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**‘Home is where the heart is broken?’:
Examining the impact of intimate relationship challenges on
meanings of home**

A thesis
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Abstract

This thesis makes an original contribution to emotional and material geographies by addressing the ways in which mutually constituted meanings of home and identity change in the wake of intimate, coupled relationship disruption. It examines practices of home making, unmaking and remaking of ten (nine women and one man) heterosexual individuals who have experienced relationship challenges and have homes in the Waikato region of Aotearoa New Zealand. Three methods of data collection - semi-structured interviews; home visits; and, solicited and unsolicited diaries - were used to access the emotional and spatial experiences of this group of people.

Feminist, queer and poststructuralist geographical theories are used to analyse the connection between relationships, emotions and materialities of home spaces. My findings are organised into two related themes: materialities and emotions. The first theme - materialities – foregrounds the role of objects for making, unmaking and remaking home and heterosexual couples. Following objects in and out of couple's homes highlights gendered power relations and the importance of intergenerational relationships. Individual power, as well as the power of objects, is examined, with attention paid to how power and coupledness can be subverted or queered. The second theme – emotions – allows for an understanding of care, love, guilt and shame across the scales of bodies, objects, and homes. Emotions and affect are 'sticky' in that they attach to objects and pass between bodies and homes. Physical violence enacted on the home, as well as emotional or financial abusive behaviour within the home, are considered. I also discuss home as a place of healing and recovery.

It is hoped that this examination of heterosexual couple relationship breakdown and home disruptions will encourage more critical understandings of geographies of identities, home, materialities and emotions.

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Embarking on academic research is always a giant personal challenge. I will be forever grateful I took it up. Delving into a topic that has left deeply personal tracks on my own identity was always going to add to, and uncover layers of emotional wounds, but also point to the human capacity for healing and the formation of beautiful scars. More importantly, it presented an opportunity that would help give voice to those who have survived, and flourished since, the rupture to their relationships and homes.

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Chapter One: Introduction: home is where the heart is ... broken?

When you came home...did you not see?

My red hair flowing free,

My green eyes sparkling with fun,

A beautiful home to be proud of,

And a woman full of love;

Did you not see; waiting for you was me?

Jean Elizabeth Ward, *Did You Not See?* (Ward 2007 70).

The poem above is a reflection of my starting point for this thesis. It resonates on a personal, embodied level, iterating a gendered representation of home, love and heartbreak. After personal experiences - of witnessing my parents' seemingly happy marriage end in divorce, those of friends and family, and, more recently, my own relationship challenge - my interest was piqued about the experiences of others regarding (changing) roles of space and place in this context. From an autoethnographic perspective (Moss 2001), my intense, embodied reactions to the reverberations that swirled throughout my own spaces of home, and sense of self, have been exceptionally poignant. Whilst the seed was planted from a feminine, middle-class, heteronormative viewpoint, I was also curious about the experiences of those whose subjectivities are further marginalised. In this thesis, it is argued that emotions and materialities of home are both affected and affecting on and around the people involved in such circumstances.

Stories of changed and changing meanings of home after relationship disruption have largely been missing from geographical research. As such, I suggest telling these stories in collaboration with those whose lived geographies have been affected in these ways, is a form of social activism that will help empower those affected.

The co-constitution of coupledom and home is widely accepted as the norm. Broken hearts and broken homes appear to be a well-worn pairing in the

popular imagination. In this thesis, I query this normalisation of the links between domestic spaces and being part of a (romantic) couple. This research probes into the experiences of 10 people who identify as heterosexual – nine of them women - with emotional or physical links to the Waikato¹ region of Aotearoa² New Zealand. The respondents have, or are dealing with intimate relationship challenges, providing an opportunity to critique perceptions regarding this assumption. Doing so, however, is ripe with concerns about the sensitive nature of the topic. Included are apprehensions about ‘picking at the scabs’ or unsettling healed or healing individuals and couples after stressful and emotional experiences. Reflexively, I consider my own feelings of (unhealed) grief regarding the loss of identity, and disruption to love. My perspective and lived reality of the tensions between social niceties, which indicate that public expressions of private grief must be limited, and sharing information - but also feelings - as being somewhat cathartic. Respondents echoed these thoughts in their observations about (over)sharing and the public-private nature of disruptions to normative coupledness.

Coupledness, particularly heterosexual coupledness, is represented as the normative method of (co)habitation in Western society. As such, historically, geographical epistemologies have been based on heteronormative expectations which support assumptions that individuals are invariably desirous of achieving and maintaining coupled identities. Unpacking the materialities of domestic spaces and the part these play in creating and maintaining coupled subjectivities in the discipline, disrupts the privileged position that coupledness holds in economic, political, and socio-cultural contexts.

¹ The Waikato region is situated in the upper-middle area of the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. The region’s economy is largely based on rural industries and rural support provided by several small to medium-sized towns, with the city of Hamilton located near the centre of the region providing light industry, tertiary education, and so on.

² Aotearoa is the Māori name for New Zealand. Māori is an official language of New Zealand and the term Aotearoa is used in a variety of contexts. Sometimes it is used alone and sometimes it used together with the place name ‘New Zealand’. Throughout this thesis, I mainly use the term New Zealand, whilst acknowledging the politics surrounding the naming of places.

To this end, it is apparent that the ways that love is conceptualised in relation to gender, care, and home spaces requires further investigation. Monogamous, romantic love holds a pivotal position in the constitution of home and identity (Morrison 2010), and I query the spatial and identity implications for those who have loved, and lost. Carey-Ann Morrison (2010) discusses how love is largely missing from geographical literature, and the causal effects of the politics of gender in the production of knowledge within the discipline. Louise Johnson (2009 51) points to some pairs of dualistic terms, “which privilege culture over nature, the mind over the body, reason over emotion, work over home, and production over reproduction, and therefore men over women in a deep and formative way”. In other words, the masculinist perspectives within geography that perpetuated the mind-body dualism have been critiqued by feminist scholarship (see Longhurst 2009). Knowledge constructed under this binarized conceptualisation, which celebrates the mind, and dismisses the body, apports words with positive associations to the mind, and those with negative connotations, to the body. Love has been discarded in this (unconscious, masculinist) process of categorisation, to the scrap-heap of the “irrational workings of ‘the body’” (Morrison 2010 3).

In taking the magnifying glass to home and love, this research adds to feminist, socio-cultural and emotional geographical understandings of experiences of disruptions to normative, gendered and embodied associations between the two. This project observes how deeply embedded, and reproduced - through intergenerationality, materialities, power inequities, emotion and discourse - gender roles are within everyday home spaces.

The three main objectives of this research are outlined here. Firstly, I query in what ways home – as imagined and material – changes due to intimate (couple) relationship disruption. Secondly, I analyse how meanings and experiences of relationships and home changes are shaped by gender, and in the context of my participant cohort, sexuality. Thirdly, I explore how and in what ways the breakdown of intimate relationships influences emotional and affectual experiences of home. Themes within geography that this

research seeks to link and extend include: geographies of home; emotional geographies; queer geographies of single people; and family geographies. Poststructural feminist theories are the mechanisms employed to unpack discourses, interpret and deconstruct social norms regarding materialities and emotions, and their mutual constitutions with the meanings of disrupted home spaces, after love relationships are broken or otherwise challenged. Like Morrison (2010) I view the relationships between identity, love and home, with a grasp on the symbolic and 'real' functions and representations that materialities provide.

Social conditioning concerning coupledness as the 'natural' state, is reflected in the spatialities of home. Relationships sometimes end, and often new ones form, (re)creating representations of normative coupledness. What has rarely been explored in the geographical literature are the tensions between individuals and families as the materialities come together, into a *coupled* home space, and new facets of identity are formed (although see Morrison 2010), especially later in the lifecourse, or in cases of 'serial monogamy'³. This research also extends Eleanor Wilkinson's (2013; 2014) work on the queering of singledness, highlighting the ways in which the privileging of coupledness relegates singled identities to a lower social status, and may even contribute to less desirable material outcomes for singles. I argue that this both 'binds' (Valentine 2008) individuals to unhappy relationships, but also reiterates the urgency of recoupling in the hope of 'returning' to a normative state.

Shame (and its bedfellow, guilt) are explored using Elspeth Probyn's (2004; 2005) examinations of the everydayness of embodied shame. Using a lens that acknowledges the agency of materialities (see Baxter and Brickell 2014; Bennett 2005; Brickell 2014), the project explores the mutual constitution of material items, home and emotions and their effects on feelings about oneself – identity. Shame is perceived as an embodied reaction to feelings of guilt, that one has done something to be *ashamed* of. Wishing to end, or leaving a relationship that externally represents a normative way of being,

³ Having only one monogamous relationship at a time, but multiple relationships throughout a lifetime.

creates conflicting and shameful emotions in some people. In neoliberal terms, the materialities of the relationship, and their agential effects on meanings, are often manipulated to compensate for (missing, or changed) emotions. They may be claimed, or perhaps released, to manage emotional and affectual reactions in both oneself, but also an ex-partner, or on a larger scale, a community.

Power relations reach into in all human relationships. The ways that power circulates, and is (unevenly) distributed is of interest to geographic research into intimate relationships. Whilst physical violence within the spaces of domestic partnerships has, and continues to, attract attention from geographers (Pain 2014; 2015; Pain and Staeheli 2014; Warrington 2001), emotional, financial, and material abuse appears to have garnered far less consideration. Gender is so often a factor in power inequalities, with patriarchal positioning of masculine subjectivities as ranked 'more-than' just physically above those perceived as feminine. Using violence, or the threat of violence, on the materialities in and of the home, is a brandishing of power that warrants the geographical spotlight being shone upon it. Not only for the ways in which it succeeds in disempowering, but also in the strategies employed to resist and empower those at whom it is targeted. This research looks at the affective impacts of the ways in which space is destroyed, or despoiled, on those who are most closely involved, those that also share the living space. These people may include: an intimate partner; parents; and children, indicating the intergenerational repercussions on spatial imaginaries, that go beyond the hard materialities.

Emotion and affect are important themes within emotional geography frameworks. The ways in which these have been demarcated by masculinist perspectives, which categorise and disenfranchise emotions as 'feminine' and 'individual', meanwhile promoting affect as 'masculine' and 'shared'. This is illuminated by the use of terms that portray emotion as embodied and relatively static, contained within one body, and affect as mobile and transferable between bodies and places (see Pile 2010). Feminist geographers (Bondi and Davidson 2011; Thien 2005) have critiqued this separation, arguing that attempting to keep unstable concepts contained

within the bounded, stable specifications of hard definitions is counterintuitive. I am in accord, and treat the two as ontologically entwined throughout this project.

