile phone) ... *because there’s numbers in there ... my bible* [italics added].”

When asked why he would save his phone, Larry articulated that there were important phone numbers on his mobile phone. His phone was the only place most of these numbers were stored thus it is a connection to people that he might otherwise lose track of. When talking about the objects in his home, he says that the objects themselves are replaceable. It is the meanings such items have. The guitar he says is perhaps about entertaining a family, you might make up a song for them, connecting with them.

Thus the category of The Intimate Home manifests through relationships and how these relationships occur in and around the home. The subcategories were; sharing; trust; intimacy-family and relationship status; and the people-less peopled home. All participants mentioned ideas that fitted into this category, yet different participants focused on this category in varying amounts. Different participants also highlighted some subcategories more than others.

The Spatial Home

All participants discussed the theme of The Spatial Home, which is how the home manifests in space. The Spatial Home has several subcategories. These are; control over space; separate spatial systems; inside/outside space; encroachments on space; access; the spatially distributed home; and privacy-home as a retreat.

All participants mentioned *control over space* as being important to the meaning of home. Sometimes this was mentioned as being negotiated in a way which felt okay, sometimes this was not. Shane's flatmate owns the home he lives in. She thus has more control over the space than him and he discusses their situation,

I don't really make the rules [italics added] ... Melissa does have, sort of, ideas about what she expects and that is, well, if things don't quite meet with her expectations, shall we say, um, *she has the right to put her foot down* [italics added] ... Well I respect the fact that this is Melissa's house and she, what she says goes to some degree. *However, we both have some input* [italics added] and if I think she's being unfair and unreasonable I'll tell her and if she thinks that I'm being something or other, she'll tell me.

William experiences the sharing of and control of his home space, specifically in terms of being an artist and requiring a lot of space for his creative pursuits, also in a positive manner, "Michael, [Williams's brother] *he's very accommodating in terms of my spaces and my interests, he doesn't restrict* [italics added]." According to Micheal, "Living with others *you don't have the same control over your environment. You share your space* [italics added]."

Maria takes in exchange students who have their own upstairs space, with bedrooms and a separate lounge. Her home in effect has *separate spatial systems*. Maria says that if the house was smaller this would not be possible in terms of how they prefer to use their spaces. She says that if the house was smaller, "... *you'd have them on your doorstep. If a student wants to get away, they can get away upstairs. They've got their own* [italics added] (tape was difficult to hear) ... It is really quite a good set up ..."

Thus separate spatial systems can occur within the one home. Lisa notes how the teenagers and her partner use the home spaces differently, each having their preferred spaces. Some participants were also particularly aware of the differences between spaces and the systems of rules within those separate spatial systems in different homes as well. John says that the rules and regulations at his parent's house are different. In his own home he makes his own rules. He describes this particularly when discussing the opposite of home as,

A place where you go where you don't feel welcome. Like if you went to see a distant relative and you felt very uncomfortable and *you couldn't do just the basic things without. Like you went to sit on the couch and someone had to put a throw down for you cause they might've thought your pants are a bit dirty or, if you got a cup and couldn't put it on the table and had to put a mat under it all the time* [italics added]. Stuff like that. You'd feel very distant and unwelcome.

Shane also discusses these rules around systems of spaces,

It doesn't mean like, we've got a whole list of house rules as such. It just means that, but *someone could transgress unwritten rules, shall we say by, drinking lots of beer and then pissing in a corner of the room* [italics added]. I mean that's just an imaginary example of course.

Being able to have some control over how space is used was important to participants in the meaning of home in that people use space differently and if there are too many restrictions around the usage of space, then people can't live how they want to.

Participants also noted that the *inside of the house is a clearly differentiated space from the outside space*. To several participants these different spaces were talked about as clearly marked by the door to their house, that stepping over that line, differentiated

personal space from the outside world. Other participants who shared their homes, talked about their bedroom door as having this same spatial marking. The home spatially centres itself inward with imploding and then outward with radiating circles. Home is inside a persons head, their bedroom, the house, the section, the street, the suburb, the town, the country.

Michael talks about the difference between inside and outside space in a comment about the pressures of the outside world,

When I get home from work I relax, don't have to worry about it anymore, [away from] the stresses of the world, having to conform to society, having to dress a certain way that you've got a certain job, rah, rah, rah. All the pressures *as soon as you walk out the door. (Coming home) I can shut the door and it's like going somewhere else, into home and shut the door and everything else is shut outside* [italics added].

Encroachments can occur within the home space, Larry talks about how these encroachments occurred within the home when he had a flatmate who, "*You had to tip toe around her, because she'd try to invade your personal space and try and dismantle your home, emotional, physical, mental, your personal space* [italics added]."

Encroachments also occur from the outside into the house. Most participants mentioned such themes. Angela offers a good example when talking about how security is important in a home,

It's financial, it's knowing that you're safe around your neighbourhood. And *that they can't get in* [italics added] and you know you don't get burglars or people getting in *and that your neighbours aren't revolting and encroach on your lifestyle* [italics added], which has happened to me. Because they can, *they can get in, not quite into the house. But they can hang over a wall* [italics added].

Several participants mentioned the theme of always having *access* to the home, whereas not all places are like this. To Maria, home means having access, "*You know you always have somewhere to go* [italics added]."

Several participants also articulated that what home means can be spread out or *distributed over various spaces*. Some participants, who considered extended family important in the meaning of home, spatially expanded the definition of the word home from their own house to relative's houses as well. Mark, for example said that, "I still think of my parents place as home, but I haven't lived there for probably 25 or 30 years. But *I still think of that as home because that's where the family is* [italics added]."

Some participants also indicated that how a persons needs are met in various places, may also mean that home is spatially distributed. According to Charlotte,

When I was on one of my trips to Palmerston North, sleeping in the car, *I called my street, the street where I always parked my car at night, my home, and my car was home. I had my stuff in it. I slept in it. I made phone calls from it. But home was also the swimming pools where I had my shower, used the toilet, and brushed my teeth. Home was the supermarket where I got breakfast, the students centre and the library where I watched TV and had dinner, studied at night, same routine, just like in my normal home. These all contained a little bit of my home* [italics added].

Most participants talked about home as *a retreat*, although in differing degrees for differing participants. Shane talked about home as a retreat, a place for spatial privacy,

It's nice to be able *to retreat into your own space, because everybody does need their own space, don't they? I think everybody needs time alone. I think everybody needs some degree of privacy* [italics added]. I have my own room, perhaps not entirely as much freedom as I might like, but ...

The Spatial Home was a particularly drawn upon category for most participants. There were a greater number of subcategories for this category and these were commonly mentioned and discussed. The subcategories were; control over space; separate spatial systems; inside/outside space; encroachments on space; access; the spatially distributed home; and privacy-home as a retreat.

The Biological/Historicised Home

Important to participants was the idea that home has an organic quality, existing through time and in space. This organic quality of home, maps onto peoples lives, moving from youth to older age, experiencing, changing and evolving in how they think of home and consequently how they want their to be. The Biological/Historicised Home consists of several subcategories which are; the different stages of life; being ready; the aliveness and organic nature of home; home having a narrative history; and memories.

What home means to people and what they need from a physical home, what they feel is home, reflects *the stage of life* that a person is at. Angela's idea of home is that her house, her community and her neighbourhood suits her stage of life. There are schools nearby for her children, friends living in the area, beaches and shops. In one of these discussions she says,

You've got the different stages of life so you see your home in different ways in different stages. I mean the way you live in a flat when you're single and going out partying with your friends is quite different. If I didn't have children, I didn't have a family, I wouldn't live here, the area ... I feel like I'm living in limbo here because I'm a mother [italics added]. Until my children leave home, then I can go back to what I am really which is not a suburban housewife.

Lisa also indicated that she has to have a roof over her head because she has responsibilities for her children. She needs her home to be fenced, close to schools and suitable for her family. She described youth when home was just a doss house, a place to sleep, this being a stage of life. Shelly also provided a clear example of this theme, "*Home is where children are when you are younger, where you are they are. But this then is a different home as the kids have grown up ... So this is a different home, a home for me [italics added].*"

Related to this sense of home following a series of life stages, most participants also mentioned that it is important *to feel ready* for new life stages. James discusses the idea of there being a right time for home to change and for him this was also about putting down roots and finding his place in the world,

It was time to own [italics added] ... I was quite happy renting for a while and moving if and I rented some nice places. But then I needed to have my own place ... That's when I realised there wasn't much security or control in renting and *I was past it, I don't begrudge renting but the time had come* [italics added].

William says of his current home that is changing, he is unsure if he will stay in it in the near future, "*Yes, I ('m) getting more and more ready to move* [italics added]."

What home means for some participants was shown as being able to support or sometimes constrain movement through personal life stages. Charlotte whose partner is moving in shortly says it is,

The end of an era, the stage of my life that is [italics added] single- parenthood, privacy, safety, quiet and choices...moving into being a family again with a husband. It's completely different. I'm obsessed with privacy and it's been important to me in what home is for so long and now if I want him here, I lose that. *What home means to me is going to have to change or I can't have that experience. It's the end of an era of my life and I don't know if I'm ready* [italics added].

William reflects on his personality and his stage of life, "Notions of self are flowing, this is reflecting, quite lopsided in a way. A different home would reflect a different part of me, *would offer me different developmental opportunities* [italics added]." William goes onto say that perhaps he is not ready for such changes yet. That how home is for him now is about his waiting for his financial investments to improve, enjoying his art and it is not about having a family yet. So his home reflects not only where he is in his life at the current point, but also what he wants, and who he is and what he is ready for.

For some participants The Biological/Historicised Home also seemed to have an organic quality. *Home is alive and it evolves* with people. As John says home changes, "You have children, divorce, life changes and home *it's like a living breathing thing* [italics added]." So not only was the type of home participants considered a home relevant to their stage of life, home also has a heartbeat. Shelly talked about her garden being important in the meaning of home and says it requires more work than the inside of her house, "(the garden is) wild in places. It's really important. Outsides a huge job, *all the*

time planting, don't like this, pull it out. The whole things very much changing [italics added]."

Shelly continued by saying that the inside space is different. The Wallpaper is also organic but it can last 10 years before it needs to be replaced. The garden needs to be worked on regularly. The different spaces require different and pragmatic responses from people, depending on the biological nature of the particular parts of home. According to Shane this was represented in the length of time a builder guarantees a house to last, this is the length of the ingredients of a physical buildings organic life cycle.

Home also embodies a *narrative history* that is related to it. Most participants articulated that their idea of home embodies a narrative history of different homes they have lived in and of various events that have happened in such homes. Most participants discussed ideas that fitted into this category. William illustrated this when he discussed his current home, owned by his brother, inherited when their parents passed away when young. The home was part of a contested estate.

Well, this home comprises of obviously, Michael, my brother, and my friend Graham and myself. It was initially the family home ... my little sister used to live here also, but three other siblings don't really identify to it as being home...because, one sibling, she thinks that Michael and myself, have been spoilt, and over provided for. That with the estate Michael and I were left this house in priority of ... there was one party that was written out of the inheritance, who then made it open to contest the estate and that party was basically provocative and semi violent towards mom and she didn't feel obligated to leave him anything in the estate, but the law says [italics added]

...

Such a historical narrative is also articulated by Shane,

My parents they, we came here [New Zealand] as a family. My father built the house in Long Street. We lived together in that house in Long Street a disappointingly short period of time, I must say, that, 5 years, or somewhere around there. Then my mother and my brother and I lived in Murray's Bay

for a period of time and one of I guess one of the things that led us going to Australia was the fact my father wouldn't let go of my mother [italics added].

Participants not only talked about home in terms of historical narratives but also *tangible, emotional or visual memories*. Shane continues his story, “*I do have a strong memory of my father eating Kentucky Fried Chicken on Christmas eve, on the lawn, feeling sorry for himself. I think he was given the short sharp shift, move along there, by my mother [italics added].*”

John says that home is also about things that you associate with past homes,

Furniture is actually quite important, cause people tend to take furniture from house to house, to make it a home. Some people really relate to furniture as home. Like, even if they don't actually own their own house or thing. Wherever they go, if they have this particular piece of furniture, that can make a place that's not a home feel like a home. *Cause of the familiarity of the furniture, cause it reminds them of, it's more to do with the memories. If you take paintings, or, and a comfortable chair away to another place, it will have like a tactile link to you previous home [italics added].*

According to Mark, “*Things in the house evoke memories [italics added].*” Such household objects matter as evocations of meaning, of times, events and people, who make home.

Thus this category was about participants moving through time as they go through many experiences in their lives. Home thus reflects participant's organic movement and growth and change. The subcategories discovered in the present data were; the different stages of life; being ready; the aliveness and organic nature of home; home having a narrative history; and memories.

The Base Home

This substantive category is about having a connection with, or belonging to something, being rooted in life and how without a home base, home and self can be disrupted. This category has similarities to The Stable Home and to The Biological/Historicised Home (both described later) yet is not equal to either. This category has several subcategories

that are; home as a physical base to centre life around and to look out from; as a psychological anchor on the self; significant life events making or changing self and base; being baseless.

Following the order in the prior paragraph, home as *a physical base centre life around* was a theme articulated by most participants. Shane provides an example of this when he says that, "*It's important to be able to invite friends to meet there [italics added].*" According to Michael, home allows you to plan because home is, "... a base, *somewhere there you keep belongings and associations and grow from and go from and come back to [italics added].*"

Shelly's ideas also represent the physical home base subcategory yet with a longer time frame, here the home is also a generational base, "*The family home is a place for children and grandchildren to come back to [italics added].*" When Shelly was a young married mother, her parents house was the base they could go back to, if they needed to. Several participants mentioned this theme of home being a physical base in the present and a base for the differing generations.

Some participants also noted how their physical home base affected how they perceived the world outside home. Charlotte described such a type of physical home base,

When I was sleeping in my car, home was there, all my things were there, so my activities, what I did, my life, was centred around being there, having my stuff there, and how I would meet my needs from there, always coming back to there, it was how I looked out on the world [italics added].

Larry describes a time when he lived in his car for a year when young. His life revolved around moving out from his car, sometimes the car was unwarranted, often without petrol, he hitchhiked to and from there, being concerned what would happen if his car, his life, was stolen. His car represented more than just transport, rather it was a type of home and way he looked at the world,

I parked my car in front of a place I felt was reasonably safe to park my car, where I could sleep, then I was without a home, I didn't have a physical home. I had a physical home in the sense that I was under a tree. As far as the hope was concerned I didn't have a home. My home was my car, I made

it my home, my place of safety. You are cautious about who you let in your car. It leaves you miserable, lost my job. I got let into a men's refuge but I was still without hope. I was looking for a place of hope [italics added].