The home, presumed to be a private, coupled, *family* space, is, however, further delineated within, with shared, 'public' spaces, such as living rooms, and more personalised, intimate, 'private' spaces, such as bedrooms. Home is overwhelmingly associated with normative sexual practices, including adult-only sexual monogamy and fidelity (Johnston and Longhurst 2010). The ways that sexuality, relationships and sexual connection is practised is socially scripted. Deviations from idealised, heteronormative, 'loving' relationship, between *two* people are labelled deviant. This research opens a door to expose linkages between feelings of abjection, and 'deviant' sexual practices within the spatialities of home, and the effects on individual constructions of identity.

Thesis outline

This thesis is committed to exploring the experiences, emotions and material consequences of relationship breakdown. Whilst geographers have taken a renewed interest in the space, scale, the meanings and composition of home contemporarily, there has been less focus on the de- and re-composition of home outside of natural disasters frameworks. In many instances of relationship disruption, the weight of the imaginary of home unmaking, surpasses that of the material unmaking, and the changed and changing meanings of home mirror the changes to one's feelings of integrity and uniqueness. Negotiating the intensity of emotions and affect in a home that has been figuratively thrown into disarray, unmoored from its symbolically secure image, has greater embodied repercussions on how people relate to spaces of home, at the time of rupture, but also going forward, than is commonly admitted. This project highlights a resemblance between feelings of grief felt at the loss of a precious relationship, and coupled identity, and the grief felt on the death of a loved one.

In chapter two, I outline the theoretical frameworks and literature I consult to place this life event, but also the process of conducting social research, in a geographical context. Explored is existing work by feminist, poststructural geographers on some of the key components of this project: home; materialities; embodiment; love; gender; emotion and affect; emotional 'stickiness'; and queer theory. The material reviewed here begins to sketch out the linkages and slippages between these concepts, and how these may apply when analysing the lived experiences of the respondents to this project.

Chapter three focuses on the methodological processes utilised in carrying out this research. The project was conducted from a feminist standpoint, using methods to collect empirical data that have been designed to be empathetic, and allow individual voices to shine through, to tell their stories. My personal position and reflexivity regarding this topic were addressed, in the interests of researcher transparency and integrity. This included a discussion of the dichotomous nature of my insider-outsider status as researcher (see Wainwright *et al.* in press). I follow this by outlining the methods used, which included: semi-structured interviews; participant observation, in the form of home visits, paying close attention to bodies and moments during contact with participants; solicited, and one unsolicited, written diaries were provided. There was some follow up interviewing, in the form of electronic questioning, to clarify and expand on points, gathering nuanced micro-information that was not clear during face-to-face interviews. Differences were noticed, and I discuss these, between the shorter visits, in which I was in the interviewees' homes for the interview period only, as compared to 'staying over' with some respondents. Discourse analysis was a final tool that added to my analysis.

Chapter four concentrates on the materialities of home: the objects that make up a coupled, or 'family' home, and the influence they have with shaping identity. Home is (still largely) a space delineated by gender. All of the participants in this project had, and some also presently have, experienced relationships with clear masculine and feminine roles reproduced intergenerationally through the materialities, and in relation to

spatialities of home. These include the geographies of care, which are viewed as the responsibility of, and performed mostly by, women, even those who clearly identified how this narrative creates disadvantaged subjectivities within themselves, and their material worlds. Following this, is an examination of the intergenerational effects on and of materialities and power. 'Family' ideologies are embedded in the materialities of home, and often passed from one generation to the next. I critique the ways that social norms structure the flow of material and emotional support as one directional, from older to younger. This research is interested in the reasoning behind, and effects of, this mostly one-way flow, and the ways in which these normative behaviours may encourage and perpetuate power imbalances, especially regarding the materialities, access to, and use of space. Examining materialities of home in a relationship context, including the processes of coupling and *uncoupling*, prompts investigation of the ways in which objects in and of the home are combined, or split, as home (un)making occurs. I ask, what the effects of material home items meanings on identities, and vice versa, are, throughout these changes, and this provokes a need to de-binarize materialities and emotions, by enquiring into their mutual constitution.

Chapter five, then, explores emotional geographies of home. Introduced is the concept of 'stickiness' of emotions (Ahmed 2004a). This stickiness carries through, and attaches itself to the materialities of home, due to the emotions that are summoned by, and attach themselves to material items and contribute to identity (re)formation. The research considers emotion and affect as they pertain to materialities of home, and leads onto an analysis of the materialities of guilt and shame. Within this framework I look at embodied reactions to relationship rupture, and unpack neoliberal discourses regarding material inequalities that subjugate feminine subjectivities, and accord power to masculine ones. Agency of both the self, but also the materialities of home is examined, with attention paid to how power can be subverted by agential (intra)actions. Subsequent to this theme, violence in and on the home, and links to literature on domicile (Nowicki 2014) are probed. I posit that such material violence, as 'private' and less

'visible', may be a form of proxy - much as emotional, or financial abuse are - for socially unacceptable and 'visible' forms of physical violence on the body. Finally, this chapter looks at the role of place in healing and recovery.

In chapter six, I bring my analysis to a close and point to channels for further research. I return to the research objectives and recap the key arguments. In contemplating the way forward, I signal how themes indicated in this thesis might evolve and be fine-tuned to extend geographical knowledge surrounding the mutual constitution of spaces and intimate relationship fracture.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In this chapter, I present the theoretical frameworks and literature that informs my research. In recent years, geographical scholarship about heterosexual love has come into focus by considering the ways that 'home' spaces are conceptualised and constructed. Much of this focus is within heteronormative Western contexts (Gorman-Murray 2006; Johnston and Longhurst 2010; Morrison 2010; Morrison *et al.* 2013a). The home has been a space where heteronormative coupledness, with its associated assumptions of love, sexual and emotional monogamy, and nuclear family, have dominated. I ascertain that there is a gap in the literature that overlooks what happens to home spaces when intimate relationships break down. I am especially interested in how space is (re)configured or (re)imagined when monogamous relationships face challenges, whether couples stay together, or choose to part. Such disruptions, or challenges to discourses about home, love, sex, the body, and family, have yet to be a focus of geographical scholarship, although, see Wilkinson (2014).

Social theorists have long been interested in romantic and sexual relationships, and their effects on individuals and society (Gabb and Singh 2015; Williams and Knudson-Martin 2013) and 'recovery' from such challenges (Oppenheimer 2007). Psychologists, too, have considered experiences of relationship challenges, including implications for the individual of 'staying together' or 'breaking up'. Psychological underpinnings, though, are not primarily concerned with the spatial and material effects of such events (see, however, Howells 2009). I argue that geography can help us build richer understandings of these life events. Place and identity are mutually constitutive, and I contend that disruptions to either have significant effects on each other. The research takes its starting point that places, materialities and identities are mutually constituted, and are the major contributors to (re)construction of identity. I investigate if, and how, gendered and sexed identities may be rebuilt or reimagined, as individuals and couples grapple with the imagined and material reconfiguration of their home spaces. Also of interest to this project

is how people feel about their identity after a relationship challenge is experienced. With this research, I focus on geographies of home, materiality, and affect. Relationship challenges draw together the emotional aspects of identity and belonging (or not belonging.) Prior to looking at the material geographies of home, it became apparent that it is important to investigate what constitutes meaning in and of these spaces for the individuals and couples involved. Therefore, hegemonic narratives about couples, families, love and especially sexuality are examined. I then look at the materialities, and arrangements of such to create nuanced meaning(s), of home spaces.

Feminist theory: bodies in and of place

In this thesis, I engage with feminist poststructuralist theory as outlined by Johnston and Longhurst (2010 22) describing their examination of sexed bodies, employing a conception of materiality and discourse as “a kind of ‘fleshy feminism’”. Bodies have been the focus of much feminist analysis in the wake of the deconstructions of mind/body dualism (Ahmed 2000). Disrupting and dismantling boundaries leads to consideration of the mind/body (Cartesian) dualism; if and how the body can be transcended. The concept of Cartesian dualism is described across disciplines. With regards to French philosopher, Descartes’ outline, philosopher Marleen Rozemond (2009 1) informs of an important facet to the dualism argument, that “Descartes’ conception of substance, including important claims about the relationship between the nature or essence of a substance and the properties it can have”. This leads to interpretations of human beings as being composed of two separate *substances*, corporeal body and non-corporeal mind, which connect in a causal manner (see Longhurst 1997). Arguments critiquing Cartesian thinking, regarding co-existence of “human and non-human” (Anderson 2014 7), open the door to (re)considering the distinctiveness of humans, and the vibrancy of matter (Bennett 2010). People’s experiences and emotions about and of home are also inextricably linked with and informed by “their corporeality or the organic matter and material of the body” (Imrie 2004 745). The ‘locatedness’ of the corporeal,

leads geographers to consider how the body is lived through, but also in what ways it may be differentiated from other bodies, and even transcended. Crossing boundaries, challenging closed borders and hard categorisations are of interest to geographers (Jones 2009). Bodily borders are not exempt from this, Robyn Longhurst (1996; 2001; 2005a) examines the fluidity and 'messiness' of *material* bodily 'boundaries.' Longhurst's (2001) bodily 'leakiness' and 'messiness', alongside deconstruction of the mind/body dualism, lead to consideration of Deleuze's (1988) suggestion that the materiality of bodies is such that they have affective results on and by other bodies.

Feminist geographies were, in the past, depicted by some scholars, in what I suggest is a marginalising binary construction as reflective of 'gentler' perspectives (Winchester 2005). I submit, however, that feminist approaches have their genesis in recognising and understanding diversity and difference, bringing into focus and challenging the structural inequalities that patriarchal constructs enable and reinforce, and that the 'softness' drawn from such binarized discourses is imagined. Binarized ideologies cemented in patriarchal models regarding 'soft' or 'feminine' and so on, dismiss spatial and experiential realms such as emotions and home. Universalised notions about feminist research practices have been contested, instead, current understandings are that, whilst research goals may be 'feminist', there are multiple of ways to add to feminist knowledges and understandings (Johnson and Madge 2016). These include the intersectionality of subjectivities and the effects that each axis of difference have on (dis)empowerment and individual agency. I also agree that knowledge is situated (Haraway 1991; Harding 1991). Situated knowledges supersede,

the traditional conception of SCIENCE as the pursuit of a disembodied, inviolable and neutral OBJECTIVITY with a formulation of objectivity that stresses corporeality, SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION and CULTURAL POLITICS (Gregory *et al.* 2009 683, emphasis in original).

As the research focuses on ‘the home,’ this situatedness is drawn into closer focus, allowing for more nuanced meanings and knowledges to be investigated and disseminated. The word ‘home’ can be interpreted on a variety of scales, and this thesis looks primarily to those closer in, or ‘personal’ spaces. It is not my intention to draw generalised conclusions, nor privilege one story or individual perspective over others (Rose 1997). I do, however, mean to highlight themes that appear through this research.

Emotional geographies of love

Emotional geographies came into greater focus from the 2000’s (Davidson *et al.* 2005) as geographers began to appreciate more clearly that “emotions *matter*” (Bondi *et al.* 2005 1, italics in original). Arguably, geography has been somewhat slower to embrace emotions than other disciplines within the social sciences (Bondi 2005a). Working emotions into geographical – or any – scholarship, is not a simple undertaking. How is it possible to ‘measure,’ or otherwise account for, the effects of emotions on space and place, as one might if working within positivist frameworks? And how can the academy adapt from patriarchal underpinnings that marginalise emotions in their dualistic treatment of emotionality? I concur that developing a framework to attempt to account for emotion and affect as important aspects of human geographical enquiry, adds richer layers of understanding about material and non-material production and utilisation of space, place and identity. Feminist theorists opened the doors to consider ways in which this might be possible, by challenging binaries and the effect(s) of the patriarchy on the production of knowledge(s).

Liz Bondi (2005a; 2013; 2014) speaks about her work as an amalgamation of her training in the fields of geography, counselling and psychotherapy. She lends a vibrant voice to the development of emotional geographies, and I look to her work to design and implement a methodological framework that I feel confident will help me negotiate gaps, generate meaning (Bondi 2013) and avoid becoming overly solipsistic.

Emotion and affect are themes that have attracted attention in human geography since the early 2000s (Pile 2010). With a shared ontology of fluidity, emotion appears the more accessible subject, affect, conversely, can be somewhat difficult to clearly articulate. Geographers respect the ways in which affect is (re)produced and circulated in space and place - acknowledging the contribution of (mobile) emotions, and emotional geographies - but also at times carefully demarcating the two (Pile 2010). This goes some way to helping understandings of the transitory nature of affect. Affect is much more than simply a feeling one gets from a place, although, "Emotions are usefully understood as tangible manifestations of affect" (Dewhurst 2009 23). Bodies are both affected and affecting, inherently "always variable and ... constantly being altered, composed and recomposed, by individuals and collectives" (Deleuze 1988 128). To make sense of the mutual permeation of body and - in this case, domestic - space, the notions of emotion and affect have been drawn on by geographers. Emotion is often interpreted as an individual phenomenon, and affect as transmitted and transferred between bodies (Paterson 2005). Theories of emotion and affect, and understandings of orientation, as starting points, and phenomenology (Ahmed 2006) - which I apply here in terms of (in)forming the (individual) self, as distinct from the 'coupled' self - are reciprocal in part. Certain material objects draw us in, but also inform and even direct our life experience.

The two ends of the affect spectrum, joy and sadness, respectively the positive and negative influences on individuals' ability to act, the capacity for human agency, are of interest to this research. I posit that disruptions to our most intimate relationships create (emotional) movement between joy and sadness, in either and both directions. With such turbulent emotions circulating, there is considerable transference of affect, not just between bodies, but between matter and humans (Bennett 2010). I concur that academic binarization of emotion and affect (McCormack 2003; Thrift 2004) follows masculinist traditions, relegating and feminizing emotion to the personal level, and favouring affect as a theoretically more advanced concept (Thien 2005). Accordingly, I share the position that feminist

scholars present, that emotion and affect are mutually sustaining (see Adams-Hutcheson 2014; Ahmed 2004a; 2004b; Bondi and Davidson 2011; Thien 2005; Wright 2010b). This research deals with proximate and intimate themes, in an ethnographic manner. Emotion and affect, as relational ontologies, support a shared focus on and attention to embodiment and spatiality (Adams-Hutcheson 2014).

In considering transcendence of bounded spaces, transference, embodied affect and knowledges in the research process, I support the position that they “are co-joined in order to examine the (re)production of everyday life” (Hutcheson 2013 477). I examine the effects of (imagined) shared ideologies and living spaces with respect to the (re)production of romantic relationship discourses and the lived experiences of my participants. In doing so, I also consider the mutual constitution of bodies and home spaces. Domestic bodies are imagined as gendered, with ‘home’ being a space that has been - and I suspect still is - feminised. As such, I maintain that home spaces, and the materiality of them, reproduce patriarchal ideologies that operate to maintain men in positions of power over women (and children) and provide a suggested basis for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual/agender (LGBTQIA)⁴ individuals and couples to consider in (de)constructions of ‘home’ and intimate relationships (Brown 2012; Gorman-Murray 2006; 2008a; 2008b; Johnston and Valentine 1995).

Alongside sociologists’ focus on love from the 1990’s (Jamieson 1998), geographers also began to pay closer attention to love from the 1990’s (Bell 1992; Hay 1991; Johnston and Longhurst 2010; Morrison 2010). In doing so, many grappled with, or outright ignored, difference, in omitting non-heterosexual love (Hay 1991). I suggest, however, that geographers’ realisations regarding the links between love and place, however thoroughly critiqued (Bell 1992), opened the discipline to the exploration of the mutual constitution of the two. Feminist geographers, often leading the way into new perspectives, also avoided the topic, perhaps wishing to avoid

⁴ An acronym used to denote non-heterosexual sexual identities and those on the gender spectrum. In using this acronym, I acknowledge the politics surrounding, and fluid nature of, sexuality and sexual identity.

contributing further to the feminisation of love and the “power politics of romantic love” (Miller 1996 170).

Romantic love is a central concept, represented as a unifying force in contemporary intimate relationships. There is an unspoken assumption that couples in particular – of all sexualities – are bound together by mutual, romantic love. Popular culture is replete with imagery of “love for another, chosen, person” (Evans 2003 1) to the point of privileging romantic love over all other forms. Until quite recently, love has often been depicted as exclusively heterosexual, and monogamous; reproducing and institutionalising heteronormativity (Jackson 2014; Johnston and Longhurst 2010). With social change, has come a degree of institutional change, including legal granting of *some* rights for *some* who identify collectively - being mindful that this does not indicate uniformity (Morrison *et al.* 2013b) - as LGBTQIA. One effect of this change has been the (re)production of social norms, achieving little or nothing for other marginalised subjectivities; indeed, further marginalising by the act of partial inclusion of *some*. For example, the emergence of homonormativity, as a mirrored version of heteronormative ideologies about marriage – two monogamous partners, usually identifying as gay or lesbian, living much as societal norms have come to expect from heterosexual marriage (as ‘queered’ in Paul Oremland’s 2017 documentary film, *100 Men*). As such, BTQIA identities (including any I may have missed from the gender/sexuality spectrum, and from the LGBTQIA acronym) within the boundaries of ‘legitimate’ intimate relationships, are missing.

Feminist theorists have long argued that the concept of love – and its hegemonic bedfellow, marriage - is a means by which women are restricted and subordinated (Ahmed 2004b; D’Emilio and Freedman 2012; Jackson 2014; Miller 1996). This ideology, whilst illustrating the gendered binary of power relations present in so many heterosexual intimate relationships, universalises the experience and distracts from the study of love, dismissing the lived geographies of non-heteronormative people. Margaret Toye (2010 41) argues that rather than avoiding the topic of love, “Feminist theory should have a special interest in the topic because of the ways the discourse

of love has not just been associated with women, but has been used against them”.

Gordon Waitt (2015) discusses some of the issues involved in the Australian debate on the politics of marriage equality. Marriage, as a legal entity in the West, is privileged over all other forms of intimate relations, as a historical construct. In most cases, it has been represented as a binary pairing of man and woman, for the purposes of reproduction and (supposed) economic wellbeing. This privileging of (heterosexual) marriage over other forms of romantic positioning, “has the potential to open up debates about love, sex, bodies, gender, families, belonging, and the nation – debates with which geographers are increasingly engaged” (Waitt 2015 430). I find it telling that Waitt mentions love first in his list of ingredients for marriage, and concur with Morrison *et al.* (2013a) that scholarship about love is relevant to the discipline for a myriad of reasons. Some of these include the constraints and freedoms that love effects on our personal geographies that are “spatial, relational and political” (Morrison *et al.* 2013a 506), but also reflecting on the privileged place romantic love has in (Western) consciousness.

Home: why geographies of home?

Whilst impressions of global geographies - the macro – appear to be easily digested by society, and academia alike (Clark *et al.* 2008; Whatmore 2002) many scholars (Massey 1991; Moss 2001; Rose 1993) have reiterated that the everyday, “(sometimes) the seemingly banal” (Holloway and Hubbard 2001 1) is also of concern to scholars. Increasingly, studies of how people interact with space contribute to societal understandings (Blunt 2005; Domosh 1998).

For more than two decades geographical scholarship has taken a magnifying glass to everyday spaces, to garner deeper understandings about identity and place (Holloway and Hubbard 2001). Some examples of geographical research about the mutual constitution of ‘everyday’ spaces and identity include; examinations of intercultural relations in a friendship

scheme in Newcastle, United Kingdom (Askins 2016), geographies of car cultures (Merriman 2009; Sheller 2004), women's emotional shopping and clothing experiences (Colls 2004), and agency/subjectivity of infants with regards to the materialities of food and feeding (Holt 2016).

Many scholars argue that one reason for prior academic neglect involves masculinist perspectives within the discipline, and the associated power imbalances (Cresswell 2015; Domosh 1999). Historically, positivist epistemologies tended to gloss over domestic spaces and discourses of heteronormative interpretations of such, relegating them to a lower status, that of mundane, 'everyday', feminised and private spaces of family and reproduction. Home - if considered at all - is conceptualised within the masculinist metanarrative as 'haven.' Critiquing binarized categorisations of the domestic sphere, Andrew Gorman-Murray (2012 251) proposes "the gendered dynamics of home require attention to masculinity and men's domestic practices as much as femininity and women's experiences". Home spaces are marginalised by positivist scholarship; associated with emotion, and therefore 'feminised.' Most people, however, whatever their gender identity, have some emotional reaction to the concept – even the very evocative *word* – 'home." There has been an increased interest in geographical enquiry in the "issues relating to home and identity, home and ontological security, the emotional economy of housing, and the nature of emotional decision-making in housing markets" (Murphy and Levy 2012 75). I contend that these are all matters of relevance to people negotiating the complexities of intimate relationship disruptions on their living arrangements and identities. Home, the domestic sphere, is categorised as a feminine and private space. The opposing end of that dualism is the masculinised, 'public' space. This legitimises social reforms that lean heavily on conceptions of home as sacrosanct spaces to preserve patriarchal social order.