Who participants developed into was frequently linked to having a psychological anchor on the self, or the place where psychological self was created. According to John home is, "... *an anchor on your past [italics added].*" Angela also says,

You know your first house you live in when you're a child? When that gets sold, you feel really weird about it, like, how can they sell my house? That's my home, where I grew up, cause its always been there and they (Angela's parents) had always lived in it. Even if I wasn't at home anymore *it was still a base ... So it's a bit like ripping a mat from under your feet. You feel like you're floating a bit, there wasn't that base that had always been a safe haven [italics added].*"

William talked about growing up at boarding school, in which much abuse was experienced by the students. He says that it meant he didn't have a home base to set himself up with, not knowing what a home was, having to figure it out 10 years behind because he didn't have it when he was young. In this way, not only is a persons base, part of who they become, but also *significant life events make or change a persons self and base.*

Shelly talked about how she gained a farm, after her mother had passed away and left her money in the will. Shelly bought the farm so she could have a horse. The farm and the horse were Shelly's childhood dreams. This was like a base for her throughout her life. However the horse died. Shelly describes this, "*I always wanted even as a child, to live on a small block of land, farm but it comes with bitter consequences [italics added].*" This was a significant life event described painfully, however, later enriching Shelly's experience of home as she feels closer to the land where these events happened. After this, Shelly started breeding miniature ponies, finding new meaning at home, adjusting her base. Such significant life events that affect a participant's base, greatly affect their lives and sense of self.

While a person's base, or lack thereof, effects who people become, some participants also mentioned that *being baseless* in the present effects who people are. James discussed a time when he felt that he was without a home, baseless, in his self and in his environment. James describes how this sense of base defines a strong healthy sense of self as an adult,

Well, you are kind of rootless without (the) security of your home [italics added]. I don't mean security in that high fences and gates. It's a place in your head as well. It gives you peace of mind and contentment I guess, well you have no anchor, security, because it gives you, it's in your self really. *Home you carry it with you, home, and if you don't have it you're lost* [italics added].

Mark also discussed how the physical home is related to what a person bases their life around. For Mark his relationships and family are crucial to him. They are a personal base thus affecting the home as base, if disrupted. Mark talks about his prior marriage break-up and how this affected the home, "(if you are in a bad relationship, you) ... make changes or do the obvious, thus if the storms are inside the home, *relationships devolve and with it the image of the home* [italics added].

The Base Home was a frequently drawn upon subcategory with a lot of subtlety in how participants expressed it. This category is a psychologically complex experience that reveals a lot about how participants move in their life and how they experience closeness through their sense of having a base. The subcategories were; home as a physical base to centre life around and to look out from, as psychological anchor on the self, significant life events making or changing self and base, and being baseless.

The Present Temporal Home

This substantive category is about the practical side of home. Home is a functional and a pragmatic idea, a way to organise life in time and space. All participants mentioned ideas that fitted into this category. The Present Temporal Home manifests with several subcategories which are; aiding living life; home supporting the particular doingness of each person's situation; and the pragmatic planning for the future home.

Home is a very pragmatic and practical idea that solves the problem of how to survive in the world, of how to live, thus *aiding living life*. According to Shane, Larry and Felicity respectively, “*Everybody needs a place to live [italics added].*”, “*We need a building to live or we’d die of hypothermia [italics added].*”, “*You have to go somewhere to sleep [italics added].*”

Home is also about the basic ‘things’ we need to live our lives. According to Malachi when he was travelling, “*There was a sense of home that I could pack into a suitcase [italics added], could’ve re-bought it from a supermarket, all the stuff was replaceable.*” For Charlotte,

When I came home from Palmerston North, from a block course, it didn’t quite feel like home until I had unpacked. *Because the things that home means are also the things that I need to use on a day to day level, my wallet, my bankcards, the clothes I wear most, my alarm clock. The home wasn’t lived in when I returned. It wasn’t home until I was living in it again [italics added].*

This is also echoed by John when talking about the practical importance of furniture, “*cause if you just sat there, just on the carpet, it’s a bit less like a home [italics added].*” Thus home is about the things that we use which aid and define our lives on a very basic level.

This doingness then expands to that which is specific for each person. *Home supports the particular doingness of each person’s situation*. Shane when talking about what keeps him in his current home says, “It may mean something as simple as cheap rent. I know I’m on a pretty good deal here. *Because I’m paying a low board I can be a university student [italics added].*”

According to Maria, she and her husband probably wouldn’t be in such a large home if they didn’t have children. Their home suits their lifestyle, what they do in life. They have spaces specifically for the children, a swing set for them outside and their own separate lounges for the children, adults, and boarders. Their home has been altered and arranged functionally to suit their life situation.

According to John his house feels like home partly because it contains everything he needs, it's practical and functional for his life as a single father with his children on the weekend, cosy and relaxing, "For me right now. *It's just right for my situation* [italics added]."

So home is a functional idea, it supports the doingness of participants lives in time and space. How participants want home to function, varies, it supports living styles. Home can support a person's safety, have a protective function for a person's identity, support their working life, their relationships. For some participants home supported the need to reflect on their lives. However there are some basic functions that for most people could apply. Shane says, "*Home could be living in a cardboard box, people do but they lack a supportive environment* [italics added]."

Thus certain types of homes have particular functions within particular societies. Home is also a pragmatic idea in terms of this, involving *the pragmatic planning for the future* of the home idea. Many participants drew upon this theme. Shelly sees doing up and maintaining her home as an investment for her financial future. Angela, when she was considering her marriage and planning for a future where she and her husband were separated, said,

I decided the only way I'm going to keep a house is if we buy another house [italics added]. So we've got a house each. But I didn't let him know that was the reason behind it. Otherwise he would let me do it.

The Present Temporal Home is the practical and often neglected meaning of home. This is the part of home that is realistically something very simple but also very essential for how we live our lives in our complex society. The subcategories were; aiding living life; home supporting the particular doingness of each person's situation; and the pragmatic planning for the future home.

The Ethereal Home

This category is in dialectic with The Present Temporal Home. Rather than home being simply a practical place to live, participants also noted that home is something altogether different and importantly defying definition. All participants mentioned ideas

that fitted into this category. The Ethereal Home manifests with subcategories of home about; the heart and feelings and mind; atmosphere and spirituality; sanctuary and profundity.

The home was frequently mentioned by participants as about *the heart, feelings, or something in the mind*. According to several participants, here expressed by James, “*Home is where the heart is [italics added]*.” Shane says when asked to define the word home, bearing in mind that the word home and the meanings of home are constantly entwined, says, “A house is bricks and mortar and *a home is perhaps something that people who live inside the house feel about the house, that it is their home [italics added]*.”

Shelly also says that part of what home is and this includes family to Shelly, is in your mind, “A place (where you) can reflect on your life, *peace in the garden, your family are really with you all the time in your mind [italics added]*. You don’t reflect on stuff as much in other places.”

Most participants also mentioned the meaning of home as about *atmosphere or spirituality*. Larry says, “*Maybe I can rest here [italics added]* (Larry’s new home) and call it a home.” Larry does not mean in terms of the functionality of the home, as a place to sleep, but in a spiritual sense. Larry defines home as heaven and this sense of rest is what Larry is looking for in a home.

James describes a similar feeling, when he talks about how peace and quiet are essential in a home and how he felt lost without such a home. James found West Auckland beaches provided that sense of home for him.

Home is where you feel at home. It’s in your head as well, I guess, that’s kind of your spiritual home, I suppose, just as important as your physical home. With Huia (a West Auckland beach) it was the, just, the place, cause I didn’t know anyone out there, it was the place, the whole atmosphere [italics added].

In terms of the spiritual, sacred atmosphere in the environment when Shelly was looking for a new home, Shelly had the feeling that somehow she was meant to be in

her particular area, to live there. She hadn't known until after she moved into her home, that there was a family history in the area. Shelly had relatives who died up at the sanatorium hill in Te Miro. Shelly experiences this as a spiritual belonging to the area.

Many of the participants also expressed the theme of home as a kind of *sanctuary*, as Mark says, home is, "*A sanctuary from the perils of life* [italics added]." Malachi started discussing the spatial home and the differences between the outside and inside space of home, in much the same manner as Michael previously described and this led to describing this sense of sanctuary in a home. I will report the longer length quote to show more fully the essence of what Malachi is saying,

You're always on guard, always trying to meet society's expectations, your friend's expectations, or your parents, conforming to the expectations of the environments. At home you can be your own person. *It's like a sanctuary. It's a place where you feel completely capable of being who you are. Sanctuary is like the place you want to be where you've got absolutely no stresses, problems, or where you, where everything is right. It's what I draw out of, what I want out of my living environments. I want peace and tranquillity. My sanctuary is sitting in my Lazy Boy, reading a book, falling asleep, the sun beaming through the window, and some nice chant song in the background* [italics added].

However other participants could not, or were reluctant to, define what it was about the idea of home, that made it both a sanctuary and a *profound* experience. Larry says, "*When you define home clearly you take away the profundity of the experience, its not definable, you destroy it by defining it* [italics added]."

The Ethereal Home is often indefinable, it is a feeling and an experience that is awesome and spiritual. There is a sense of closeness, connection and emotionality that participants frequently felt towards their homes. The Ethereal Home is about this essential and inexpressible feeling that is over and above any other part of home. The subcategories were; the heart and feelings and mind; atmosphere and spirituality; sanctuary and profundity. While I have provided examples of these subcategories there is little doubt to me that other subcategories in this category would be found with further research.

The Stable Home

This category manifests as participants seek stability and constancy. It is also about being in control and maintaining this. The opposite of the category is the sense of instability and vulnerability. All participants mentioned ideas that fitted into this category. The stability category manifests with subcategories that are; the enduring home; consistent and predictable patterns; vulnerability; and the assured home.

The enduring home is discussed by Mark in terms of safety and to Mark safety is a feeling. It's also about trust that relationships, as an example, will endure despite arguments. Relationships happen in the home. When relationships devolve so does the home. However Mark close experiences relationships with his family of origin, and such family is important to the meaning of home for Mark, as stable and enduring.

John says that the home is the enduring place of stability whereas family, friends and life changes. So while to Mark the family were experienced as the stable part of the home, to John the physical home itself is the stability. When at her home, Shelly experienced some of her animals passing away. She says that the sadness around home eventually passes. Shelly says of the loss, it is, "... just part of life, home just feels like a sad place, *but it's still home* [italics added]."

As well as the home being about enduring stability, it is also about *consistent and predictable patterns* that occur in home. Lisa says about the predictable patterns and routines of her children and partner as they leave for school and work, "*Yes, they're going again* [italics added]." According to Michael his, "... bed, coffee, electricity, *these are the constants* [italics added]."

Along with that assured stability is the sense of control such predictable patterns offer. According to Michael the meaning of home has not changed throughout his life, "*It's always been the same* [italics added], how I've defined it's probably changed, as I've grown older I've got to understand what makes up home more. *But how I feel about home's always been the same* [italics added]."

William says of his present living circumstances that while the home lacks some comfort at times, he knows his present living companions, he knows their routines, their

moods, how they react to things. This is experienced as consistent and predictable. William contrasts this type of home with his experience of boarding school where, “You become a number, *not having things that you feel secure around. Like here I know the people around, at ... (boarding school name) it was sleep with one eye open* [italics added].” William describes a sense of instability and with that comes *vulnerability*. Larry says, when talking about his prior difficult living circumstances with his flatmate, and the years when he lived on the street or in his car there was a sense of, “... *invasion into that space. If you can't live in a place where there is comfort and stuff, you'd hurt, your vulnerable, and of course you are going to pull back* [italics added].”

This lack of stability, and consequence of lack of safety, is contrasted with the stable *assured* and safe home. A clear example of this subcategory is when Larry talks about his home as heaven and his assured afterlife, “*I know I'm going there* [italics added].” John also talks about the importance of owning his own home, this guarantees, *assures* security and stability for your children. Security is he says,

... very important to me. Security is the number one reason. *Financial security for your children cause you have something to give them later on in life* [italics added]. Whether they chose to live there or sell it and have the money to get their own places. It's a financial thing, an inheritance.

Thus The Stable Home has similarities with The Base Home. The Stable Home category however is not so psychologically all expansive and is not only a weaker point on a continuum of strength and stability in the home. The Stable Home is a category of its own with subcategories that were described as; the enduring home; consistent and predictable patterns; vulnerability; and the assured home.

The Real Home

This category has similarities with The Ethereal Home and The Comfortable Home (to be discussed in the next section) but is not equal to either. All participants mentioned themes that fitted into this category. However not all participants were mentioned this theme in an obvious manner. The Real Home is something participants worked towards or felt themselves moving closer to, sometimes as an ideal, throughout their life. Yet

what participants thought of as The Real Home was changeable through life stages. This category only has two subcategories; the real home; and the full home.

Within *the real home subcategory* participants engage with differing socio-cultural values about what home is, taking such societal values on board to find what they personally believe about home. Michael says, “*I’ve only ever had two real homes* [italics added].” These two homes were both homes Michael owned and lived in. He had lived in other places that he did not own but did not consider these to have been real homes because he did not own them. According to Larry, home reflects our makeup as beings and that we are broken beings and so we belong on earth. His perspective takes on board societal values from his particular Christian outlook. According to Larry, “*My real home is in heaven* [italics added].”

The subcategory of *the full home* suggests that the real home is the achievement of parts which make up the whole of home, specific for each participant. However within this is an engagement with socio-cultural ideals about what home is for each life stage and of course what the participants believe this should mean for them.

To Shelly the epitome of the comfortable home is a fireplace the family sits around. She says it is the look of the fire, the warmth, the cosiness, you can sit by it, dry clothes on it and the family revolves around the system of it. This to Shelly feels like a real home. Shelly also says that, “*My animals make me feel as if it’s a real home* [italics added].”

Mark describes the opposite of home, the non home, as somewhere that you have to live, but you don’t chose. He uses an example of a friend of his, living in a boarding house. He has somewhere to sleep at night, but that is all. He says you exist there, rather than live there, it’s not a real home. He then describes his situation before his partner moved in with him. He wasn’t completely uncomfortable living just with his teenage son, but, “*There was always a piece missing* [italics added].”

Finally according to Lisa, “*Home wouldn’t be really home without kids. It would be a doss house instead* [italics added].” From her present life perspective home necessarily includes her children. William says that he doesn’t see his current home as his real

home but more his brother's, who owns the house. He then says that, "*This home doesn't represent me, in necessarily a full way* [italics added]."

The Real Home is the last substantive category to be discussed here. The Real Home was a complex category which not all participants mentioned in exact quotes but often discussed more subtly. It was discussed by all participants in some subtle manner. The Real Home only consists of two subcategories which were; the real home; and the full home. Because of the degree to which people subtly and often mentioned this category it features later in the grounded theory itself.

The prior categories were in no particular order of importance. The meaning and relevance of the categories comes more into focus when I discuss the core code and the full grounded theory in Chapter 5. For a clear summary of the nine categories Table 1 follows.