When the geographical lens did begin to turn to home spaces in the 1990s, this tendency to idealise and universalise home as a homogeneously positive space, where individuality was at its most free, came under scrutiny (Brickell 2012). It is important to note that this 'freedom' is assumed to be

heterosexual, with deviance from socially prescribed heterosexuality excluded from this norm (Domosh 1999; Gorman-Murray 2008b; 2008c; Johnston and Valentine 1995; Wilkinson 2014). I concur with Wilkinson's (2014 2457) argument outlining the privileged place of "coupledom and long-term romantic attachments" over any other form(s) of living arrangement(s). These historic contexts, I argue, have present day relevance. Despite current depictions of more equality between genders, especially in heteronormative homes, women still bear the bulk of the 'mental load' and domestic labour burdens. In other words, in consideration of the circulation of power, it is noticeable that women have 'crossed over' into 'male territories', but men have not made the return journey with quite the same vigour (Gorman-Murray 2008a; 2011; 2012). Representing home spaces as havens may "describe the lives of men for whom home is a refuge from work, but certainly doesn't describe the lives of women for whom home is a workplace" (Blunt and Dowling 2006 16). This is apparent in the way in which care is imagined as gendered. This construction - as the gendered 'nature' of care - reproduces caring as both individualised and ingrained with power inequalities. In a very real way, dualistic representations have assisted this privileging of scholarship concerning what are deemed to be 'public', or 'masculine' spaces over 'private', or 'feminine' spaces (Blunt and Dowling 2006).

This thesis addresses the (micro) material geographies of home. I allege that home 'making', through the material items and their arrangement(s), can be conceptualised as a means of inscribing meaning *into* and *onto* space, and is "a component of embodied and place-centred commemorative practice" (Jones 2007 163). This corresponds with scholarship that argues that materialities are an integral part of the ways which people curate their versions of home, and that those material aspects of their homes are embedded in construction of identity (Gorman-Murray 2008a; 2008c; Hurdley 2013; Morrison 2010; Tarrant 2016).

Household consumption patterns and materiality are recognised in the social sciences as contributing to the formation and marking of identity (Gorman-Murray 2008a; 2008c; Miller 2001). Since the 2000s, geographical

scholarship has been described as undergoing a material (re)turn (Anderson and Wylie 2009). Critiquing many of the readings of this 'turn' within the discipline, Ben Anderson and John Wylie (2009 319) are quick to distance themselves from "equating materiality with 'ground', with 'reality', and with 'the social'". Instead, they consider the relationship between matter and affect, invoking non-representational theoretical (NRT) or "more-than-representational" (Lorimer 2005 91) interpretations. Whilst I acknowledge NRT as one perspective regarding materiality, affect and emotions, I propose that a feminist theoretical framework is a more suitable tool to employ to begin to probe this gap in geographical knowledge.

In considering the material geographies of home, Andrew Gorman-Murray (2008c 283) points to this call to "re-materialize' research in social and cultural geography" as a way of investigating the role of domestic spaces in identity formation and management. I attest that in much the same way that material items may be of significance to those grieving the death of a loved one (Hallam and Hockey 2001), this also occurs with personal belongings during and after the loss experienced in a relationship separation process. Social scientists note the increasing emphasis on 'display' (Dermott and Seymour 2011). I point out that 'display' in this context, is a means by which individuals wish to represent their identities. Applying this to home spaces in this thesis, the intersubjectivity of subject-object relations is closely examined.

Home spaces are often at first glance, a simple matter of built spaces that provide shelter. This impression is fleeting, however, as the multiplicity of both constructions and meanings of home rapidly emerge (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2006; 2008b; Hayden 2002; 2003; McDowell 1997). I posit that the very practices – including marginalisation by positivist approaches - that have caused domestic space to be missed by geographic investigation, may have made it an even more interesting site of scholarship from a feminist perspective. Home spaces have had meanings constituted in a greater variety than is normatively accepted. Removing the constraints felt by any formal definitions or boundaries being placed upon the home, invites new perspectives to gain deeper

understandings of place, space and identity. Home spaces are varied, in both type and scale, and are sites of not just positive ascriptions, but also have negative qualities and a fluidity of meaning, dependent on many factors (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Duncan and Lambert 2004). These may include; the people, animals, and objects present in the home, and are heavily influenced by social and cultural norms and conventions (Goode 2007; Morrison 2010; Philo and Wilbert 2000; Urbanik 2012).

I also wish to explore the perspectives and experiences of material home *un*making practices. This contributes to the 'unmaking' of identity through relationship dissolution and challenge, and (de)construction of home. This may, or may not follow through to what social norms mostly dictate should next occur: the 'rebuilding phase'. Some people go forward as newly single, individual entities, and others as (still, or newly re-) coupled, or a 'relationship' entity. Psychological literature – and dominant discourse - depicts rebuilding as a necessary step, a catalyst for a “transformational process and opportunity for growth” (Warren *et al.* 2008 351). I therefore ask of my participants, and the literature, do people try to recreate, either consciously, or subconsciously, the homes they 'lost' (Goode 2007) or rather, start afresh, with new furnishings and belongings, or (re)arrangement of material items in this pursuit? I also wish to query this perception of 'personal and/or relationship growth' and how it is treated by my participants in relation to their homes and identities.

Place is a key factor in intergenerational emotional and material support when a relationship sours. Those who find themselves physically distant from wider family may be vulnerable to feelings of isolation, and material support in the form of childcare, financial, or help with accommodation and household items. Geographers have noted that intergenerationality has rarely been concentrated on intersectionality (Vanderbeck 2007). Sociologists, Elena Moore *et al.* (2012) look at the effects of the solidarity-conflict dualism, with regards to younger generation divorce, parental divorce, is however, disregarded. Their research highlights the divergence of thought regarding intergenerational differences, but also, the effects of gender on levels of support offered. Some sociologists (Bengston 2001;

Bengston et al. 2002) suggest that unified values and goals link across familial generations, whilst others (Connidis 2003) point out that intergenerational conflict is also common. Many now agree that looking at this in a dualistic manner is flawed, and that both unity and conflict spread across these generational relationships (Connidis 2015; Lüscher and Hoff 2013). Research which has been conducted about intergenerationality appears to predominantly be about grandparents' contributions to younger generations (Tarrant 2009; 2016) with a dearth of geographical scholarship regarding flows of power, support, resources, and so on, in the reverse direction. The level of intergenerational support is significant to the material, social and emotional (dis)comforts that those who separate may face.

Feelings about home inhabit a broad and multi-layered spectrum. From 'housewives' feelings of contentment, to their lived experience(s) often felt as a stultified air of near-incarceration and drudgery by many. Women were depicted in media and popular culture during the post-war era as desirous of nothing more than a husband, home, and children – a life of 'easy' domesticity. This gendered domesticity appears to have been embedded in heterosexual women's identities, which sociologists and geographers alike note has proven to be considerably "culturally resilient" (Chapman 2003 4; see also Blunt 2005; Domosh 1999). I agree that especially for those with such marginalised subjectivities that,

material homemaking practices are a key means of reconciling fractured or fragmented identities in the contemporary western world: various meaningful possessions embody different facets of self, and their juxtaposition at home not only (re)unites these diverse identity-fragments, but materially embeds a 'whole' self within domestic space (Gorman-Murray 2008c 284).

In attempting to unpack some of the binaries observed, I also look at men's experiences of home, historically conceived as, "a confining place from which to escape" (Blunt and Dowling 2006 144). Under such binary fabrication of gender and place, men were encouraged, almost *expected*, to find domesticity confining, bounding them from women, whose home

domain was comforting, nurturing, and protecting. Such essentialist themes are critiqued as reductive, by scholars like Andrew Gorman-Murray (2008a; 2011). It has been considered that ‘escapist’ perceptions - where men, especially, were encouraged to be disconnected from domestic spaces - may at times, have been a deliberate strategy employed by some individuals to explore and express non-heteronormativity, in a variety of ways, not least being exploring queer sexualities by those individuals. I argue, among other things that this was a silent, but somewhat acceptable means to avoid what Judith Butler (1997) describes as the giving up of the possibility of queer love – fluidity of sexuality - in identifying as heterosexual. ‘Home’ is not an acceptable place for this undertaking, as home is represented as wholly heterosexual in the popular imaginary. In terms of adventure and travel as aspirational, societal norms involving “stabilisation of specific arrangements for living” (Ahmed 2004b 144) – the heteronormative, ‘family’ home – are performatively maintained. The temporality of such a lived geography is key to such performativity, as Butler (1993 20) informs, the “power of discourse to produce effects through reiteration”. By repeating social conventions, Ahmed (2004b 93) argues “the historicity of the performative and its role in the generation of effects cannot be separated”. I claim that this is an example of NIMBYism⁵. A means of unspoken, quiet, or maybe denied, knowledge of Othered sexualities lived away from ‘home’.

Contemporarily, while these impressions about men’s experiences of home do linger, they have begun to be challenged in the literature (Gorman-Murray 2006; 2008b; 2011; 2015; Longhurst 2000). Sociologists outline a focus on ‘display’, or what is often read as ‘legitimately family’, and a shift to recognise diversity (Dermott and Seymour 2011; Finch 2011; Gabb 2011). This is in reaction to the “complexity of relational experience” (Gabb 2011 39) that makes up so many home spaces. The social institution of marriage as the organisational framework of hegemonic heterosexuality (Wolkomir 2009) displaces alternative forms of intimate relationship as

⁵ Not In My Back Yard: An acronym to denote opposition by residents to something that will/may affect or take place in residents’ locality.

Other. There exist a variety of intimate relationships, including *some* polyamorous, but also, more commonly, 'supposed' - but perhaps not necessarily lived - monogamous examples. By this, I mean where one or both partners are involved in either a disclosed, or an undisclosed, extra-relational affair. With such relationship variety in mind, the home is regularly, but by no means always, placed as 'off limits' to anyone other than those in the primary relationship. It is, however, important to note that intimate relationships are not simply a case of binarized categories of heterosexual or homosexual, gay or straight, single or coupled (Johnston and Longhurst 2010). Included are a variety of sexual, geographical, historical, political and social identities, a diversity that often disrupts established norms.

Queer geographies: extending queer theory

Queer theory worked its way to the forefront of much social science scholarship from the 1990s as the hegemony of heteronormativity was being challenged more openly, particularly within Western cultural contexts (Johnston and Longhurst 2010). Geographers have engaged with the mutual constitution and performative aspects of a range of everyday spaces with queer subjectivities (Bell *et al.* 1994). As the discipline is evolving to consider queer perspectives and give voice to those who are marginalised by hegemony, I agree however that,

While maintaining the instability, elasticity and limits of identity categories, the concept of hegemony reveals how the production of identities and the critique of heteronormativity are themselves effects of hegemonic processes – and therefore not per se subversive (Varela *et al.* 2011 19).

In other words, although hegemonic thinking may be changing to include non-heteronormative discourses, that very process has contributed to the formation of homonormative discourses that privilege and prescribe certain 'ways of being' LGBTQIA. For example, and of relevance to this thesis, coupledness is still privileged over all other forms of domestic arrangements, and binarization of sexuality(ies) is dominant.

Whilst societal norms ascribe heterosexuality as the 'natural', unremarkable order of being, contemporarily, marginalised groups are becoming more visible, and this visibility is having the effect of both challenging, but also at times, affirming many of these conceptualisations. For example, depictions, especially in popular culture - television and cinema - of gay and lesbian couples as suburban, monogamous, regularly white, and middle class, creating nuclear families (see ABC's *Modern Family* 2009-; 2010 feature film *The Kids Are All Right*), mirroring heteronormative constructs. Intersectionality is not regularly depicted, with identities often simplified to highlight just one axis of difference. Gavin Brown (2012) links the term homonormativity to neoliberal consumerism, suggesting LGBTQIA subjectivities have been apparently homogenised by the process. It is, however, important to note "that heteronormativity cannot (and should not) always be neatly conflated with heterosexuality" (Wilkinson 2014 2453).

'Queer', is a term reclaimed originally by the LGBTQIA 'community'⁶, and has been appropriated⁷ here (as it has been elsewhere) to discuss many marginalised subjectivities, in recent years. Singledom is marginalised by societal norms, whereby social and political frameworks privilege coupledness over all other forms of intimate, and non-intimate relationships (Wilkinson 2013; 2014). I argue that these discourses have queered singles – especially those who are single-by-choice - but also note the fluidity of 'relationship status' and identity(ies). I investigate if and how social constructs affect the material geographies of my participants. I examine the (particularly gendered) way society discusses personal aspirations throughout the lifecourse, and how singledom, especially female singledom, is queered by these conversations (Johns 2017).

Individuals may strongly identify as 'part of a couple' and struggle with identity when that breaks down, and they are perhaps unexpectedly and regressively considered as single, and hurry to attempt to re-partner to

⁶ I acknowledge the politics of the use of the term 'community' in this context. Doing so denies the heterogeneity within a group of people whose intersectionality of identities are so much more, and the possibility of fluidity, than sexuality labels allow for.

⁷ I acknowledge the sometimes-controversial appropriation of the term 'queer'. I use it in this context for its "power to wrench frames" (Berlant and Warner 1995 348).

recover a coupled identity. Conversely, ideologies about intimate relationships may be challenged, and identities may be reconstructed to embrace a single (queer) identity. As Kath Browne (2006 887) explains, “More broadly, uncoupling queer from normative hetero/homosexualities enables the exploration of new ways of thinking difference and offers critique beyond the assumed transgressiveness of the ‘other’” (see also Podmore 2013; Wright 2010a).

Sociologists and anthropologists identify that couple relationships based primarily on romantic love, is a relatively recent phenomenon (Coontz 2006). Marriage – as the hegemonic form of couple relationship - originated as a social contract, an economic, and often political tool, with aims that included social and biological reproduction, and as a means of regulating sex and sexuality (D’Emilio and Freedman 2012). Within this structure, labour is largely gendered; males assigned the role of provider and protector, females, nurturer and in need of ‘protection’ (Bryant 2013). Enabling the cogs to keep turning in the marriage machine, romantic love – or “the ideology of love” (Schneebaum 2014) - is an essential tool in modernity’s reproduction of mutually constituted gender and sexuality (Wolkomir 2009).

I note that within the myriad and nuanced ways that monogamous love is experienced, that one focus when intimate relationships break down, or are severely challenged, is on the material. In considering material geographies, I am mindful of the danger of conducting somewhat superficial geographies. Therefore, I consider it important to this research to “evaluate the interconnectivity and co-constitution of materialities and their geographies” (Tolia-Kelly 2011 153).

‘Stickiness’: unsticking the emotional and the material

Conducting research on emotional geographies (re)produces what Sara Ahmed (2004a) expresses as the collective nature of emotions. Attention to reflexivity and positionality during the collection of empirical data, sits propitiously within feminist frameworks (Laliberté and Schurr 2016).

Emotionally sensitive topics are surrounded by a certain amount of stickiness, and this stickiness, in an apparently linguistically contrary manner, circulates, contributing to affect, but at the same time, adhering to individuals and groups, researcher and respondent(s) alike. My experience is consistent with the description of how power relationships are constantly interrogated during the research process. I also concur with Ahmed (2004a 31) that, “contact clearly involves the subject, as well as histories that come before the subject”. Whilst she goes on to further explain the influence of long histories of contact, for example; in the case of racism, I perceive, that on a micro-scale, that interpersonal histories and knowledges – or the absence of these - also affect the interchange between myself-as-researcher, and (friends versus strangers as) interviewees. I engage with reflexive practices that appreciate the ambulatory nature of social environments which are constantly (re)producing knowledges and subjectivities (Laliberté and Schurr 2016).

People collect and surround themselves with an array of items intended to mark identity. The hegemony of heteronormative coupledness contributes to identity construction, whether identity fits into and reflects normative views, or demonstrates resistance to societal norms, traces of identity are apparent in the materialities of home (Tarrant 2016). When an intimate relationship faces challenge, or is terminated, opportunity arises to reassess identity, and material preferences. This may include a reassessment of the meanings of materialities. Passing items from generation to generation is common practice, and viewed by many as a means of displaying love for and of home, and by association, family. Household items transferred in these ways are not necessarily of large financial value, rather, the worth of the items is instead determined by emotional attachment. The process of dividing the material objects and collections often add layers of pain to an already distressing breakup. Material objects are often the focus of legal proceedings, as networks of feelings are disentangled, cleaving what was once imagined as one entity, back into two, and power struggles are often observed to be enacted through ‘rights’ to such items (Goode 2007). This is reflected by the observation of the close association between, and

mutual constitution of, home and identity. It is also a vivid illustration of the assertion that:

Neither home, identity, or the relationship between them is 'fixed'. Identities are fluid, composite and fractured, composed of multiple axes of difference and ongoingly changing. Likewise, as a site for constituting the shifting self, home is not a fixed space, but remade over and over again through everyday homemaking practices that reflect personal identities (Gorman-Murray 2008c 287).

The embeddedness of gentrifying processes of 'homemaking' are discursively "positioned in a feminine subject position" (Domosh 1999 433). I instead intend to look at the emotional 'value' of how the material items in and of our homes contribute to the meanings we attach to these places. In other words, how the same 'things' are, by nature of temporality, spatiality and individual subjectivity, commodified, and yet at, in and by others, not. Geographers have investigated the stickiness of materialities of home and subjectivities (see Blunt and Varley 2004; Brickell 2014; Gorman-Murray 2006; Morrison 2010). However, I find the autoethnographic account of sociologist, Jackie Goode (2007), resonates loudly regarding materialities and the self. Goode (2007) investigates the multiplicity of meanings, and relationships between objects, collectors, producers - and particularly applicable to this research - intimate partners, in what Appadurai (1986 366) describes as the "politics of value". Describing in her investigation of contested, fluid and multiple meanings to objects that,

An approach to material culture that privileges the mundane and sensual qualities of artefacts as well as their symbolic meanings enables the unpicking of the subtle connections with cultural lives and values that are objectified through such forms (Goode 2007 365).

In this investigation of home spaces, participants experienced tensions between intimate, or formerly intimate partners, over household items and personal belongings. I therefore documented stories about the relationship between such items and the meanings ascribed to them.

This research illustrates how intimate relationships are partially constituted by the materialities of home, (re)producing coupled identities as distinct from, and at times overriding, individual identities (Morrison 2010). The research extends what Gill Valentine (2008 2098) describes as missing from geographical scholarship, “‘family’ studies as an absent presence within the discipline”. Material items are often conceptualised as part of the glue that binds couples – and families - together, and contributes to keeping them bound. The process of ‘unsticking’ these bonds, especially during the process of dividing the material objects, often involves anxiety and conflict, and cleavage is rarely a tidy process. Couples, families, and individuals are, to varying degrees, socialised by generational affects. Material objects, including those passed between generations, accumulate emotional, sticky, “affective value” (Ahmed 2004b 11). Contemporary influences, such as (social) media and the behaviours and opinions of peers, reproduce and circulate meaning, and are material to the ways in which people attempt to make sense of their worlds. Identity and materiality, I argue, are mutually constituted.

Summary

To address the theoretical discussion on relationship challenges and the material geographies of home, I examine the home as a key geographical space. The emotional, affectual and material repercussions of damaged romantic relationships are commonplace, yet are under-examined in geographic literature on love and relationships. I use a feminist lens to examine the material and emotional effects on spaces of home on a small group of affected people with links to the Waikato region. This research engages with emotional geographical theory, which notes the effects of emotions on how, when, why, and where people interact with and make meaning of space in their everyday lives. Linkages and slippages between place, emotions and identity help geographers in their quest to understand space and place in the pursuit of furthering geographical knowledge. The importance of scale as a key geographical concept is pivotal to understanding the reasons for probing further into knowledges concerning

geographies of home. Romantic love, and its rupture, are investigated in the context of home, expanding on the work of geographers who have identified the under-explored implications on and of space, of love (Morrison 2010; 2013; Morrison *et al.* 2013a; 2013b). In a social environment which presents love as aspirational, this project queries dominant discourses regarding privileging the notion of heteronormative coupledness over singled identities. In doing so, I have theoretically aligned the findings of this research with the work of Wilkinson (2013; 2014), who extends the notion of queer geographies to look beyond sexuality, to include further facets of self, as in intersectionality theory.

Chapter Three: Methodology

In this chapter, I outline the methodological framework I employ in this research. I engage with qualitative methods, which are rooted in feminist frameworks that are intended to contribute to knowledges regarding people, place and phenomena. Doing so, I respect that there is no one “universal female identity’ (often based on the unstated assumptions of white, heterosexual, able-bodied ‘Western’ norms)” (Johnson and Madge 2016 78). A qualitative approach, then is able to illuminate the often hard to reach spaces and experiences of relationship breakdowns and challenges.

I examine how knowledge production is situated. Embodiment is considered, both as a researcher, but also embodied actions and reactions of participants. These occur both in the research process, but also within respondents’ personal geographies. I first consider the research tools employed, and why they were selected for this project. Within this research framework I explore the nuanced differences identified in the type of data collected, between the short, semi-structured interview, and ‘staying over’. I then summarise the discourse, and then data analyses and how they were approached and practised. Finally, reflexivity and my own positionality regarding this research is considered. Included is a discussion about research ethics, especially in consideration of researcher on the spectrum of insider-outsider. I point to the empowering and therapeutic potential and heuristic properties of feminist approaches and methods (Johnson and Madge 2016), including a look at some pitfalls and ethical dilemmas both anticipated, but also those less anticipated, that were encountered.

The stories that respondents so generously shared with me about their experiences of challenges to their intimate relationships, add to understandings of the disruption of home. The varied and nuanced ways that individuals act, react and feel as they negotiate often difficult and challenging emotional terrain is humbling. The feminist methodologies I use, with their associated emphases on interpretation and representation (Bondi 2013), illuminate and disseminate information and experiences shared with me on this research journey. I contend that these are the most appropriate

means by which to tell these stories and garner knowledges and meaning from their telling.