Table 1

Substantive Categories on the Meaning of Home

Substantive Category	Substantive Subcategory
The I/Self Home	The outward expression of personal subjectivity and identity; investment of self; a need for privacy for the subjective self; ones own place
The Intimate Home	Sharing; trust; intimacy-family and relationship status; the people-less peopled home
The Spatial Home	Control over space; separate spatial systems; inside/outside space; encroachments on space; access; the spatially distributed home; privacy-home as a retreat
The Biological/Historicised Home	The different stages of life; being ready; the aliveness and organic nature of home; home having a narrative history; memories
The Base Home	A physical base to centre life around and look out from; a psychological anchor on the self; significant life events making or changing self and base; being baseless
The Present Temporal Home	Aiding living life; supporting the particular doingness of each person's situation; the pragmatic planning for the future
The Ethereal Home	The heart and feelings and mind; atmosphere and spirituality; sanctuary and profundity
The Stable Home	The enduring home; consistent and predictable patterns; vulnerability; the assured home
The Real Home	Real home; full home

CHAPTER FIVE

Being Comfortable: Having and Making a Comfortable Cognitive and Environmental Habitat: A Grounded Theory on the Meaning of Home

Before discussing the full grounded theory it is important to introduce the core code. While the core code is a substantive category like the prior mentioned categories, it also consists of particular qualities that make it important for the grounded theory. Of such the core code should appear frequently in the data, be linked to the other substantive categories and appear important enough to warrant the theory fitting it. I have detailed further criteria in Chapter Two. In the present study The Comfortable Habitat is the category which warrants use as a core code.

The Core Code: The Comfortable Habitat

For the participants in the present study the most crucial part of what home meant was about experiencing comfort and being comfortable. The *Comfortable Habitat* occurred when participants had acceptable dealings with the substantive home categories. The Comfortable Habitat is about personal values, expectations, needs and ideals concerning home and included engagement with socio-cultural values about home. The Real Home also included such engagement with socio-cultural values. The Real Home however represented what participants thought home *should* mean, what home was ideally and sometimes fantastically for participants.

The Comfortable Habitat rather represented what home *actually did* mean for participants *after a more thorough personal engagement*. What felt comfortable varied between participants but all participants expressed this need for comfort in their homes. What participants described as their meanings of home and what they thought of as home, formed a cognitive habitat. This cognitive habitat informed how they related to their environment, their physical habitat. Thus when I refer to the cognitive habitat I am referring to the word, the meaning and how participants locate where and what home is. When I refer to the physical habitat I am talking mostly about the physical experience of the home. Having a Comfortable Habitat meant that a participants cognitive and

physical habitats matched, that what home means to the participants was reflected in their experience of home as much as possible and vice versa.

I will shortly discuss The Comfortable Habitat but first provide examples of a few of the ideas from the prior paragraph. The participants did not just follow socio-cultural values about home, they engaged thoroughly with popular notions about what home should be like. Shelly illustrated this when she discussed her home. She describes, on multiple occasions, where she changed some aspect of her home, not because of socio cultural values about home but rather her personal preferences. Shelly described changing the paint and wallpaper in her home as a matter of personal, creative expression. This was not about, she says “...*keeping up with the Jones's* [italics added] ...” it was about how she preferred her home to be and she says it was to a degree important to maintain the saleable qualities of her home, for her future financial stability.

Michael talked about how it would not be nice to live in a house with yellow and brown wallpaper. This was not unpleasant however because such colours are not fashionable, but Michael explained it was a matter of personal preference. He could live in such a house and in fact his home used to have such 70's style wallpaper. However he changed this because he didn't like it and didn't feel comfortable within his home as a result. Thus The Real Home was about idealised and currently fashionable images of how a home should be. The Comfortable Habitat was about participants engaging thoroughly with these images and deciding for themselves how they preferred and were comfortable with the word, the meaning and the experience of home.

The other concept that is important to return to, is how the participants meaning of home and their experience of home need to match in order for the participant to feel comfortable. However as we shall see throughout this chapter, this doesn't necessarily mean a direct match, rather to a level that feels comfortable for the particular participant. Mark talks about this complicated match between cognitive and physical homes when he discusses that the most important thing about home, “... would be *the sense of belonging to it, belonging to the concept of it, of home* [italics added], that that's where you want to be, that you're happy there, with the people ...” Throughout much of Marks' interview he discussed how the meaning of home is a complicated idea

and means something different to everyone, that it is not just a house but that the person's experience of the home has to be what they want it to be.

It should also be mentioned now, as I commence discussing the particulars of the comfortable code, that I have chosen to use the title *The Comfortable Habitat* rather than The Comfortable *Home* to delineate this code. This is because the meanings of home for participants included multiple segments that formed not only a home but also a habitat, a preferred cognitive and environmental niche. The Comfortable Habitat is not a singular or simple *thing in itself*. It is rather a complicated and subtle preferred arrangement of segments of participant's lives in the field of home. The Comfortable Habitat was mentioned by participants throughout all the substantive categories. The comfortable category is divisible into several subcategories of fit; balance or equilibrium; ease; and needs satisfaction.

Beginning with the idea of *fit*, according to Mark, home is about being comfortable and, "... *comfortable is where you want to be, where you fit* [italics added]." Maria talks about The Present Temporal Home saying, "Washing machines for example make your life easier, more comfortable *and help you 'fit in' with today's world* [italics added]." In the home such things are important because we can then feel more comfortable outside the home too.

The subcategory of *balance* was expressed frequently. Balance was about balancing which needs are being met in the different substantive segments of home. William, for example, sees his current home as comfortable but only just. William discusses his difficulty in living with family and friends from whom he has a very different lifestyle. To William these difficulties are accepted and home is made comfortable because he has managed to balance his different needs in that home, especially around his preferred substantive categories. One of his home needs is to be around family and support and care for those that are like family (he repeated this throughout the interview and such supporting was mostly seen as positive and important for William). The other need is to save and increase his finances to buy a more comfortable home, which involves for the present, waiting for investments to grow so he can afford a new home. William says,

It is difficult. Well I sort of feel like I am in some ways supporting them both, you know *I am being a support to them both but at the same time it's*

providing me a shelter while I'm waiting for my investments to grow [italics added].

In terms of *ease* Shelly talked about having very particular health related dietary needs. When Shelly leaves the house this becomes more difficult to maintain. It is *easier being* at home as the household is arranged functionally to fit her needs, thus offering Shelly the feeling of comfort. Shane also says, "*I suppose you do have to feel at ease living in a house, home* [italics added] and something could happen to disrupt this." John describes being comfortable as being safe, having no external hassles, being able to relax and wind down in your home. Larry talks about similar ideas when he says, "*Home as a place where you can relax and be yourself, be at ease* [italics added]."

The subcategory of *needs satisfaction* is a crucial sub category within the comfortable code. Each participant has a particular need for fit, balance and ease. Participants have a level of each of these subcategories at which point they will feel satisfied and thus comfortable. Thus needs satisfaction is particularly crucial to feeling comfortable. Felicity indicated that if she had her ideal home she wouldn't change much of what she presently has. She may change some physical aspects of her house. But generally most of her home needs are satisfied there. She is comfortable there. Shane also mentioned a similar idea. His home was comfortable and his home needs were met. However if he came into more money, he said he might consider building a bigger house. He would then move his *home* into that new house.

If a lack of needs satisfaction occurs in an important category the home is particularly vulnerable. Participants also perceived differing amounts of needs that they expected the home to satisfy. While certain categories such as The I/Self and The Spatial Home (privacy) were the most important to Charlotte, she felt like she required a lot of needs to be met from her home. However when her particular favoured substantive category needs were met she felt like all her needs were met. While discussing her I/Self Home and The Spatial Home, she then said,

I am really nesty. *My home has to be just right all the time, in how it feels, everything* [italics added]. But then I am at home most of the time. I study full time here so my life is here, so it is a really important place for me.

Yet while her favoured substantive category home needs were met, her substantive categories were far from being all right in all areas.

According to Mark,

Comfortable is in your head, in how you think about things. You can be comfortable anywhere if you want to. It depends on how you want to live your life and if you are positive you can be comfortable in any type of home [italics added].

According to Mark the lack may just mean there is a bit missing. So *lack* does not necessitate the uncomfortable or devolve a person's sense of home. What matters is how the person is able to frame or understand the lack and how important that particular bit that is missing is. It is this which will make the difference between something feeling comfortable and thus like home or something not feeling comfortable and thus not like home.

John's words help to illustrate this complicated subcategory when he talks about how his feelings towards home changed when he and his wife separated. According to John his wife made his home feel more like a home because, "*Sharing the home means more* [italics added]." However John adapted to this change, this lack and then was able to enjoy his home again because he found fulfilment in other parts of his home. John framed this lack as about a stage of life, rather than about the home. Thus John did not expect all his needs to be met in a home but rather only some of these more crucial needs. He altered the needs which he expected home to fulfil in order to feel more comfortable. Angela also illustrated a similar idea when she talked about not transferring certain feelings about her life onto her actual home, not making the atmosphere of the home suffer.

In this way Mark, John and Angela carried out specific work using The functional aspect of The Present Temporal Home and The Biological/Historicised Home, to protect home, to make it inherently more stable, at a very cognitive level. This is an important idea that I will come back to when discussing the axial categories in the present model of home. Thus needs satisfaction is a crucial and complex subcategory and these prior quotes and paraphrases show the complexity involved. Different participants had different needs that they expected the home to fulfil and different

substantive categories they focussed on. When those particular categories were fulfilled they tended to feel that most of their home needs were met.

It should be clear throughout the prior examples that participants showed individuality as to which substantive categories were preferred by and important to them. Participants were specific over how particular substantive categories were arranged and were not so particular over others. Such preferences were unprompted by the interviewer and the participants fell into their own style of talking and preferred subject matter on home. Participants were selective about which parts of home mattered the most.

To Felicity the most important part of home was The Intimate Home, the family home. For Felicity this meant making the atmosphere comfortable and like a sanctuary for family and close friends to feel at home in. Without family and friends visiting and staying regularly she says, "*It would not be very nice. It would not be a home to me [italics added].*" Later Felicity summed up, "*I think it's a sanctuary [italics added].*" Throughout Felicity's interview she frequently discussed making her Ethereal Home comfortable, like a sanctuary, so family and friends would come to stay more, so The Intimate Home could be the best it could be.

To Michael home was a place of escape from and freedom from the pressures of life. Home was about being able to be in a relaxing atmosphere, in The Ethereal Home substantive category. Without this feeling of successful escape via home it wouldn't feel like home. The Spatial Home was one of the crucial categories for Michael. It enabled him to be himself. It was also a base and provided him with stability. For Michael the most crucial categories however were The Spatial and The I/Self Home.

Mark portrayed a wide and inclusive generality of the parts of home that were important to him. To Mark The Ethereal Home, "*Home is where the heart is [italics added].*" was crucial and repeated throughout much of the interview. For Mark the home was a package that suited not only his I/Self Home but also most of the substantive categories of home. It seemed he had reflected on the meaning and experience of his home frequently. He focussed mostly on The Ethereal and The Biological/Historicised Homes.

Thus finally The Comfortable Habitat is divisible into subcategories of fit; balance or equilibrium; ease; and needs satisfaction. Participants have individual preferences over which substantive categories and subcategories are the most important to them. Within The Comfortable Habitat participants arrange the substantive categories and subcategories to feel comfortable, to feel fitting, balanced, at ease and as though their needs are satisfied. Each participant finds their preferred arrangement of these substantive categories and may find some categories are more important to them than others. Each participant also accepts different levels of comfort and of home being o.k. in these substantive categories. This is not however fixed but instead more fluid and can change throughout the participant's life.

The Not Comfortable (Home?)

While The Comfortable Habitat is a preferred arrangement of segments of participant's lives in the field of home, the Not Comfortable is about this subtle arrangement being upset or inadequate. The Not Comfortable is always followed by a question of the status of the home as home. Often participants described The Comfortable Habitat through The Not Comfortable. The Not Comfortable is thus crucially important to and qualifies The Comfortable Habitat. The Not Comfortable however is not a substantive category within itself. The Not Comfortable is about the participant experiencing degrees of distance from The Comfortable Habitat. Most participants contrasted The Comfortable with The Not Comfortable on multiple occasions prior to prompting in the interview. The following examples show participants using their awareness (not necessarily related to present circumstances) of what is uncomfortable to explain and qualify what is comfortable. Participants used the word uncomfortable and the words not comfortable interchangeably on multiple occasions.

The Uncomfortable is a sense of not fitting, lack of balance of categories, of being unsatisfied or being ill at ease. The following examples show this sense of The Not Comfortable as a sense of *not fitting*. Shelly says when discussing her garden which is important to her,

(The garden)... has to enhance the style of the house, *so the whole things just like one unit, so it's not a jarring feeling when you say this doesn't fit with that. Home has to be a harmonious place, inside and outside with*

nothing jarring because otherwise it's going to be, sort of, uncomfortable
[italics added].

James also talked about this sense of being uncomfortable. James lived in a lower socioeconomic status area in Auckland for short period of time but did not feel like he fitted in. He said he felt like he didn't belong there, that he didn't feel comfortable. He was not in the type of habitat that suited him. He was uncomfortable and thus he moved.

This was also echoed by Mark. Mark would not feel at home if he lived in a place without land or animals, it wouldn't fit how he lives his life. If he lived in the city he couldn't live his life as he does at present. Mark talked about the individuality of what people find comfortable in their living circumstances and what it is like not to feel comfortable. "*A lot of people wouldn't be comfortable in a situation like this,* [italics added] sets you on edge when you can't be comfortable." According to Felicity the opposite of home is "*...being somewhere that your very uncomfortable, well I couldn't live with anyone that, um, people that don't gel with you, gel, yeah* [italics added]."

The home can be uncomfortable *when differing needs are not balanced* or when *needs are unsatisfied*. Shane describes a time when he was uncomfortable in a home because the needs his home met were unbalanced and unsatisfied. He describes when he as an adult, lived with his father. It was years ago when Shane worked night-shifts and went home to sleep in the mornings. His father would however bang on his bedroom door in the morning yelling at him to get out of bed and stop being so lazy. Shane's particular home needs were not balanced satisfactorily and sleep was particularly important of these needs. Shane couldn't meet his need for sleep in that home, nor could he meet a lot of his other needs there. Shane could not find a balance between his more and less preferred home categories nor satisfy his home needs there, thus it did not feel like home.

Shane also provides an example of *being ill at ease* as a feeling of being uncomfortable too. Shane talked about the culture shock of going back to Ireland where he was born. He expected it to feel like home as he was born there and thus to him it should've felt like home yet it didn't. Instead he felt, "*... uncomfortable, like a fish out of water, uneasy feelings* [italics added]." Maria who talked about how she needed to redecorate parts of her home, especially the carpet which was old and threadbare says that if the

work isn't done it is not o.k. The meaning of home is different and feels uncomfortable. She is not at ease with her home.

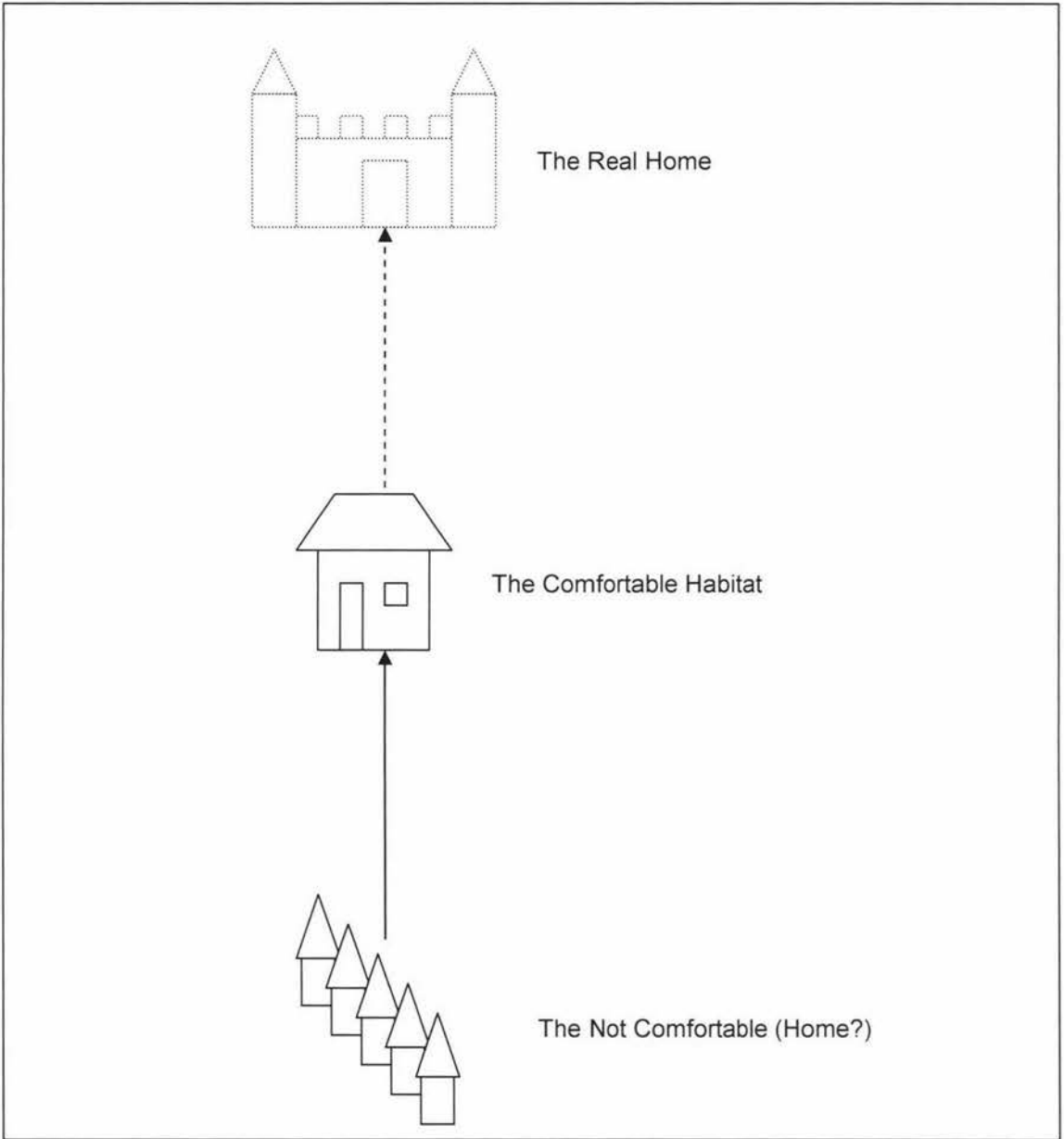
Thus there were multitudes of individual ways participants found comfort or were uncomfortable with their homes. As the dialectic of The Comfortable Habitat, The Not Comfortable manifests with the same subcategories. However it was equally possible for participants to feel uncomfortable and yet experience this in a general, less categorisable and less definable manner. With The Not Comfortable, participants were more likely to talk generally rather than specifically. With The Comfortable Habitat however participants were usually more specific. Though still not all participants were able to verbalise exactly what *comfortable* or *not comfortable* meant. Often participants experienced this as a subtle awareness of their surroundings but could not define the feeling only that it was somehow *alright* or *o.k* or not.

Dialectics, Continuums and the Particular Function of the Substantive Category The Real Home

First, the idea of a dialectic is a useful but slightly imprecise idea here. While The Comfortable Habitat and The Not Comfortable (Home?) are a dialectic, this is not a simple relationship. They are not at opposite ends of a continuum. The Comfortable Habitat is both the midpoint (the equilibrium) and the goal (the end of the continuum) of the home experience. Home is either Comfortable and the home experience is *alright* or *o.k.* for participants or it is Not Comfortable or uncomfortable. The focus of participants was on the mid point, The Comfortable Habitat.

When participants were Not Comfortable, while the home became vulnerable it could still be preserved as home. This depended partly on the level of uncomfortable that the person experienced with home. Thus while lack does not necessarily devolve home it does make it more vulnerable and if a person cannot deal with the important lack, lack can then devolve home. This is the cornerstone of the grounded theory itself which I will introduce and set out shortly. It is important here to qualify that the idea of a dialectic is useful but in other ways imprecise for the current model. Figure 1 follows to visually show the idea of the continuums, which I now turn to discussing.

Figure 1. Continuums of Comfort.



So I will now discuss the continuums. Rather than being one continuum from the top to the bottom point of Figure 1, there are a series of smaller continuums around and between each point. Turning to Figure 1, on the preceding page, will aid this discussion. Starting with the Not Comfortable, this can be experienced in degrees from a slight discomfort to an all pervasive conflict that makes the home intolerable. The following examples describe participants experiencing different degrees or being at different places around the continuum of The Not Comfortable.

Larry provides an example of The Not Comfortable. Larry describes his flatmate as invading his space, his thoughts and who he is. According to Larry his flatmate attempted to explain inappropriately, his motivations, his ideas, what he thought, in short, his subjective self. This led to great discomfort and open conflict. Thus while initially this relationship made him feel uncomfortable threatening his idea of home, this went on to become openly conflicted and thus to him he could not be at home when he was in his own house. The result was that Larry's home was devolved, he was no longer comfortable and he moved away. Larry's experience of the uncomfortable fell at the bottom of Figure 1.

Felicity had a difficult relationship with her ex-husband and her in-laws and moved to the other end of the country to get away from the conflict. In a small town, she says, everybody knows everybody. The conflict thus became all pervasive. Felicity could not feel at home under these circumstances so she moved from her home in a small South Island town to a city in the North Island. This was similar to Larry's experience of a completely uncomfortable home, which no longer felt like home.

Felicity also described a conflict with a female boarder she had, after she had moved homes. The boarder had different ideas about using the space within the home and relationships between house members. The boarder would arrive in Felicity's bedroom in the middle of the night to talk. Felicity did not consider this appropriate behaviour for the level of intimacy expected from a boarder (as opposed to a family member such as her young son). Felicity asked the boarder to leave as Felicity's home had become uncomfortable. This discomfort could be resolved and so the situation fell a little further away from the bottom of Figure 1.

At present Felicity fosters infants as a reimbursed home service. However babies do not create conflict for Felicity if they wake in the night as she expects this behaviour from babies. Felicity expects the different household members to respect different rules about space, depending on who they are, the age of the persons and the level of intimacy accepted by her. With Felicity's fostered babies we have an example of another slightly less uncomfortable situation in which comfort can more easily be maintained. Thus we are moving towards the midpoint on Figure 1.

William says his home is not quite comfortable but not quite uncomfortable. His home is for the present manageable. He says his home is comfortable, "... *like running, working at a stress level that you feel comfortable with* [italics added]". For William the Not Comfortable situation was closer to being comfortable than uncomfortable on Figure 1.

If you recall I said a few pages ago that having an increasingly comfortable home means a participant is also more likely to call their home a Real Home. This leads to the question, what if we are satisfied in all substantive categories, yet we can see the possibility of further comfort and satisfaction? Does this mean the idea of The Comfortable Habitat is somehow always insufficient or limited or constrained by resources? Can home become more of a Real Home if we increase comfort? If The Comfortable Habitat is the goal how can we make sense of this?

The full grounded theory I am about to set out makes sense because while The Comfortable Habitat is the goal, *the meaning of home is a process not an end point*. It is a process that moves, changes, ebbs and flows and is continually worked on, not only on a day to day level but over a person's life as the person's themselves change and grow. Just as The Not Comfortable sits at one end of Figure 1 (and comes in varying degrees) there is also an upper end of the comfortable continuum, The Real Home. Participants were working towards gaining The Real Home. Yet how a participant defines a real home is also a process not an end point. Like the other substantive categories, satisfaction and comfort within each category is personally defined, filled out and experienced. The Real Home was also importantly not actually more real but more ideal to participants. Each participant thus responded personally to societal values regarding how home should be ideally and considered along with this, the appropriate

living arrangements for each life stage. Thus The Real Home assumed a mystical importance.

In Figure 1, The Real Home is in punctuated lines. This is because the actual experience of home always came back to participants finding a position of comfort, with all the substantive categories and The Real Home was only one particular category not the core code. The Real Home is a cultural ideal. Yet The Comfortable Habitat represents a point of engagement with such cultural ideas, where participants assess where they stand in relation to these ideas. While The Real Home is a pivotal achievement for participants it is a mythical achievement because it is changeable, fluid and participants understanding of it over their life courses will change. The Real Home is an ideal image that a participant has of how multiple segments of their lives should function in a particular culture and society. It was not the core of what the participants talked about.

Reintroducing the Word Home

Participants drew on the different uses of the word home in a fluid manner. This often depended on the context of the conversation and could change within the space of only a few sentences. Participant's usage of the word home also depended on the type of home that I, as a researcher was responding to. While there are multiple ways the word home was used, most often participants talked about the home, on any part of the continuum of the word home, as still having a spatial location of a sort. Thus most often participants discussed home as a spatially located building, the common contemporary meaning of the word home.

What participants then did was added to this word what home personally meant to them. As such then, some participants also applied this meaning to other things or places in their lives. That is places that were seen as having similar qualities to home. For Charlotte, Larry and also for Michael, who said that their cars had similar qualities to home, their cars then had the possibility of having the label home transferred onto them. In the case of Michael however he preferred to centralise his definition of the word home to in a house, so this did not occur. To Michael and to Maria home will always be a house. To Felicity home could be in a tent she says. Thus some participants were more likely than others to allow and to experience this crossing over of meaning and thus the

word home onto other things or places. Some participants were more fluid about what a home could be. Other participants had places or things that were *like home* or were secondary homes but still had a preferred Real Home.

However it was also common that if the participant's personal meaning of home was not satisfied, the word home, defined as something more than just a house, was not used. All participants did this to varying degrees. Most participants noted that home occurs in a series of levels of definition. Most participants when defining the word, focused on the home as partly a building though also much more than only a building. The home was seen by people not only as about being comfortable, but it was also a positive idea that participants worked to protect.

Thus in Chapter 4 and in the current chapter while we are talking about a home as a house frequently, we should also be aware that the word home was used in such a way that participants also drew on the process of making the idea of home comfortable. That how the participants used the word home was about their sense of comfort around how that word should be applied. Whether participants used the word home for their house was about being comfortable and feeling like their house was a home. When participant's quotes are used to describe home, the participants were at times speaking about one type of home and most often speaking about more than one type at once.

Part of the process of home, is about this fluid interrelation between the word, the meaning and the experience of home that is subtly going on at all times. How the participants used the word home is about their sense of comfort with language, meaning and experience with not only the home concept but in their more general outlook on life. How the word and the meaning of home play out is part of a process of making The Comfortable Habitat. Home has both a highly cognitive and a highly physical component to it. The current project focussed mostly on the meaning of home. Yet it is important to keep the complexity of the cognitive and the physical and experiential components of home in mind throughout. Thus said it is appropriate to introduce the major axial code.

The Major Axial Code: The Process of Making the Comfortable Habitat

The course of action which binds the relationships between the substantive categories and the core code into a full grounded theory is the basic social process of Making the Comfortable Habitat. In the grounded theory the meaning of home was experienced as a sense of comfort, equilibrium or homeostasis felt within and between the substantive categories in the cognitive and physical habitat. It is when a disparate event or idea enters the home field creating The Not Comfortable that participants became crucially aware of and engaged with their process. This process model of the meaning of home is activated by a current experience of The Not Comfortable, an awareness of ways of making home more comfortable or getting closer to The Real Home. The process of *managing a habitat* and making it feel *comfortable* occurs subtly, though often unnoticed, at all times. As at this point the grounded theory gets more complicated it is appropriate to provide a clear map of where we are and where we are heading. Table 2 thus follows for this purpose.

Table 2

Core and Axial Components of the Full Grounded Theory

Core Code	Subcategories
The Comfortable Habitat.	Fit; balance; ease; needs satisfaction
Major Axial Code	Properties of the Major Axial Code
The Process of Making The Comfortable Habitat	Goal orientated; expected returns; investment, maintenance and defensive, motivations, manoeuvres and orientations; negotiations and tradeoffs
Axial Categories	Subcategories
Adjust to the Environment	Get used to naturally; close eyes; find good reasons; change ones focus; draw on particular substantive categories
Adjust the Environment	Change parts of home; changing parts outside of home; physically insulating the home; and changing homes

The Properties of the Major Axial Code

I have introduced the core code of The Comfortable Habitat and its imprecise dialectic The Not Comfortable. I have discussed that experiencing The Not Comfortable is the main event that activates this process model of the meaning of home. I have also discussed how the process model is activated by participants seeking greater comfort or trying to get closer to The Real Home. In the following section I introduce the properties of the major axial code and then discuss the two important further axial categories. The properties of the major axial code are as follows; goal orientated; with expected returns; investment, maintenance and defensive motivations, manoeuvres and orientations; and lastly negotiations and tradeoffs. I will now discuss these.

Goal Orientated

A property of the major axial code of Making the Comfortable Habitat is that participants were *goal orientated*. It was difficult for participants to feel as if their house was their home if it was not comfortable. Participants were focused on The Comfortable Home. When it was Not Comfortable the participants undertook actions to make the home comfortable. Thus even if the home were not completely comfortable the participants attempt to change some aspect which enables them to think of the home as comfortable even if not everything they want in a home. The participants were focused on this goal of making the home comfortable. Because of this goal home was thought of as a positive experience. Participants did not focus on the negative meanings of home. When home was experienced negatively participants were more likely to use the word house to describe their home. Thus participants were orientated towards the goal of Making The Comfortable Habitat.