The research toolkit

I used mixed qualitative research methods, involving; semi-structured interviews (see Appendices A and B), participant observation, solicited and one unsolicited visual and written diaries (see Appendix C) were utilised to gather primary data. I followed up with email and direct online messaging with four respondents, to clarify and expand on interview transcripts (see Appendix D). The participant observation was in the form of home visits, with all but one of the respondents, to gain a deeper insight into spatial and material arrangements within the home. The participant who wished to be interviewed elsewhere, I met in her children's school grounds during the summer recess, at her request, as she was concerned her husband⁸ or children may return home during the interview. I also spent longer periods, overnight or longer, with three respondents, and this gave me even greater access to their everyday spaces as they shared their thoughts and feelings. I employed snowball recruitment methods, talking to friends and posting my recruitment information poster (see Appendix E) on a Facebook page with secure settings.

I also approached relationship counselling providers, via email, in the greater Waikato to request permission to display posters designed to recruit participants. I met with two counsellors in person, and hung the recruitment poster in four consulting rooms, resulting in two respondents coming forward.

Overall, I recruited and interviewed eleven participants who all self-identified as heterosexual, and participants were given pseudonyms. One of the original eleven interviewed later decided they would prefer not to participate, and withdrew from the research. This person explained that a divorce was

⁸ Possessive nouns indicating relationship status, such as, 'husband', 'wife' and 'partner' have been used throughout as the participants themselves have used them when referring to their (ex)partners and/or (ex) spouses.

now underway and they felt it was inappropriate and unhelpful to be included, so I withdrew all of their data from the analysis.

I found – not unexpectedly due to the inherent ‘sameness’ of those connecting via the snowball technique – that the research was informed by nine Pākehā⁹ women, with a spread of ages from late 30s to late 70s (see Table 3.1). These women, often newly single, or teetering on the brink, undecided about whether to continue with, or end, a relationship, were prepared to talk about their experiences and feelings regarding relationships, identity and ‘their’ home(s). I also spoke with one middle-aged, Pākehā male participant. Further, provisions were made to interview couples together (see Appendix B), however, none were forthcoming. I include information about the type of housing tenure each contributor is currently experiencing. This is done to highlight differences, if any, there may be in how respondents are connected, or not connected, to their current homes due to neoliberal ideologies regarding home ownership versus renting, but also to acknowledge that some previous joint home owners are now renting, since their relationship dissolution. I concede the lack of diversity in my participants’ demographic make-up, but also see this as a strength of the research. It has allowed a deeper examination of the experiences of a dominant, often taken-for-granted group.

⁹ A Māori word used in Aotearoa New Zealand to denote non-Māori, often a white-skinned New Zealander.

Table 3.1: Participants' details

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Housing tenure</i>	<i>Number/Length of relationship(s) discussed</i>	<i>Relationship status at time of interview</i>	<i>Time passed since rupture of relationship(s)/separation</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
Beth	74	Female	Joint owner, spouse in rest home care	4/> 30 years, 6 years, ~3 years, 6 years	(re)married	~25 years (widowed), ~15 years (separated), ~10 years (separated), currently married	Retired dairy farmer/office administrator
Lisa	mid 40s	Female	Joint owner-occupier	2/~ 10 years, ~ 10 years	married	> 10 years (divorced), currently married	Counsellor
Mulan	49	Female	Owner-occupier	1/> 20 years	divorced	4 years	Laboratory pathologist
Coco	early 40s	Female	Renting, single parent, joint custody of minor children	1/> 15 years	separated	1 year	Early childhood educator/centre manager
Annie	mid 40s	Female	Renting, single parent, full custody of minor children	1/> 10 years	separated	several months	Former teacher, currently health sciences student
Jen	mid 50s	Female	Owner-occupier, 2 dwellings, including holiday home	2/14 years and < 5 years	divorced	~15 years (divorced), ~5 years (divorced)	Secondary school teacher
Steve	54	Male	Joint owner-occupier, 2 dwellings, including holiday home	1/29 years	divorced	8 years	Farmer
Lynette	late 40s	Female	Owner-occupier, 2 dwellings, including holiday home, full custody of minor children	1/28 years	divorced	3 years	Veterinarian
Gretel	early 40s	Female	Owner-occupier	1/< 10 years	(still) de facto	several years, remained in relationship	Self-employed agricultural
Pixie	49	Female	Joint owner-occupier	1/> 20 years	(still) married	several years, remained married	Interior designer

Participants were also invited to engage in self-directed photography, drawings, and solicited diaries or journals. All participants agreed to draw a picture of their interpretation of the word 'home' during our interview sessions. Solicited drawing by research respondents has been used in geographical research since the 1990s (Johnston and Valentine 1995; Longhurst 2005b; Morrison 2007). Apart from the 'ice-breaking', 'fun' aspect of actively drawing, laughing at one's own depiction, maybe lack of artistic prowess, one of the most useful purposes it served was to connect the participants to a key theme of home. It is such an everyday word, and yet when I asked my participants to draw it, there was pause for deep thought

by most of them. Some, like Beth¹⁰, a woman aged in her mid-70's, were quite literal, equating the word – home - with house, drawing what looked like housing floor plans. Others preferred to conceptualise it as the view of the exterior of a house, or a cross-sectional, 'dolls' house' perspective. Several drew people inside, gathered together, 'family' units represented as close, warm and caring, fireplaces were symbolic in several drawings. Further still, some interpretations were more ethereal, with indications of sensual geographies, with smells, views, tactility. Annie preferred to encase words that felt like home to her in what can be recalled as a 'house-shaped' outline, inside a wreath (see Figure 3.1):

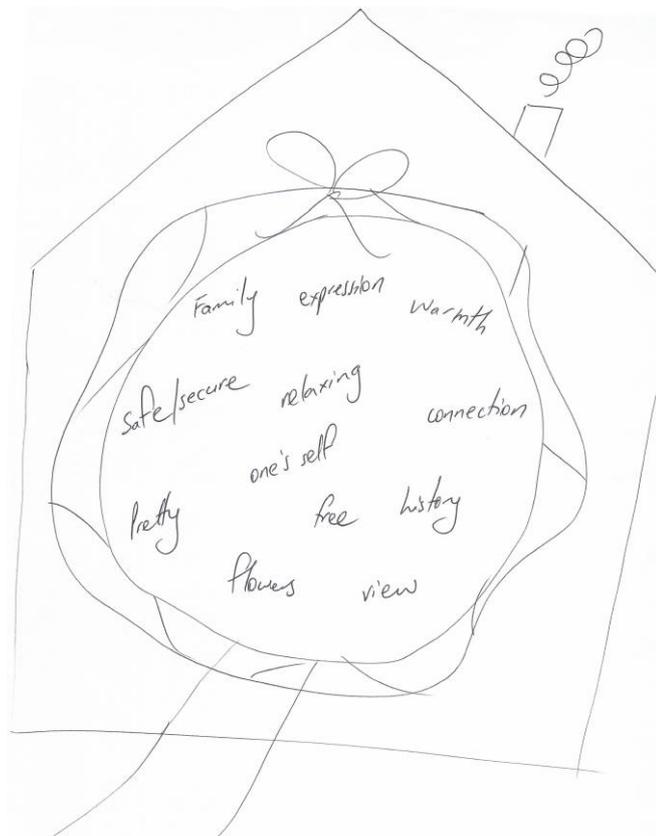


Figure 3.1: Annie's drawing of home

Diary notes were written, usually after driving a few kilometres down the road from the interview venue(s). I utilised an audio recording device as the key means to document interviews, agreeing with Dunn (2016) who informs

¹⁰ All place, family, pet names, and non-New Zealand nationalities have been changed to protect participants' anonymity.

that excessive note-taking can disrupt rapport and give cause to miss key points due to the concentration required.

One challenge that I faced was in talking about love. It was not a topic that I found my participants were terribly forthcoming about. After the first couple of interviews, I decided that love needed to be addressed more directly. I consider a few reasons for this reluctance to discuss love. Firstly, as love is not a topic that garners much academic clout, I believe that my participants simply over-looked its worth. Secondly, there is a cultural reluctance to discuss love in 'everyday' conversation. We have privatised and individualised love, and the gendered, binarized meanings assigned to love, have marginalised it. But thirdly, and possibly most notably, the people I was talking to were likely to have a jaded outlook on love. They had loved, and lost. Talking about a concept that they had likely once believed in, but which had caused personal distress and discomfort, was not something that many of my participants were hastening to do. Ruminating on this, I decided that a little discourse analysis was called for, to help unpack where love might sit in my investigation of the materialities of home.

I examine how knowledge production is situated. Embodiment is considered, both as a researcher, but also embodied actions and reactions of participants. These occur both in the research process, but also within respondents' personal geographies. I also consider reflexivity and my own positionality regarding this research. Finally, I acknowledge, and briefly discuss, the empowering and therapeutic potential and heuristic properties of feminist approaches and methods (Johnson and Madge 2016), including a look at some pitfalls and ethical dilemmas both anticipated, but also those less anticipated, that were encountered.

Of the five journals distributed, three were filled in and returned (see Appendix C). These free-style diaries, along with the one unsolicited diary that was offered to me by one respondent prior to our interview, give yet another insight into the feelings and identity (re)formation of those participants. The use of diaries gave respondents time and space to process their own thoughts and feelings about the research, and provide rich,

longitudinal interpretations of emotional and embodied experiences (Felip *et al.* 2015).

Identifying that there had been little direct discussion in the interview of embodied reactions to splitting up, I followed up with email or Facebook Messenger messages (see Appendix D) – preferences having been indicated in contact details on signed consent forms (see Appendix F) - to five participants. This resulted in four replying with descriptions about their embodied reactions to the emotional turmoil they had, or were, experiencing. Two contributors later sent self-directed images, however, five gave permission for me to take and use photographs during and after their interviews.

I was given consent to contact five contributors, via Facebook's Messenger application, or by email after the initial interview and transcription process, to ask more nuanced questions to clarify information given during the interview, or after reading their research diaries.

Semi-structured interviews

Consulting with the current literature (Phillips and Johns 2012; Winchester and Rofe 2016) confirmed that the use of semi-structured interviews appeared to be a sound starting point to launch qualitative research about this sensitive topic. I chose this as the primary data collection method as I felt that the knowledges surrounding this topic were likely to be very situated (Rose 1997). A major strength of semi-structured interviews is that they encourage elicitation (Longhurst 2016). The 'structured' part of semi-structured, also allowed exploration of key themes guiding the research and discussion, while also allowing my participants to add their own perspectives, some of which I may not have anticipated (Bryman 2012). These interviews were conversational in manner, the initial interviews were all conducted in person, either in the participant's home, and/or work space(s) over an informal "cup of tea" (Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst 2017a). With the aim of working towards building some reciprocity into the research, I provided morning or afternoon tea.