Expected Returns

In order to make the home comfortable participants undertook manoeuvres in which there were *expected returns*. The Expected returns were that of increasing comfort, finding The Real Home and decreasing or minimising the uncomfortable. It is important to think of these manoeuvres as ones in which participants were expecting returns because it is the returns that are important. These are not actions simply for the sake of

it. Thus participants were experts at negotiating with their environments for particular effects, for expected returns.

Investment, Maintenance and Defensive Motivations, Manoeuvres and Orientations

Another property of the major axial code is that participant's motivations for altering comfort levels can be further grouped into *investment, maintenance or defensive motivations*, which then lead to subsequent particular *manoeuvres or orientations*.

When the participant's particular motivations are followed by actions I have labelled them manoeuvres. I have used the word orientation for the general focus of participants over time. I discuss these investment, maintenance and defensive motivations as manoeuvres firstly.

Investment manoeuvres are about improving or giving to or adding to the home. Investment manoeuvres are undertaken for many reasons such as change in the meaning of home through increased wealth, changing lifestyles or goals and values. Investment and maintenance manoeuvres are most likely to be about improving upon positives. Maintenance manoeuvres are undertaken when there is no particular threat against or aim to improve home. Instead the participant undertakes a series of actions to keep home the same. If the home is only slightly out of equilibrium and comfort is only minimally threatened then there is only usually maintenance work that needs to be done.

Defensive manoeuvres are about defending, protecting and aggressively re-gaining home, taking back cognitive or environmental comfort. These manoeuvres involve threats to the home. What defensive manoeuvres are used depends on the level of threat that the home is experiencing. If the home is very threatened and barely feels like home (barely comfortable) more aggressive manoeuvres will be used. Defensive motivations can be seen as a response to negatives.

The actions the participants take can be cognitive or/and physical. Home is to an extent, constantly made and remade over a participant's life as they change, evolve and grow. As the participant evolves they continue to search for ways of organising their inner and outer life to find comfort, to form comfortable cognitive and environmental habitats despite these changes. It is the participant's perception of how the environment affects

them and their consequent motivations that are primary to which type of manoeuvre the participant chooses. The same action may be undertaken by different participants with different motivations. These different manoeuvres are about how participants were motivated in the action sequence to interpret, respond to and alter their home environment.

Home is a habitat and consists of a habituated learning. If a person is having constant negative experiences of the idea of home, this can be taken on as home is like. Let me clarify this idea, the habituated experiences of home such as defending constantly against encroaching neighbours, may result in the participant responding in such a way as to defend against the next set of neighbours that moves in, a habituated learning. If the participant constantly has to defend home, the idea of comfort for that participant stands a chance of devolving. However for a participant who is habituated to the struggle of defending home, this habituation through The Biological/Historicised Home may make defensive manoeuvres seem natural. Thus in this case the struggle of defending home becomes an orientation rather a series of manoeuvres, forming part of the participants sense of what is a comfortable cognitive and environmental habitat.

Thus the meaning of home for participants becomes associated with specific types of manoeuvres, such manoeuvres can then become orientations and vice versa and home is recognisable through these. Participants can thus have preferred motivations and manoeuvres, ones that they are habituated to, that they are more comfortable with. These manoeuvres form a building block for what home can mean to people and how they experience and interpret home. In this case the investment, maintenance and defensive motivations are also considered orientations and become part of the meaning of home for participants.

The difference between these motivations, manoeuvres and orientations is thus a matter of how the person perceives their situation and their actions. As these are perceptual motivations the same action could be continually repeated by a participant and yet over time the motivation for that action could change. So what could initially be seen by a participant as a series of defensive manoeuvres over the meaning of home, over time could become a defensive orientation and yet could later be cognitively reframed and then experienced in a different way, as an investment orientation towards the meaning

of home perhaps. Over time, motivations, manoeuvres and orientations change, the meaning of home over a participant's life experiences subtle and slow shifts. However these perceptions and actions are a crucial property of the major axial code.

Negotiations and Tradeoffs

Another property of the major axial code of Making the Comfortable Habitat is that this involves a series of *negotiations* and *tradeoffs* to maximise comfort and minimise what is uncomfortable. A negotiation, for the purpose of the present study, is a process whereby participants consider the results of their actions and possible actions and work the environment in particular ways to gain particular effects. A trade-off is a type of negotiation whereby one thing is sacrificed to some degree to increase another thing, or in this case a substantive area. We can consider the actions that participants undertake to make home comfortable as negotiations of varying types. Tradeoffs are the most frequently used type of negotiation.

The ideas of the subcategories balance and satisfaction of needs (of The Comfortable Habitat) are brought to the fore here. Negotiations are frequently a way of balancing needs or thinking about and measuring what will be accepted as tradeoffs in order to have other needs met. The idea of negotiation involves energetic involvement towards gaining balance as the part of the goal of having a Comfortable Habitat. Negotiations are a property of the action orientation of the axial code, whereas the idea of balance is part of the substantive goal hoped to achieve.

As this model is getting more complex I will bring in some examples. William talked about being in his current home, which involves a series of complicated negotiations, whereby he balances his different needs. William discusses his needs and how he has balanced which crucial needs are met on pages 75-76 of Chapter 4. Thus the idea of a negotiation here shows up through the core code subcategory of balance. In this particular speech he says that although his current home is not ideal, it allows him shelter while he saves for a better home. William, when negotiating how he balances his needs with his environment, goes on to say about his home,

Yes this is my home, but I don't intend to be here forever. *I'm committed to being here for a variety of reasons which are, that financially he* (Williams

brother) would find it very difficult to survive if I left, that's quite a big emotional pull on me. I'm very committed to him. I want him to be happy. The other thing too is that the houses have gone up 30% a year and I have not kept up in terms of my investments at 30% a year and so I've had various opportunities to move out but I've thought well I could better myself through investing and then I could get a better home [italics added].

Mark discusses his partner moving in with him. He says that you lose parts of privacy, but then you gain in other ways by having someone to share your life with. He is not only balancing which needs are met to a comfortable level but also negotiating with his environment to achieve this.

Angela discusses that her home is not ideal for her and talks about the idea of a trade-off. If she was not a suburban housewife, as she calls her position, her life stage, she would not be living in the particular area she lives in. However her area, her local community is good for her children. There are beaches and schools nearby. The children have a lot of local friends. There are shops nearby, everything they need. However she says she is a Labour voter and it is a National voting area and she doesn't feel that she personally fits in with the political opinions and values of the people in the community. For Angela the community is an important part of home, yet she negotiates and makes a trade-off between what she and her children need in terms of home.

William also discusses a negotiation which is more specifically a trade-off. William has to travel to the opposite side of the city each day to where he works. In a more comfortable situation he would live closer to work. The home he aims to buy will be perhaps in the central city. However because he lives cheaply he can invest his money in order to save to get a more comfortable home. Thus while his present home is not completely comfortable his aim is to save to get a better home in the future. He says, "*It's a trade-off, you know like it may be costing me money to get over to, you know Howick, but in the last week I've made \$10 000 sort of thing* [italics added]."

Tradeoffs can be over any aspects of home. Tradeoffs between parts of dialectics such as privacy as opposed to intimacy or stability, as opposed to change were mentioned often by participants. The balancing of substantive categories as tradeoffs dependent on

the participant's available resources and financial situation was also a commonly mentioned theme. A participant may find a category of the meaning of home is not satisfactory to them. However they may accept this as a trade-off to maintain other important parts of the meaning of home. This is especially the case, if changing the less acceptable part will involve substantial change to a more important dimension. Thus the participant makes a trade-off between differing parts of home in order to maintain a particular arrangement that feels the most comfortable for that participant. So participants were involved in maximising their level of comfort via a constant process of negotiating and making tradeoffs between how the segments of their homes were functioning.

It is important to qualify that while this theory asserts that people are constantly monitoring and negotiating the fit of their meaning of home with their environmental feedback and assessing the manifestation of their home ideas, participants were not necessarily aware of this process going on. It was frequently rather a subtle instinctive awareness of embodied experience. The experience of homeostasis or equilibrium of temperature the human body keeps up in order to function, is a similar idea. While at times participants were aware of and actively thinking about ways to negotiate with their environment, it was not always a cognitive monitoring, but often a subtle part of human experience and an engagement with living.

Further Axial Categories

While the major axial code is the process of making the home comfortable, responses to this are divisible into two main categories which are *Adjusting to the Environment* and *Adjusting the Environment*. I will now discuss these two main axial categories.

Adjusting to the Environment

Adjusting to the environment is a common axial category and strategy used by participants to make The Comfortable Habitat. All participants mentioned ideas which fitted into this category. This category manifests with several subcategories which are; to get used to and become habituated to the environment naturally; close ones eyes; find good reasons; to change focus; and lastly to draw on particular substantive categories.

In terms of Adjusting to the Environment participants can adapt to, that is *get used to and become habituated to the environment naturally*. That is described by Lisa who when younger used to go to Whangarei and Dargaville for her holidays. These places were not home but after a while they felt like home. They did not have the same Auckland Friday night feel she says, but “... *you adapt, change to the environment and come to know it* [italics added].” Felicity also says that if you stay in a place longer it feels more like home, “... *you get to like it and adjust. You get to know it* [italics added].”

John talked about new furniture in a home, representing something different, something not quite home, and how new furniture gradually becomes part of home as a person adjusts to this change in the home environment. “*New furniture doesn't feel like part of your house but you start to feel comfortable with it, wear a groove into it, fit into it better, then it becomes yours. You start to lounge on it more then* [italics added].”

Michael says about the experience of moving houses and how the new house gradually becomes home,

The mind grows to accept it. When you move into a new place it's always scary but after a few months your concepts and ideas, and you're used to your environment and the familiarity and the regularity of the different things around you [italics added].

In Adjusting to the Environment, participants describe themselves becoming habituated to it, in that they know what it is and how it functions, they learn to work their environment and know what they can expect from the environment. Thus part of the process of making home comfortable is about maintaining a habitat and the process of becoming habituated or adapted to a certain type of home.

In Adjusting to the Environment another response is to *close ones eyes*. William describes this as he talks about his garden “I have a binge or a battle with the garden when I want to keep Michael happy. *I've tried and I've tried but he doesn't do it the way that I do it, so it doesn't work* [italics added].” So his response is to close his eyes and ignore that part of the home. He cannot maintain a Comfortable Habitat in that part of his home, so he describes ignoring this aspect. Shelly also discusses how she often does not have enough money to fix or change the house how she wants. One of her

responses to this is to "... *close my eyes and ignore it* [italics added]." Maria also discusses the carpet in her house which is old and threadbare in places. It is a huge job to re carpet the house and they have other work on their home that they need to take care of. Maria thus describes how the family ignores and closes their eyes to the carpet.

Another strategy participants used was to find *good reasons* to negotiate temporary discomfort. An example of this action is by Shane, from an extended part of a speech I introduced on page 80 of the present chapter. Shane was discussing his lack of comfort and how he felt like a fish out of water when returning to his prior home of Ireland. Shane suggests that for people who are travelling, that they have very good reasons for the travel or they are more likely to *not cope* with the possible experiences of culture shock, to feel uncomfortable.

William also expresses this response to being less comfortable than preferred when he discusses his good reasons for being in his present home. He lives there cheaply, so he can save money and wait to invest in a lucrative business opportunity to increase his home investment potential. Thus his home was made comfortable because of his goals for the future, saving for a better home. Thus being comfortable sometimes involves sacrifice and a multitude of parts to arrange and finding good reasons to negotiate temporary discomfort, is important for a person's sense of overall comfort.

The next subcategory is that of *changing ones focus*. This is a complex subcategory in which participants reframe how they had previously thought of a part of home. While William uses good reasons to negotiate temporary discomfort at home, he also reframes this discomfort, to maintain a positive outlook on home thus changing his focus. William lives with Michael, who does not get along with their sisters. For William this means that his relationship with his sisters, is somewhat stunted or not allowed to evolve how he would like. However instead of feeling as if this conflict is devolving the idea of home or how he would like home to be, he changes his focus and reframes this positively as meaning, "*The extended family, everyone can get on with their life* [italics added]." To William this then means that he, his brother and his sisters each have the freedom to live how they choose.

Shelly discusses living by herself on a small block of land and having limited time, finances and knowledge as to how to fix things that break down, or to keep up with the work the property needs done on it and thus maintain it. After much discussion on the difficulty of this she then reframes it as a challenge. Thus she adjusts her choice of focus from the negative experience of not being able to manage the property herself to the positive experience of successfully coping and being able to achieve things she never thought she could do by herself.

Reframing may appear as if the participant is denying something or justifying a self deception. However this is not the case at all. The idea of reframing makes sense through drawing on social constructionist ideas where a single reality is not fixed and stable. Reframing as denying or pretending, indicates having a position in relation to what home is or should be. Without this ideal, stable meaning, a stable position on what home is then it would not be considered a reframe. Thus in a social constructionist manner, where this is no single reality, the idea of a reframe is instead a change of focus as the participant values a different perceptual lens. William explained this when he discussed that adjusting to his home in this manner was defiantly not about reframing reality in some self deceptive way, but rather looking at his situation taking into account the bigger picture, seeing in another way.

In terms of the prior subcategory a related subcategory is to *draw on particular substantive categories* to deal with the lack of comfort. William also reframes his lack of comfort with his current home into something more comfortable, by drawing on specific parts of his identity, his I/Self Home, that he is a caring and creative person. He says that perhaps his creativity means he can, in an artistic rather than a dysfunctional sense, dissociate various parts of himself and live in this, at times, difficult environment.

Being able to draw on or frame ones life according to The Biological/Historicised Home was also mentioned by several participants. Drawing on this substantive category appeared to enhance a connection to the home. It enhanced the sense of stability, base and rootedness for participants. It also enhanced the participant's sense of I/Self in connection to the home. Felicity talked about how her home, being the way it is, is because of her personality and how she was brought up, nature and nurture. She drew on this sense of time, of her personal history to explain how and why she created her

home as she did. Thus using this category she enhanced both her I/Self and her connection to her home through this substantive category. Frequently when participants were able to take a sense of narrative time into their experience of home, in any way, they expressed that they felt close to and very connected to their home.

In this way being able to draw on particular categories cognitively was negotiated by participants for certain effects that would help make a more Comfortable Habitat. This particular axial subcategory is perhaps one of the more complex but frequently used strategies of this axial category. This subcategory also appears again with a different title in a slightly different form in the second and following axial category.

Thus the category of Adjusting to the Environment is an important part of how participants undertake the process of Making The Comfortable Habitat. Often a participant may be involved in several of these strategies at any given time. The category of Adjusting to the Environment manifests with several subcategories which are; to get used to and become habituated to the environment naturally; closing ones eyes; finding good reasons; changing ones focus and lastly; drawing on particular substantive categories.

Adjusting the Environment

All participants mentioned responses which fitted into this axial category. This means that participants responded to a lack of comfort, by changing something in their environment rather than as with the prior category, where the participants focussed on changing the way they thought of or felt about their environment. Thus this category involves a particularly physical response to a lack of comfort. This category manifests with several subcategories which are; to change parts of home; to change things outside the home to affect the home; to physically insulate the home; and to change homes. In terms of responses involving adjusting the environment, this may mean *to change parts of home*. Lisa lives on a farm and considers the land part of her home. To her, home is hard work, with lots of jobs to do. Her work includes both the more mundane usual jobs around the house and the extra jobs, including renovating, around the house and farm. Lisa says,

You want your house to be like your palace of how you want it and how you perceive it and you'll do anything to get it that way. So, yep, that's why there's endless work. *You know, like putting the fences up so the horses don't run away, or I don't like the colour of the house, let's paint it ... you always make more jobs for yourself* [italics added].

Maria also described how the family painted the house as it was no longer comfortable. Larry described closing doors when his flatmate was home as she intruded on his space too much. Thus with this strategy participants adjust the physical aspects, both small and large, within their home to make it more comfortable for them.

A smaller number of participants mentioned strategies in which they *changed parts of their lives outside the home in order to make the home more comfortable*. This strategy is discussed by Malachi as he talks about what he wants in a home. Malachi is moving homes shortly, because he finds his flatmates difficult to live with and thus the home has become increasingly uncomfortable. Malachi is looking for a new home close to work as he gets tired and stressed by driving everywhere in Auckland. While he wants a home close to work to minimise his driving distance, he also arranges his work (he owns his own business) in such a way that he can bring work home more frequently, so he doesn't have to travel as much. This consequently means he gets more time at home, is able to enjoy it more and have more time to use his home how he wants. He is also less tired and stressed. Thus he arranges his outside life to make his home more comfortable.

Another subcategory that several participants mentioned was about *physically insulating the home*. This may consist of changing parts outside the home to make the home more comfortable as in the previous axial subcategory. Yet this may also consist of changing parts inside the home to make the home more comfortable. This axial subcategory is similar to the axial subcategory *drawing on particular substantive categories* discussed in the prior axial category on pages 97-98. When participants insulate themselves within the home they, draw on particular substantive categories to affect the home experience positively, thus physically insulating their meaning and experience of home. While the former subcategory, *drawing on particular substantive categories*, occurred in a particularly cognitive manner, the current subcategory involves a more physical experience. The present subcategory has a particular sense of insulating, withdrawing

and keeping the meaning of home safe. The others subcategories do not have this same sense of withdrawing which characterises this particular subcategory.

In this manner Larry drew on The Spatial Home to give him a greater sense of privacy for his I/Self Home. While he did not need a particularly special amount of space, he wanted to be able to be himself in his home. He insulated himself from a flatmate who was particularly difficult to live with by spending more time in his bedroom, rather than in the communal spaces of the home. Larry also attempted to meet more needs outside the home. He created a more spatially distributed home to insulate his sense of I/Self Home. However for Larry this was not enough to protect his sense of home, to retain his sense of comfort, that his meaning of home also matched his experience of home and that his home was what he wanted it to be.

When Charlotte had an increasingly difficult situation with her neighbours she responded by closing her curtains more during the day and by planting trees to block her neighbours out. Charlotte did not want to move homes, however she had no privacy and the neighbours seemed to be taking more and more space. She couldn't stand inside her front door, behind the net curtains without her neighbours watching her and calling out. Thus she withdrew more into the house rather than the section and closed off her house to the neighbours, thus insulating her meaning of home which was about privacy and space.

The final subcategory in this axial code is that of *changing homes*. All participants mentioned this strategy for Making the Comfortable Habitat. James said that if his neighbourhood deteriorated, specifically if some people with big dogs that they wouldn't look after properly, moved close by to him, he would consider moving. He said that if the dog wandered and his life with his own dog, who was a particularly important companion for him, was threatened he would get angry at the owner. If the owner refused to look after their dog and keep it under control and started abusing him when he stood up for his property then he would have to leave as they would end up in a fight and then he would get depressed and angry and he couldn't live that way. Larry described his experience of complete discomfort within his home and how in the end it was so uncomfortable, moving was the only solution. Malachi also described how he was looking for a new home because his flatmate tried to control everyone in the house

and he couldn't even cook in the kitchen without her putting away his cooking ingredients if he left the kitchen for a minute.

Thus changing homes is most likely the response when a person experiences discomfort (or conflict), engages in defensive manoeuvres to no avail, the area of discomfort is in crucial codes for that person and the other axial strategies have been tried to no avail. An example of this latter response could be that changing ones focus could involve too much change to crucial substantive categories, staying in the home would mean changing who a person is and the meaning of home completely. Thus the participant would stand the chance of adapting to an environment that would change their lives in non acceptable and uncomfortable ways. Thus while the main axial categories and subcategories are potential resources the participants may use to make The Comfortable Habitat, at times the only comfortable resource left for participants was to change homes.

Thus the axial category of Adjusting the Environment manifests with several subcategories. These strategies are drawn on as participants strive to Make a Comfortable Habitat using their available resources to maximum effect. Summarising the aforementioned subcategories, these are; to change parts of home; to change things outside the home to affect the home; to physically insulate the home; and lastly to change homes.

The type of strategies the participant undertakes to make The Comfortable Habitat depends on which category is in need of improvement, what the reason for the lack of comfort is, what resources and responses are available for the participant, their habitual forms of responding and what type of habitat they prefer. While both Angela and Felicity experienced difficult relationships with their ex husbands and had few workable strategies to make their homes comfortable, they had different resources available to deal with their situations. Angela's ex husband went overseas and was not heard from again. Between the couple they had two homes so the lack of comfort did not need to involve a change of homes for Angela. For Felicity however, the only resource available for her to make a comfortable home involved moving far away from both the ex husband and difficult relationships with her in-laws. Thus the way participants respond

to their lack of comfort depends on the degree of the lack of comfort, the categories the ill-fit occurred in and in the above examples the resources they had to deal with this.

There are a multitude of ideas, environmental influences and information that people are responding to, juggling and settling with daily, people do not always engage with all of this input when seeking comfort. With home, within the physical aspect, participants appeared to want more comfort than was necessary in the other sites of their lives. Realistically because of the constant input of information in most places, comfort is not always possible. However home is a place, which due to its nature of belonging to a few people rather than being a public space, people have a better chance of finding and making comfort in.

It is also important to bear in mind that the substantive categories do not exist in isolation. The Present Temporal Home is linked to the Spatial Home because we live our daily lives in space. The I/Self Home is linked to the Present Temporal Home because who a person is, is connected with what they do and what a person does is connected with the type of home they need to match their life activities and so on. These are never isolated categories. As William outlined concisely for me, the meaning of home is experiential. Thus the codes and categories constantly entwine in complex ways.

So to conclude this chapter have participants been talking about the meaning of home or the meaning of their lives? Are these just segments of peoples lives unrelated to home? When discussing the meaning of home first via the associations participants wrote on their mind maps, I asked, "Is this (asking about each specific association) connected with the meaning of home for you?" Most often associations were about the participant's meaningful and experiential lives to do with home. Home was also the one space and place participants needed comfort above all else. Are these substantive categories just segments of people's lives? For participants, some segments of their lives were more important than others, their priorities were maybe work, education, children, fun and entertainment, travel or saving for retirement. Participants had preferred substantive categories in their lives that they focused on, made comfortable and so with home. So yes these are segments of people's lives and home is a part of people's lives and what is important to them in their lives plays out with their meaning

of home. So we are talking about both the meaning of home and the meaning of participants lives. Home is a cognitive, physical and experiential process that is inseparable from the participants fully experienced life. Home is about *being* comfortable. An important part of this is *having* and *making* a comfortable cognitive and environmental habitat.

CHAPTER SIX

Conversing with Context: Discussion

This chapter contextualises the present research. First I briefly summarise the findings of the present research. I then discuss how the present research fits with the current state of home research. Subsequently I bring in relevant ideas from sub disciplines in psychology, other than exclusively environmental psychology to discuss the inherent implications of the present representation. At that point I focus largely on the work of Israel (2003). After that I move into discussing the larger theories that the present study fits with. I discuss the biases and limitations intrinsic to this project. I then conclude with discussing the specific contributions of the present research and offering suggestions for future research.

Summary

The aim of the present research was to explore the meanings of home. I also looked at what the word home meant to participants in order to complement this understanding. I discovered that the word home has multiple descriptions. Most often however the word home was used to mean a house that participants currently lived in. It also appeared that most participants considered home spatially, defined in terms of the small/close spaces or larger areas. Thus I ordered the participants ideas into meaningful points along a continuum of space, which started from home as a bedroom or small part of the physical space of the house, towards the largest category of home as country of residence, or in the case of one participant's reflections planet Earth.

Participants also defined and described home along a continuum from home as the physical house, towards home as something more subjective. There were five main meaningful points along this continuum, these were; home as a house; a house or place that we live and dwell in; home in terms of emotional attachment or affection for place or other; something within people that they then place in a house or a space; or a cognitive and abstract idea. The definition of the word home was entwined with the meaning of home. If a participant's meaning of home was not satisfied, they were less likely to use the word home even in the most basic depiction as their house of residence.

This part of the research developed into a taxonomy that added flexibility to the thematic, essential and core meanings of home discovered.

I arranged the thematic meanings of home elicited from participants into substantive categories. The substantive categories were; The I/Self Home; The Intimate Home; The Spatial Home; The Biological/Historicised Home; The Base Home; The Present Temporal Home; The Ethereal Home; The Stable Home and The Real Home. The essential and core meaning of home was The Comfortable Habitat. This meant being comfortable, having ones substantive categories in order and being content with how they play out in the home, which formed a preferred cognitive and environmental habitat. The Comfortable Habitat was an integrative experience, which, when felt, included having ones definitions of the word home satisfied in their life as well. The major axial code was; Making the Comfortable Habitat. This code consisted of two main categories, or strategies through which participants made The Comfortable Habitat. The two main axial categories discovered were; Adjusting to the Environment and Adjusting the Environment.

An important element of the research, posed in the introduction, was also to discover what home meant specifically for New Zealand people. Was home about material possessions and the expression of monetary wealth? Far from participants desiring perfect architecturally designed homes, participants instead dialogued with contemporary socio-cultural values and expectations, accepting some values and not others. Participants expressing attachments to material objects framed these as about their preferred substantive categories. Material possessions were most often valued by participants because they represented connections with people, events, memories or the functionality of participant's homes. Participants found a place of comfort in relation to their idea of a Real Home rather than simply accepting contemporary socio-cultural definitions of what a Real Home is.

Discussion

The present research encountered a lot of ideas that were represented as core to other studies on home. Many of these ideas however did not appear central for the present research. To list the similarities and differences between the many home studies would take much time and space, yet it would always be incomplete. Thus the following discussion focuses on home research that resonates most with the present findings. I focus on the meanings of home rather than the word home, as this is where participants mostly focussed. Yet first, I bring Douglas (1991) to the fore, who says that it is very difficult to consider home without situating it in some kind of space. I found this to be the case, as participants were constantly referring to their physical, spatial homes that were also embedded with meaning for them. Hollander (1991) says that home as such radiates outward, from home as self and body, towards the home as planet earth. This too resonated very closely with much that participants talked about when defining the word home.

Tuan's (1980) ideas about rootedness also resonate with the present research findings. The present research suggested that as people reside in a place for lengthier periods, moulding their environment to suit their needs, their connection to their home grows. Shelly provided a strong example as she had undergone many major life experiences while residing in her current home. Adjusting to these and adjusting her home to suit her changing needs, it came to hold more of her life and comfort. Remaining in the same home throughout such life events and framing these as natural, by drawing on The Biological/Historicised Home also facilitated people's connection to their homes. Tuan suggests similar such ideas, including that such deep connections might be part of a lost paradise and time. Yet several participants in the present research did suggest that the environment offered such companionship, support and strength. I represented this sense of deep connection through The Base Home, The Biological/Historicised Home, The Stable Home and The Ethereal Home.

Dupuis and Thorns (1998) found that for elderly people, the intergenerational home was a source of ontological security. Dupuis and Thorns suggested that the younger generation may not consider home in this manner. The participants in the present study were between the ages of 30 and 57 so such results were not testable. However for most

participants, family and close relationships were an essential part of home and ontological security. For some participants this occurred through an intergenerational home, yet it was also frequently distributed over a multitude of different spaces.

Participants also made their homes in belief systems, interests and goals and within the spaces and places these occurred. Williams's home for example was a future home providing a haven for his artistic interests. William was living in his intergenerational family home, yet he felt more connected with the home he had yet to buy. Thus while the present research resounds with the findings of Dupuis and Thorns (1998), the people and the spaces and places that make home feel ontologically secure, may be altering in contemporary society.

Frequently general theories of psychology stress that childhood conditioning creates adult's personalities and guides their responses to the events that happen in their lives. Personality and habituated perceptions also manifest in how a person uses and moves through space and time in a habitual manner. Thus the present research implies that we may be transferring prior cognitive habitats, ways of perceiving and responding to our environments, onto new environments and recreating by habit, prior homes.

Yet Rose (1996) discusses how our lives have been invaded by ideas from the *psy* disciplines. Such *psy* ideas guide our attitudes and our perceptions of self, biography, individuality, normality, health and so on. *Psy* ideas are like socio-cultural and historically valued lenses. The *psy* complex is one of several disciplinary procedures and technologies concerned with subjectivity that monitor and control citizens (Rose, 1996; Hook, 2003; Foucault, 1982). Personality developing in a stable and consistent manner over a person's life, is also such a socio-cultural lens. The sub discipline of critical psychology encourages researchers to question accepted knowledge, as does phenomenology and grounded theory. For the present study, putting aside *psy* ideas meant questioning my own perceptions and interpretations of the data.

The *psy* complex is fostered by a tendency to focus on control, stability and consistency rather than the opposite. Participants in the present study frequently said, that their meaning of home had been stable, consistent and had developed predictably throughout their lives. Several participants noted that home had always meant the same, yet they

now come to know what this means more, or that they were the only ones who had influenced what home meant for them. Putting aside psy ideas meant that I was able to hear other participants who, even while favouring consistency or seeing a stable storyline, noted how events or life stages could and had changed their meaning of home dramatically.

The level of stability and consistency or lack thereof, perceived by participants appeared to be mostly about the participant's focus. For participants to whom The Stable Home was a preferred category they may be more likely to interpret their home within a stable and consistent storyline. Each participant may have a balance of stability or change that they are comfortable with. If this balance tips they may seek a way of re-establishing their equilibrium. Participants can also rewrite these stories and the storylines explored may also depend upon how they can comfortably fit into a particular conversation. From a social constructionist perspective, people construct *versions of reality* through language and conversation (Burr, 2003). The interview process itself then affects participant's choices over stories to tell. In Israel's (2003), research on environmental autobiography, stability, consistency and the necessary control exercised over the environment to maintain such stable storylines about personality and home is presupposed. This does little to foster the idea of an evolving, fluid, selfhood, of human agency or of an evolving sense of home. It does however resound of psy structures.