As research has a formal aura about it, it was important I let my participants know that it was not to be all about sadness and formality. We needed to be able to be as relaxed as possible, to be open to humour and to grasp the opportunities for (re)construction of an empowering identity. This was a factor my supervisors were quick to point out when I expressed doubts about researching a sensitive, potentially emotionally draining topic. During the interview process, it was apparent that many participants were acutely aware of how knowledge is shaped, and disseminated. Beth indicated her motivations for being involved in the research were based more on altruism, than finding her voice, although I imagine there were elements of both.

Beth: Well, I just hope that telling some of my story, even though some of it is kind of embarrassing, will help ...¹¹ you know, someone. That doesn't know about this [experience]. So they can make better lives for themselves. So they hear it (interview 11 December 2016).

Using a feminist perspective meant adhering to a non-judgemental, reciprocal interchange of opinions and ideas, and attempts to break down the hierarchy of interviewer and respondent (Bryman 2012; Longhurst 2010). Nine of the ten interviews were conducted in the respondents' own homes. The other was held outdoors, in a local school's grounds. All respondents were given an information sheet (see Appendix G), to explain the purpose of this research. The interview schedule was flexible, as I anticipated, and experienced, that unique perspectives resulted in new areas of exploration that were not identified prior to embarking on this research. The questions were designed to explore feelings about home, identity and emotions. I found anticipating what types of challenges that my participants would have encountered in their personal relationships was a difficult aspect. I did not ask directly, rather letting participants share as much, or as little, as they preferred to about these events. I was prepared to include many perspectives, whilst remaining respectful and empathetic.

¹¹ Conventions used in transcripts throughout include: ellipsis (...) to indicate parts of transcript edited out; double slash (//) to indicate interrupted speech; **bold print** to indicate distressed discourse; square-bracketed italics [*laughs*] to indicate non-verbal gestures, facial expressions, actions; square brackets [added material] to indicate explanations for reader clarity.

Retaining a focus on the materialities – the physical spaces, and arrangement of material objects within the home, but also the temporal aspects of how long someone had been in a home since the challenge was experienced - was helpful in this regard. I gently emphasised that I was interested in challenging dominant discourses, particularly dualisms, by recognising and often naming them, and encouraging discussion about the fluidity and spaces in between either end of these binary pairings.

I was anxious about the content of the interview schedule, my own research inexperience; interviewing some participants who were friends, others who were complete strangers. After completion of the first interview, there were subtle tweaks made to the questions, and I noticed myself relax a little as I became more confident with the topic, how to negotiate friends-as-participant roles, and manage any anxiety in meeting my previously unknown participants. It was also important to the research to try to assuage my own identity crisis; as friend, work colleague, childhood friend, daughter's childhood friend, graduate student, and all the other roles I may have been known as by my participants.

As I identified that the research was potentially sensitive, I prepared a list of support services for any participants who indicated, either directly, or indirectly, that they may need further support as they negotiate their new realities, feelings and geographies (Appendix H). For the participants who now live outside of the Waikato region, I amended the support services list to be more relevant to their current geographical location (see Appendix I).

Staying over: interrogating an unexpected methodological tool

I did spend considerably more time with some of my participants than others. This was primarily due to access, the distance involved in visiting with them. It is also important to know that these participants were all friends prior to undertaking this research. I address the contrasts in spending more time - staying with one contributor for several days, and two others, overnight - with the shorter sixty to ninety-minute interview visit only. These experiences provided a different and enlightening perspective on people's

lived geographies and there was a participatory feel to them. I agree with Eric Laurier's (2010) contention that having prior (and recent) experience of relationship breakdown gave me immediate insider status with these participants in their homes. They understood that I was familiar with shared custodial arrangements and the materialities, and importantly, the emotionalities of relationship challenges. In other words, I had the opportunity to gather a deeper and richer data set than the one to two-hour semi-structured interview provides. When consulting the geographical literature, I identify a gap in using overnight (or longer) stays with participants as a methodological tool.

For the interviews that included a longer stay, I brought other food items, such as breads, cheeses and preserves, to contribute to the household's store cupboard. There has also been some electronic communication, using several platforms, for example; photos and comments submitted via email; Snapchat and Facebook Messenger (see Appendix D), following on from the interview sessions, with a couple of participants. As such, I consider, in the same manner as Gail Adams-Hutcheson and Robyn Longhurst (2017a), how mediated all these interfaces are in the research process. These (electronic) communications have presented small challenges, including my care in dealing with these from an ethical standpoint. I have made note of these challenges, ensuring participants understand when they have given explicit permissions to use images and comments submitted in this fashion. I have also referred to the differences between these delayed responses, as opposed to the responses made 'on the spot' during a face-to-face interview session. To express my gratitude to my participants, I also propose to produce a synopsis version of this thesis to be distributed to them after submission and marking is completed.

The most revealing aspect of this, with the participants that I spent a longer period with, was that I observed that the 'mask' that is worn. I witnessed a complexity of emotions, illustrated in this context by saying one thing and feeling another (Adams-Hutcheson 2014). I noted that when staying over, the 'healed/healing' performance was dropped, at least in part during the interview process, with more of a performed identity displayed in the

'everyday'. I saw more clearly, the deep pain, and the questions they had about identity, and the ruptures to self that were experienced. I made notes about my observation of this phenomenon when I first became aware of it, in my research diary (see Appendix J), after staying with Coco for several days in her home.

On returning 'home' – I reflected on this interview and the time spent in Adelaide with Coco. It was a bit of a lightbulb moment for me, understanding the nuances and limitations of the interview as opposed to longer fieldwork. While I was with Coco, she was candid about her experiences, but I felt she projected a mostly accepting and positive outlook about her situation, as a single mum, dealing with significant challenges. But when we got to her [empty, at the weekend] work space – a space she helped design, and adores – I noticed a change. Her vulnerability and deep sadness were more apparent, with tears, and wobbly voice as she articulated her feelings (research diary entry January 2017).

Performances of a public persona that was read as 'healed,' 'strong,' and 'capable' contrasted with private identities which seemed emotionally raw, that peeped out during the relative privacy. The situated influence of interview times and spaces, were noted in all participants, to varying degrees. I argue that permanent traces are left embedded in place, but also in the minds and bodies of those who experience intimate relationship ruptures. The depth of these traces varies with the type of experience itself and there are temporal effects. It is important, for this research, to explore the attachment, or detachment to or from place, that participants feel, for a variety of reasons. These may include relationships with place over the lifecourse, and the effects of destabilising binarized constructs, such as topophilia and topophobia (Tuan 1977).

Textual discourse analysis

In consideration of love, power and sex, is it possible to separate this trio regarding the concept of the constitution of identity within the context of

intimate relationships? Of particular interest to this research is the co-constitution of love, sex and the power relations, and hegemony of monogamy embedded in 'coupledom' to the construction of identity. To delve into how love, relationships, and splitting up are imagined in Western societies, I examined media examples, such as newspaper, magazine, and other popular textual representations, such as blog spaces. In doing so, I draw on Chad Steacy *et al.*'s (2015) assertion that discourse analysis has been somewhat underutilised as a methodological tool in critical human geography, and hope to illustrate the pervasiveness of discourse in constraining personal choices regarding relationship rupture.

I challenge the hegemony of coupledom over singledom. This is apparent in advertising, blog spaces, television programming, movies and romantic literature, and coupledom's institutionalised, privileged status in terms of legal, economic and social policy paradigms (Wilkinson 2013; 2014). Even blogs with forums designed to empower people in the wake of relationship challenge, are often replete with conversations and commenters reproducing the metanarrative of either remaining coupled, or plans for future re-coupling. Rarely do blog commenters discuss singledom as a permanent option (see chumplady.com 2012-2017; emotionalaffair.org 2017; marriagebuilders.com 1995-2016). Some go further, and suggest that all 'marriages' are salvageable, if one party to the relationship just tries hard enough (marriageemissions.com n.d.; Wheat 1983). The fear of divorce-as-failure, and the 'threat' of singledom to follow, plays powerfully on normative ideologies and the hegemony of coupledom.

When a couple relationship ends, or faces a significant challenge, many people turn to the 'self-help' section of their local bookstore (see Chapman 2015; Glass 2003; Spring 2004), or electronic versions of these, in the form of internet spaces - online bookstores - I predominantly used Amazon.com. Searching the relationship help section of the website throws up a multitude of options. Many also turn to the helping professions, of counselling, therapy and psychology, who also often recommend readings for those experiencing relationship stress. I witnessed (and personally undertook) this search for answers, partially constituted in an apparent attempt to 'fix' a

relationship, or oneself, or one's partner(s). Typing into Internet search engines a myriad of phrases and keywords, often desperate to soothe the pain, to escape emotions they feel overwhelmed by. There is a plethora of spaces that promise to show you how to repair your relationship (see emotionalaffair.org 2017; marriagebuilders.com 1995-2016; Heitler 2013). I analysed a sampling of these materials, selected from some recommended readings from therapists, but also most popular search engine (Google) listings, for phrases and words including; 'how to repair my marriage,' 'marriage help,' 'infidelity,' 'divorce,' and so on. I point to an industry (and virtual 'space') built on perpetuating the power relations present in the status quo; that marginalised subjectivities are depreciated further by the continued privileging of coupledness - despite personal pain - and to this end, of 'staying together.'

Data analysis

During the data analysis phase of this research, I wrestled with the politics of what to 'leave in' and what to 'leave out.' I wondered, should I exclude what is considered too intimate, as has tended to be the norm in masculinist geographical perspectives? As a feminist geographer, I note that even in the relatively 'safe' and 'private' interview space, often with people I knew well, and in the context of intimate geographies, there was hesitancy - how much, and in what format to share - both from myself, but also my participants. Social norms dictate that 'over-sharing' one's intimate emotions and embodied reactions is not acceptable. To do so is marginalised, as "The messy materiality of bodies is often associated with women, femininity and Otherness. So too are emotion and affects, especially those that are heightened or considered excessive" (Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst 2017b 46). Reflexively, I queried my abilities, particularly in this academic context, to sort through the raw data, and what I chose to privilege by writing about. I agree that there is a degree of fear, and marginalisation, in approaching and dealing with extreme or uncontained emotionality by the academy (see Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst 2017b; Bondi 2005b).

Seven of the participants were friends or acquaintances, and I knew some of their (relationship break up and/or challenge) stories intimately. Some of them knew some of mine. As such, I assumed a role of intimate insider (Cuomo and Massaro 2016; Massaro and Cuomo 2017), and the researcher angst that this entails, “the concerns of trespass, misrepresentation, reduction, and finally awfulness haunt[s me] as [a] feminist scholar” (Cuomo and Massaro 2016 94) as I study this group of people, in spaces and places with which I can closely relate.