Thus in the present research the implications of questioning my psy interpretations, meant that I discovered both stable and consistent comfortable habitats and changing ones as well. The Comfortable Habitat was not limited to being only about homes that feel natural and comfortable like ones childhood home. It rather represented a process whereby participants continually create and recreate the meaning and the experience of self and home throughout their lives. This was negotiated with the practicalities and actualities of living life in multiple substantive areas. This sense of engagement with and process in the meaning of home was not represented in the theory of environmental autobiography.

Helen provides an integrative example of many of the preceding ideas, including those about the fluidity of the meanings of home. Helen, in a moment of reflection when interviewed discovered that she didn't have a home. She felt this because her current

physical home did not match her meaning of home, an idealised childhood home with a warm loving family, a cosy fireplace and aromatic smells of constant baking from the kitchen. Her present home however is unlive in, sparse and although Helen had boarders, it was also frequently without close companionship. To Helen this suddenly indicated to her that she lacked a Real Home. It also indicated a lack of a consistent, stable story.

Helen then reinterpreted this, suggesting that her childhood home became a façade after her mother had passed away and her father became abusive. Joining her story I could suggest that by using the spatially distributed home, Helen drew on an essential coping strategy that kept her safe from abuse as a child. In adulthood her physical home was also a façade, as she lived out her idealised home elsewhere. This of course presupposes that there is a consistent storied version for how we are with our homes and in our relationships.

Yet Helen is divorced, not in a romantic relationship, her grown children do not live nearby and thus it is less possible in contemporary Pakeha culture for Helen to live according to her ideal Comfortable Habitat. Her home habitat, spatially distributed to solve resource issues was comfortable. She was not living in a façade. Helen works in the café at her local bible college. She studies there part time and finds close companionship there. Where Helen's home manifested was fluid throughout her life. Experiencing home in this new manner can lead to further habituation and thus what home means and how this manifests, may come to change over time. The stories we tell about our homes are fluid showing both stability and change.

Home thus consists of segments of participants lives made comfortable through many different spaces and places. Participant's cognitive habitats provide limitations around the niche they will feel comfortable in. While home is a primary site for living our lives the spatially distributed home is perhaps becoming more common in contemporary Pakeha culture. The present studies conclusions, find support from and reciprocally resonate with the theory of environmental autobiography. However the present study also expands this, by the discovery of much fluidity around the idea of home and by placing this in the contemporary New Zealand context.

Snow (2004) says that the urge to remodel one's home environment is instinctually bound. Snow suggests that remodelling home, occurs in a person's life when they begin to search for a more self expressive home experience. Snow focuses mostly on the physical aspects of the *habitat* yet suggests much more is involved. The present research found that this sense of adjusting and altering the environment was essential for many participants.

Now I will turn to the larger theories that the present research fits with. The *narrative perspective* is a social constructionist view, suggesting that people construct self stories from the available discourses and stories within a socio-cultural and historical environment. A person's identity, experiences and lives are created and become meaningful from these discourses (Nicholl, 1999). One particular resonating narrative idea is that of the personal *niche*. As McLeod (2004, p. 357) says "Just as organisms evolve their own niche within an ecological system, people are faced with the task of constructing niches within the social ecology that confronts them". According to McLeod we are also always acting within and positioned by such social discourses. Thus the idea of the comfortable cognitive and environmental habitat resounds with the idea of the personal niche. This niche is complex and multifaceted for cognitive, social and tool appropriating animals such as ourselves.

The fit of a person's characteristics including their values, preferences, skills and abilities with those of the environment has been conceptualised in the theory of *person environment fit* (Cable & Edwards, 2004). When a person fits with their environment they are likely to feel less strained, more satisfied and consequently perform better (Pervin, 1968). This theory has been mostly used in industrial and organisational psychology. Yet this sense of satisfaction and fit a person may have with their environment resounds with the core code, The Comfortable Habitat in the present research.

Person environment fit theory has evolved over time and follows two main directions. Complementary fit means that the person and environment each provides what the other needs. Supplementary fit means that the person and the environment have matching qualities. Thus the first branch is about need satisfaction and the second is about similarity of values (Cable & Edwards, 2004). The elements of fit can also be defined

objectively or subjectively (Roberts & Robins, 2004; Caplan, 1987). Murray (1938) as cited in Roberts and Robins (2004) coined the term *beta fit* to describe the fit between the person's subjective evaluations of both the self and the environments available resources. Lofquist and Dawis (1991) cited in Roberts and Robins (2004) found that altered fit can happen from either changing the self or perceptions or through changing the environment. Person environment fit resonates in many ways with the present research findings.

Bourdieu (1990) intended to create a practical theory bridging subjectivist and objectivist theoretical orientations. His work is also partly social constructionist thus it is a useful model as it shares similarities with the present research's complicated epistemological backbones. Bourdieu's (1990) theory offers the idea of the *habitus*. Habitus are "... systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations...." (p. 53). The habitus are historical and socio-cultural structures that situate people within a society, guide how they think about knowledge and reality, and how they perceive and organise their lives in time and space. The habitus are historical artefacts generating social practices.

According to Bourdieu (1990) people also construct a personal habitus through their past experiences which effects their interpretation of new experiences. The personal habitus functions much like the concept of schemata, cognitive structures for organising and responding to situations occurring in the environment. Thus this resonates with the present research discovery of a cognitive habitat around the meaning of home or in Bourdieu's language perhaps a habitus for the field of home. The larger and the more personal habitus of course are not separate but are an interconnected whole. According to Bourdieu these habitus do not limit nor completely determine the potential for experiences. They are bendable and can change through time. The idea of habitus contains within it a balance of the ideas of stability and change within people and historical periods. Cognitive habitats evolve through time as people change and learn new ways of working their environment for particular effects. Thus the present research resonates deeply with Bourdieu's habitus and I draw on this theory for support.

Finally it is appropriate to return to the present research's phenomenological foundations to discuss support for the grounded theory discovered. The idea of the phenomenological *life world* is also relevant with one specific conceptualisation resonating particularly. Ashworth (2003) lists seven segments of the life world. These are; the self (identity), the social aspect, embodiment, temporality (including time and biography), the spatial aspect, project and discourse. These segments are not isolated segments but rather are interconnected parts of person's lives. Ashworth's segments are similar to several of the substantive categories in the present research. While Ashworth says there may be other segments discoverable and these are not ontologically based, the same can be said for the present research. The main difference being that the present research places these categories into a full explanatory and process orientated theory.

Taking on board the larger theories the present research fits with it would seem that home can be conceived of; in the present research as a comfortable cognitive and physical habitat, as an instinctually bound process, as a particular thematic narrative that a person constructs, as person environment fit, a schema of perception, a habitus in the field of home or a life-world. Participants may have multiple fields (home as only one field) and a more overarching individual pattern of the importance of how these fit together. Such ideas take the present studies conclusions into the more abstract realm and open up many possibilities for interpretation. But before concluding and discussing future research I now turn to the biases and limitations of the present representation.

Biases and Limitations

There are multiple biases and limitations within the present research. Firstly the present research was guided by particular epistemologies, a theoretical framework and a methodology. When creating a grounded theory and having a guiding theoretical framework, the latter can influence the resultant theory. In the present research for example the idea of the cognitive habitat was discovered, yet this maps onto the idea of the phenomenological life world. Did I discover this or simply apply a well known phenomenological concept? I was hoping to create a flexible theory that accounted for people's similarities and differences. Yet this intention promotes a bias. According to Moore (2003) much past home research is lists of meanings without explanation of how the list pieces relate to each other. The present research is more than a set of isolated list

parts. Yet grounded theory methodology prescribes sorting data into substantive categories, a core code and an explanatory theory of how these fit together. Thus I was necessarily going to discover a list or categories similar to life world components and an theory explaining how these fit together.

Was I inappropriately constricting 15 individual stories to fit into one theory? The study consists of only 15 participants, some from my own immediate social circle. Several participants were perhaps similar to me, others may have responded to what they knew or had heard about me through the snowballing procedure. The participants may have thus been positioning themselves according to what they thought I valued about home. Yet even if I was a complete stranger, the participants could still have been positioning themselves accordingly. Knowing some of the participants meant they were able to feel more comfortable when correcting me, if I summarized their ideas back inadequately. I could also have been presupposing their opinions, so I had to make sure of what they were really saying and that it was captured on the audiotapes, rather than just assumed.

My position as a single parent through much of the research could have led me to focus on The Stable Home, a personal concern, to an increased degree. Yet the Stable home did not become the core code. Had I not been aware of this bias within myself I could have easily interpreted the core code as about having stability. Yet perhaps my change in position (I am now a two parent family) may account for my seeing fluidity, both stability and change as a crucial contribution of this research. Core code or not, was that really an important contribution of the present research or perhaps part of my change of life circumstances and perspective. My home and my base for looking out at the world had changed.

Another time I was sure that participants were obsessed with what home meant and being meaning makers. Yet participants were making meaning for me. They were involved in their process of being, having and making the comfortable habitat. It was only occasionally that there were thinking about what it meant, trying to put their homes into the framework of their stories and lives.

These are some suggested biases and limitations to the generalisability of the results. However in a grounded theory the result gained is about valuing the participant's voices

and the discoveries made rather than what was not discovered. The results apply to the present research and it is not assumed that they will apply to any further populations.

Bias invaded every process of the research and my interpretation of the data, whether I wanted it to or not. This is why I openly placed myself into the data as a participant researcher. I consider that psy stories represented the major bias to overcome in this research and this has been discussed prior. Finally this research is just another story. Whether this story remains relevant is perhaps dependent on its explanatory strength and how it may be applied in the future. Thus after concluding, I turn to look at possible consequent future directions for home research.

Conclusions

The present research specifically offers a fluid process model of the participant's cognitive and environmental interactions with their homes. It supports both the differences and the similarities of participants. It is relevant to New Zealand people. It integrates and is supported by much home research. The present research offers a new perspective on home, that takes into account current perspectives on personality and home but also challenges psy ideas and thus contributes a more fluid representation corresponding with the existential freedom that goes along inherently with lived experience.

The present research also suggests that the core process of being, having and making a Comfortable Habitat is part of a larger process occurring in participant's lives, not limited to happening just with a physical house. This process occurs as people seek comfort, integrating all the parts of their selves and lives, becoming secure with cognitive and environmental niches, and habituating and re-habituating to the world surrounding them. The present study is a rich exploration point for how humans function. Home was not a minor or irrelevant subject to any of the participants. Contrary to this being comfortable and having and making a Comfortable Habitat appeared crucial to participant's sense of overall comfort in their lives. Thus in this sense the present study represents a spring board for multiple other avenues of research on what this sense of being comfortable or of experiencing a psychological homeostasis is and how it contributes to our ability to experience our lives more generally. In conclusion home is not a simple *thing in itself*. Home is about a person's beingness within their existential lives.

Future Directions

Finally I turn to the question of where to, for the future of home research. Firstly discourse analysis would be ideal for exploring the word home, when, how and why people use it and for what purposes. Transcribed interviews or perhaps media representations of home could provide data for analysis. Hence studies on the word home, present a future direction for home research.

Participants in the present research frequently mentioned home being a sanctuary, offering possible future directions. There were also substantive clusters around the ethereal and emotional home, the social and peopled home, the stable and consistent home and the spatial sense of home. Such clusters indicate other possible configurations for organising thematic portrayals of home. Several of the substantive categories also formed a series of dialectics, such as privacy vs. intimacy which may also suggest research possibilities. Populations such as long distance truck drivers or travellers may provide information on the spatially distributed home.

The larger theories that the present study fitted with, also suggest possibilities. Exploring the meaning of home may find practical application through its therapeutic potential. Not only did themes about home come up for participants, but themes of significance for their overall lives. For example, one participant who had recently redecorated his home also replaced many fully functional small appliances to much extra cost. Outside of the interview he said this was because it was depressing to have old things around him. I was aware this participant had many years prior suffered from depression and experienced a breakdown. Did he use his home in a functional manner to protect himself from re-experiencing such issues? Another participant described his youth spent at a boarding school, as being in prison. He sees home now as a place of freedom and escape, prison themes.

Several participants who had nearly lost their homes after divorce connected their homes as houses they personally owned, rather than rented and would fight to keep for their own stability. For myself, home has been a place of protection, privacy and safety where no one could get near my thoughts or change who I am. I relate this to an abusive boarding situation in my late teenage years.

The combination of narrative counselling and environmental psychology offer possibilities. Narrative storylines, through The Biological/Historicised Home and The Base Home would be considered open to interpretation and reinterpretation. Counselling would not focus on dysfunction but rather the value of meanings of home, the fluidity of possible storylines, the environments effects on people and how reviewing storylines and altering the environment may then be useful for the client. Helping clients become aware of how they use the environment functionally, could assist them to use the environments effects on them to experiment with new ways of being and to assist psychological processes of change.

There are still unanswered questions about why the process of Making The Comfortable Habitat occurs at all. At what point and in what ways does an uncomfortable environment begin to change people if they cannot change their environment in some way? In the present study some participants undertook a particularly cognitive response to discomfort, mentally reorganising their preferred substantive categories, changing themselves and their meanings of home. This occurred mostly when the axial strategies of the present research were insufficient and their habituation was in a sense forced. Thus there may be many more discoverable strategies for Making the Comfortable Habitat.

In terms of future research there is much work to be done on human adaptivity and the engagement of cognitive processes along with this. Studies taking into account the meaning of home are one area that this type of research could be fulfilled in. The present research intended to be exploratory rather than confirm any pre-assumed hypothesis. In this manner it has opened up many possibilities for future research.

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Appendix A

Conversations About Home**INFORMATION SHEET**

My name is Charlotte Aspinall. I am a student at Massey University, Albany, undertaking my Honours degree in Psychology. The present research is my foremost project for this degree and is supervised by Linda Jones from the School of Psychology at Massey University, Wellington.

The Research.

This research aims to explore how people understand *the term 'home'*, and what *'home' means* to people. Recent American research exploring people's *psychological sense of home* defines home in terms of people's physical dwelling place, bricks and mortar locatable in space. If *home* is more than bricks and mortar much subsequent American research about home, doesn't make sense. There has not been enough *home* research that is based on peoples lived experiences. The present research aims to be about *people*, specifically New Zealand people with their wonderful diversity. I want to know what *home* means to people, however they define home to be.

Your Role.

You are invited to share your valuable perceptions with me in an interview that will take approximately one hour and a half, at a time and place that we are both comfortable with. I am interested in the perceptions of people over 18. The interview will be like a chat, a conversation about home. We will brainstorm to get started and there will be a few specific questions. It is not expected that any sensitive topics will be discussed, and you do not have to talk about anything you chose not to.

The interview will be audio taped but I won't be transcribing the tape (typing it up in detail). All information received from you will be completely confidential. The only people with access to the data will be myself and my supervisor. When writing up this project, quotes from the interview may be used, however any features that could identify you will be removed, and pseudonyms will be used to protect your anonymity. I will show you any quotes and check that I have understood your meaning. The tapes will be destroyed at the end of the project.

Your Rights.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Decline to answer any particular question.
- Withdraw from the study (within six weeks following the interview).
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher.
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- You also understand that you have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

If you require any further information and may like to take part in the study you can contact me in the following ways. My supervisor is also available for information should you require it.

Charlotte Aspinall Ph: 027 431 8999 Email: charlotte1@paradise.net.nz	Linda Jones Ph: 09 414 0800 x 6530 Email: L.M.Jones@massey.ac.nz
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This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, ALB Application 05/038. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor Kerry Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Albany, telephone 09 414 0800 x9078, email humanethicsalb@massey.acn.nz.

Appendix B

Conversations About Home**CONSENT FORM**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature:**Date:****Full Name: – printed**

If you would like a summary of the project sent to you on completion, please down write your address:	
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Postscript

When I decided I was going to write a Postscript I was sooo ready. If I had thought of it sooner, I would've have ended up writing a prescript and not much else. I probably would have left the research exercise unfinished, figuring I had already done it. I can almost hear Linda saying, "No, not again, no more excuses, please." But no, she was much more creative and concise with words. However I didn't come with a warning for my poor, long suffering, supervisor. I guess this craving to write one's own story is one reason, some students add reflective diary entries about their process to their thesis's (mine was meant to be a dissertation originally, my poor, long suffering, supervisor).

The Postscript, the participant researcher quotes and the biases and limitations section, together show how I have influenced the data and where the research has sprung form. My intention was to provide this in a way enabling the reader to read one story, not dual stories of researcher vs. self. I guess this is also my personal conclusion to a very emotional project. I have also chosen to write these personal reflections here so that the reader does not feel that they are compulsory reading. If you chose not to read this, go forth and do something fun, your experience of the formal thesis will remain the same, my own emotionality about home will be dodged. But then you may have your own emotionality about home.

I choose the topic of home because I was fascinated with space, how people use it differently and how this in turn acts upon them and effects how they think and feel. I was fascinated by how friends of mine, of a different culture and ethnicity, used their space so differently, used so much of my space (my space?). Originally I wanted to study the differences between how Maori and Pakeha think of home. I was sure Maori people would say the meaning of home is about family and up north (where my particular Maori friends came from). Pakeha people would say something different.

Family was crucial to most of my participants, the cultural difference was possibly that the Pakeha families were often smaller and less enmeshed together, than with my Maori friends. But that's another project. Initially I was disappointed that I couldn't include Maori participants. But I probably would've have turned out a shallow understanding, been shocked at my own stupidity and not finished the project, or missed several

deadlines and out of desperation turned it into a thesis (much like the current project). This project is 15 people's stories of home, the participants and I. It is a particularly Pakeha version of what home means, not all that home means or will ever mean. I am fascinated by environmental psychology and I spend most of my time at home. I am a distance student with children, (a partner who is moving in soon) and I only work two days a week. I am obsessed with my home, the big reason I chose this topic.

I then became furious when I read of researchers who, it seemed to me, turned home into a game through which they could judge other people and claim difference equals mental disorder. I thought certain recent American research on home was dangerous and I didn't like where it was going. It was as if researchers were taking the one space that people have to be themselves and ruining that.

I also get furious over television programmes such as *Mitre Ten Dream Home*, *DIY Disasters*, and recently *Extreme Home Makeover*, for various reasons. The latter is one of my favourite programmes. Des and I cry like babies while watching it. But a while ago, the team were building a dream home for a family who were living in a homeless people's shelter. They kept calling the family *homeless people*. They then built the family a house in a homeless people's rehabilitation community. As if the family didn't deserve their dream home, they needed help, not a gift like the usual families the team built homes for. That somehow the family needed a half way home to recover in. I'm not saying that recovery wouldn't be an issue but surely the family wanted a dream home, a fresh start, not a reminder of the hard times, but new better times.

Then the team also built another family without a house, a dream home. But they joined the two homes together. They sent the families on holiday together while the houses were built because somehow having the same experience of homelessness meant the two families were going to be lifelong friends. I guess to be fair to the team, they couldn't look through the families old home and see their personalities and build them a new home to reflect that. So I guess the team couldn't draw on that sense of their I/Self Home and their Base Home in another other way than as homeless people, this being their base. But the team just seemed to fall blindly into this stereotype of homeless people as basically without personality and uniqueness.

I was disappointed. They never once called people with homes, *homed people*, so why did they have to call the family *homeless people*? Are we defined completely by where and how we live, as if we always have complete control over this? If someone looked at my home and judged me on it a few years ago I wonder what they would've said? It's taken five and a half years of struggle to be able to afford to fill my house with furniture, to fatten up my babies, to make a garden, to make my home. Home can be a fragile thing.

With this project perhaps I needed to get *my obsession* with home out of my own system. To explore what my home means *for me* and loosen its grip over me. I don't know if I've completely done that, but I have done enough to let it rest. I feel like I haven't left home in years, in so many ways. But it seems I'm not the only person who feels this way about their home. When I asked my sister, who lives in Australia, what home meant to her, she said, "Australia isn't my home, because my friends and family are in New Zealand. They are my home and they are the keepers of my memories, of who I am." She said that she can make new friends in Australia but they will only know her now. The stories she tells of her life, her past, are all just stories to her new friends. They haven't lived the journey with her, been there as she's cried, laughed, experienced her life. Her friends and her family in New Zealand know her and have seen who she was going through such experiences. They hold who she is. Home is an entirety of who a person is, where they've been, who they are going to become, how they have negotiated their way through their lives, the good and the bad times. Such people know that my sister has not lived her life lightly but rather lived it fully surrounded by caring family and friends.

I so wished she had been a participant in the study, but then turn on the tape recorder and she probably would've gone silent, as most people did initially. Turning it off seemed to get them talking again. It seemed a useful strategy for calming loud children, not so, it made mine louder. Anyway, a year later, my sister is gradually habituating to Australia. She's had new significant experiences that her friends there have seen with her. Now those friends too, will hold her, though not as much of her as her family and friends in New Zealand.

But this small story illustrates a point I need to make. This project has always felt dualistic, as if the real project is these conversations external to the formal interviews. I have struggled to place these conversations about home, the ones in the students rooms in Palmerston North, talking to myself, my friends, the ones with my children “Mommy play with me.”, “No, not until you’ve finished the practice interview.” Yet now, surprisingly, what was a dualistic, awkward process, finally feels holistic.

Other casual conversations also dug into my head and sat there, unmoving. Because I knew some of the participants in the study, I saw other things that were, sometimes but not always, captured on tape. I saw how significant life events had altered what home meant for people I knew. So I thought I’d share a little more of my story to illustrate this point further. When I was teenager, I was assaulted repeatedly when staying at a house in Dunedin. The perpetrator, attempted to disassemble who I was. He said I had to be taught, by him, better ways of living and caring about people. That included a little violence every now and then, (for my own good) when I wouldn’t behave. I came out of it knowing he was speaking utter rubbish and not too physically damaged. Until years later, when I came to find he had restructured the way I looked at the world, my base. I had somehow ended up believing his version of what happened, that I was a bad person for not behaving. Therapy sorted that out, years ago now.

The point is, in my home now, I still need a lot of privacy. Living with other people drives me nuts. I can’t stand people telling me who I am or what I think. In my home, my base, I control who comes into it and what ideas are here. Why has The I/Self Home and the privacy for my subjective self become so important? On my participant researcher audio tape I was crying like a baby over how home protects psychological inadequacies I didn’t know I had. Do I make trade-offs to maintain the personally important category of The I/Self Home as I like it, or have I been sabotaging areas of my life? Ideals? Survival? Sabotage? It depends on what I want in my life and how I chose to look at it. My home had functioned in an important way for a long time. The reason I needed home to be so private, to protect my subjective self, was because I was too fluid. I let people change me. But I am less like that now. Consequently my old home is not adaptive and isn’t functioning well for me anymore.

A couple of years ago now I lost someone I was close to. I didn't want to go out, or do anything. I wanted to hide in my home and be sad and refuse to enjoy being alive. Privacy was still important to me after this significant life event had passed. But the meaning of privacy changed. It became really self destructive for me. What I needed was to get out and live my life. Perhaps now I am drawing on The Present Temporal Home in a new way, in a way that makes privacy more functional for what I want now, for the doingness of my present situation.

I met someone really awesome and The Intimate Home category is really important to me now. My Des has come into my private bubble. After Five and a half years of struggling to afford to make my home what it is now, perfectly arranged for me, who I am and my babies, I have to share my home? When the rest of his furniture arrives I am going to panic. But I'd rather become a *we* than stay an *I* without him. So Des shares my privacy now and my home is changing again.

My mother also needs a very private home. She too was a single parent. When I was young we had privacy for our little family. I am habituated, through multiple experiences, to being a private person, having a private home base. I don't really know how to be a family, with a husband, in the one home. It's all a bit new and I'm not that adaptive, especially not about my home. But what home means is fluid and can change if I let it, if I let myself have new experiences. So I am going to experiment a little with my home, see what else it can do for me. How long does habituation take?

I was thinking about The Base Home and chatting to a friend. He was talking about the lack of dogs in the neighbourhood. He said that if people with big dogs moved in and the neighbourhood changed then he may have to move because he might want to punch someone. It was our in-joke. Years ago my friend had a mental breakdown including problems with managing anger. He lived temporarily in a mental health faculty and felt really lost (some, but not all of our conversations about this were captured on tape). Now he seems to need a really strong home that protects him from re experiencing that horrible time in his life. Significant life events and The Base Home are still haunting me, telling me to let the project go, probably. But I noted this same issue with myself and with others as well. I am fascinated by the bubble, the private culture, that home can become.

Bear with me a little longer. My base is changing. A few weeks ago I invited friends over for dinner and I never do things like that. Des cooked an Island style dinner for them. They crawled home, fat and full and barely moving, like Des and I feel every weekend when we have our Island meals. I was investing in a new type of home, The Intimate Home, trying it on and seeing what it feels like. The effect of that dinner has lingered, it hangs in the ethers of my home, changing the atmosphere, changing what it feels like to be at home.

A few weeks ago I was thinking about moving homes. I really didn't want to, but I was exploring the possibility of it. I've lived in this home for five and a half years. I've had a lot of memorable experiences here. My children and I have grown up, my littlest one from a baby to a school boy. But the street has gone downhill, there have been fights, just a few doors down, involving only a couple of houses, but the police were called just the same. I also have the neighbours from hell. My house stopped feeling like home.

My neighbours used to live down the other end of the street and we were friends. We swapped children, hung out and drank lots of coffee. However then they moved in next door and asked if they could store some things in my garage until their boarders left and they had more space. Over a year later, the boarders have long since gone and I can't use my garage at all. The neighbours collected things in inorganic rubbish collections, that they already had in my garage and are now also stored in my garage. They found some of my old clothes in a plastic bag in the garage and assumed I was throwing them out. I was surprised one day when I saw them wearing my clothes.

Their new baby arrived and was planted at my home. Their dog had puppies. The mommy dog took up escaping and biting people. The puppies got bigger, took up escaping and biting people. Every time I hung out my washing I felt compelled to converse. When I opened the curtains at my front door they were waving good morning. When I brought the groceries in they were watching. When I was baking they turned up. Where was my privacy exactly? So one day when my neighbour came over for a coffee, it came out, "Instead of buying that new van for \$148 a week over the next three years you could've put up a gate so your puppies don't escape, or hired a shed to put your furniture in. Yes, I am grumpy. No, Des is not here. No my children cannot go to your house because I don't want them bitten." My poor ex-friend.

But I have noticed two new fences have gone up in this street recently and nearly every house has their curtains closed where they are close to the neighbours. As the street has deteriorated, people are insulating themselves, withdrawing into their homes a little more. But since being rude to my neighbours, I'm really enjoying hanging out my washing in private and living in a bubble with my curtains closed. The husband helped trim one of my trees the other day. I delivered phone messages to the wife, as her phone is disconnected (her puppies keep chewing the outside wires). This much space sharing is fine. Better still, since buying the new van my neighbours are hardly ever home and the puppies are tied up as another neighbour complained.

I think now it is me that is the annoying neighbour. I still watch out the window when they come home. I still yell too much at my kids. I plant trees positioned for my privacy, which when fully grown, will shade their kitchen and bring bees near their house. I play loud music sometimes and sing badly in the middle of the day, when babies need their sleep. I wouldn't want to live next door to me. But, I'm mostly concerned about *my home*, not theirs. It's the one place where I can do these things. It's my home. What my landlords must think of me!

I was thinking that my current home is the opposite of how I grew up. No wonder I'm so uncomfortable lately. My home when I grew up was a beautiful, heavily and oddly renovated, old house. I used to lie on the carpet and stare up at black beamed ceilings, dreaming. In the section we had so many trees it was like a jungle, you couldn't see out. Our Alsatian-cross ran tracks along the fence, terrifying anyone who got too close. I always imagined home as being so lusciously green, peaceful and private. But realistically it wasn't like that at all. We lived by a sports stadium and most weekends there were crowds of people. The street wasn't great and the 1980's glue sniffers had made their home behind the stadium. Perhaps there was a sense of danger lurking outside the physical house. I am possibly living out my environmental autobiography, in this street, insulated in my little house. Yet when I was a child, I didn't know anything much about anything. Some of those glue sniffers were my school friends. My memories deceived me.

Now as my street has deteriorated, I haven't given up and moved. I used to love the community feel to my street. There's a basketball court and playground at the end of the

cul de sac. School is a four minute walk away. My kids have friends everywhere. I have loved this street for five and a half years. So instead of moving I have realised I'm lucky to get a rental property that is long term. I have closed my curtains, brought large plants and hanging baskets for my veranda (strategically placed). I have planted trees and I have dug in. I've booted out the neighbourhood kids and I am insulating my space. Which is, what it appears the other people who live in this street are also doing. If my neighbours deteriorate again, then I'll close my eyes and my curtains and outlast them and I will probably see other new neighbours come and go. I am comfortable here I have lived here for what feels like a lifetime of memories and this is my home. I have plans for its future, to buy my home, to build a deck and a conservatory, to convert my now unusable garage into a hang out room for Des and his mates, a boy's room.

I went for a walk the other day and found myself looking into the windows of a nice rental property not far away. Des and I were thinking of who it was suitable for. I couldn't live beside the big barking dogs and the neighbours were too close. Yet we have a serious dog issue in our street and some very intrusive neighbours. But I have a big section and semi long term stability and I don't want to move. "I like it Des but it's not for us. I know my home. I love it. I've lived there forever. Please say that you're o.k. with coming into my home and making it yours. Please." "Yes of course. I'm not coming into your life to change anything. I just want to be with you. Let's go home, to our home."

and we did

and then...