Mental analysis was already occurring during and immediately after the semi-structured interviews took place. Research diary notes were made, as soon after the interview as possible. I began the formal part of analysing the data as soon as I could, transcribing verbatim as much of each interview as I could manage, in between meeting with each participant. Despite this, there was a backlog after the final interview was completed, and I spent some time completing transcription. I employed open coding (Bryman 2012) to locate recurring themes. Examples of words and themes that resonated with geographical significance to this project included, ‘home’, ‘power’, ‘gender’ and ‘stuff’ (materialities). Emotions, like ‘joy’, ‘heartbreak’, ‘guilt’, and expressions of abjection (‘eww’, ‘yuck’), silences, emotional, embodied signals, such as tearfulness, ‘wobbly’ speech, deep inhalation, sighs, and so on, were indicated, as cues to affective register(s). These were highlighted and I made notes on the printed transcript pages. I then made headings on a large wall-mounted ‘mind-map’ (see Appendix K), and notes on sticky notes, with comments and what I felt were linkages between themes and ideas.

I still did not have a clear focus formed, and the process of beginning to write helped to identify and clarify the themes I was to concentrate on in this project. This was a form of writing-as-processing, a way of allowing ideas to form, and then consolidate (Adams-Hutcheson 2014).

Positionality and reflexivity

Qualitative research is a process of locating and uncovering meaning of our lived geographies and experience(s) (Bondi 2013). Reflexively, I observe that having an outsider's 'awareness' and empathy is no substitute for the lived experience, that enriches empathetic understandings of the emotionality and (de- and re-) construction of identity involved. I argue this has created space for me to gain deeper understandings of the term 'situated knowledges' in that, "all knowledge is produced in specific circumstances and that those circumstances shape it in some way" (Rose 1997 305). During the research process, I consider the mutual (re)constitution of subjectivities in the research relationship. Pondering this, I concur with Einagel (2002) that there were - and as I write, still are - times when (re)making identity is prioritised over other facets of the research.

I am a mature, Pākehā, middle class mother, and graduate feminist geographer. I am interested in those who, like myself, feel links with the greater Waikato region. These people may no longer live here, but feel they have the region embedded in their identity – as 'home' - to some degree. I locate and recognise a myriad of tensions and ask, if I feel these, what are my participants encountering and experiencing before, during and after interviews? Realising the mutual constitution of the effects of my subjectivities and the research, I approached the interviews with a certain amount of trepidation – who was I (to be) in my role as interviewer? I was mindful, nervous even, about two key points; that this was quite a sensitive topic, but also that some of my personal contacts were likely to know something of my personal experience. Of particular note is my position as a member of a small, rural community, a mother of young adults, with the surveillant gaze that this environment nurtures. This included some of the more oppressive features of discourse – gossip and the (un)masking effects surrounding (my) relationship challenge and later breakdown, the subjects and subjectivities involved, and the (home) spaces in which these processes occurred. Hannah Avis (2002 192) expresses many of my own tensions as she wrestles with 'self' and how she is (re)presented in her research role,

Consideration of the ... interviews that began my fieldwork has meant recognizing the **me** in the process. It has meant recognizing the multiplicity of that **me**. I do not only mean the me that is classed, gendered, and racialized, the me that is in and of the academy, that must be reflexively encompassed, that is (re)scripted, in the course of my work, but also the me that is a friend to my friends, that sings with them, drinks in the pub with them, goes to the cinema with them, and now, the me that interviews them (emphasis in original).

Reflecting on the dichotomous nature of my position-as-researcher lead me to further interrogate how to negotiate potential conflicts from an ethical standpoint.

Engaging with feminist methods leads me to consider the ethical implications of doing research. The apparently dichotomous ideologies of Lawrence Kohlberg's (cited in Vivat 2002 238) view that "‘mature,’ ‘advanced,’ or ‘post-conventional’ morality is characterized by abstraction and detachment from concrete situations in favour of producing generalized rules and laws, and that women tend not to reach this stage of moral development", in contrast with Carol Gilligan's "ethics of care" (cited in Vivat 2002 237) with which she argues that there are two different, gendered moralities,

such that men tend to adhere to what she calls an ethics of justice, or ‘morality of rights,’ which has fairness and equality as its primary values, while women tend to adhere to what she calls an ethic of care, or ‘morality of responsibility,’ which has inclusion and protection from harm as its primary values (Vivat 2002 238).

I agree with Vivat's (2002) examination of the two, in that there is room for an ethical stance which borrows from these two perspectives, a form of ‘situated ethics’ - a term she embraces in part from the idea of ‘situated knowledge,’ as outlined by Donna Haraway (1988). She outlines this as an attempt to break down the binaries and universalisms embedded in each position, and adapt the ethical framework to best suit the situation and type of research undertaken. In other words, there is a place for detachment, but

also a place for a more empathetic and attached engagement in social research. I believe this research calls for a more attached style, but that its sensitive nature also requires negotiation of emotional territory that may involve some detachment for both the sake of the participant, and myself as the researcher, taking care to avoid and minimise potential emotional or physical harm to either party.

Reflexively, I see that this positionality, as both somewhat an insider, but also outsider to this research, brings something extra to it, but simultaneously creates difficulties in interviewing and writing about the topic. Neutrality is not something I can – nor wish to - lay claim to. I do, however, accept the challenges of writing about identity, place and intimate relationships when one has been affected by this same challenge. Emotions and affectual feelings regarding place(s) are nuanced layers that both need to be ‘cut through,’ yet acknowledged for their contribution to individuals’ assemblages of identity and affect. Social research interactions have flows of knowledge and power that can be described as transferable, vacillating furiously between researcher and researched, and back again (Hutcheson 2013).

I was buoyed by recent work on writing intimacy into feminist geographies (see Moss and Donovan 2017; Pain and Staeheli 2014; Smith 2016). My own story includes the interruption to my long term, most intimate and treasured relationship. In choosing to research a topic close to my own lived geographies of the past few years, I was aware (and nervous) of the “risks of solipsism and narcissism” (Bondi 2014 334) involved in doing so. My identity and embodied experiences have constituted my roles as lover, partner, mother, farmer; for most of my adult life. These facets of my identity were torn asunder by the unforeseen rupture of this relationship that caused me to question even more deeply than I had previously, the social construction of monogamous relationships and romantic love. I also reflect on the ways in which place(s) has been embedded in my identity, causing me to consider the binarized notion of (not) belonging.

My positionality and emotional safety, and how that placed me in an already emotionally sensitive field, was considered by myself and my supervisors, prior to embarking on this research (Bondi 2005b). Social researchers pay great attention to the ethical treatment and care of our human participants who give so generously of their time, knowledge and experience (see Bryman 2012; Martin and Flowerdew 2005). Researchers, prior to embarking on their research, write codified rights for participants into ethics applications, including providing participants with information sheets (see Appendix G) and ensuring written and signed consent forms (see Appendix F) are understood and collected (Dunn 2016). It is also important, however, to assess the researcher's position in relation to the topic, and work to protect their (emotional) health and safety – and that of the supervisors (Bondi 2005b; Gormley and Bondi 1999). I hold that some sectors within the academy are changing their views to consider more autoethnographic perspectives as part of the production of knowledge (Moss 2001). Although I do not pointedly give my account, or tell my story of intimate relationship challenge in this thesis, I reflexively contend that this is embedded in the research. My own lived geographies piqued my interest in the stories of others who have had similar experiences. I recognise the role that my own experience – along with my method(s) of recruiting participants, particularly the participants who were previously known to me - has in the co-production of data (Bondi 2005b).

I was, I admit, somewhat surprised by the positive response from people I knew, or knew of. Having some personal connections with some of my participants gave me cause to consider the implications, positive, negative, and those on a sliding scale in between, of such research. These included having some previous knowledges about parts of the 'backstory' for some of my participants. This was at times of some help, but was also of concern to me, as I grant that partial knowledges and discourses can combine to draw an 'inaccurate,' perhaps 'subjective truth,' but arguably a situated perspective to proceed with. There was also the advantage of having an existing rapport with some of the participants, which helped both of us in the research partnership to convey and understand ideas and feelings in a more

successful, easy manner, and to go some way towards breaking down some of the power imbalances that are inherent between the informant and the interviewer (Dunn 2016).

Summary

In this chapter I have summarised the methods used to gather the empirical data required for this project. Also described are the theoretical rationales behind these methods. Qualitative, feminist methods were utilised to scrutinise the effects of ruptures to, real or in the imaginary, materialities and identity due to relationship fracture. Insider status to this research has enabled me to anticipate and interpret some of the unspoken cues that hinted at hidden meaning(s), prompting me to gently probe a little deeper. Research, in the context of strong emotions about personal, lived geographies, is enhanced by empathetic techniques and approaches.

The following chapters extract and expand on the interview data, self-directed diaries, and electronic message prompt to answer my research questions. I examine in what ways home, as imagined and material, changes due to the effects of romantic relationship rupture, how these changes are shaped by gender, sexuality and intergenerational affect. Throughout, the theme of identity, or who individuals feel they are, and the fluid, sometimes ephemeral, and susceptibility to change of subjective positions is explored. These findings are critiqued using the relevant literature to provide a detailed inquiry into the experiences of intimate relationship challenge.

Chapter Four: Home and (un)coupling: precarious family geographies

This chapter examines the ways in which material geographies of home, on a variety of scales, are co-constitutive of coupledness. Of particular interest is “the material cultures of objects and their use, display and meanings within the home” (Blunt 2005 506) and the way in which these objects contribute to embodied identities. Exploring materialities includes evaluating patterns of consumption, or acquisition, meaning and use of domestic or household items. Carey-Ann Morrison (2010 246, emphasis added) points out:

Consumption and the production of social relations within the household are connected to consumption practices and subjectivity formation in spaces beyond the dwelling, and vice versa. The practices of consumption work to establish *couple's* subjectivities because the purchased objects, while perhaps needed for the functioning of everyday living, embody the emotional work invested in *joint* homemaking decisions. The practices of household consumption also highlight issues of gendered power and control in cohabiting heterosexual relationships.

Homemaking is categorised as a feminine practice (Morrison 2010; 2013). Domesticity is built around coupledness, most often with a masculine and a feminine role assigned to each of the individuals that comprise the couple, in a heteronormative manner. These roles are reflective of the power relations that have long been reiterated in the masculine-feminine binary, and marginalise the experiences of individuals in households composed of single people. This has the effect of queering singledom (see Wilkinson 2013; 2014; Morrison 2013), reproducing the hegemony of heteronormative coupledness.

Geographers have concentrated on the mutual constitution of identity and place, and the significance of material objects (see Klocker *et al.* 2012; Mansvelt 2005; Morrison 2010). Louise Crewe (2011 27) indicates the enduring marks on identity that material items leave:

Objects have immaterial lives that continue long beyond their material presence in the world. It reveals the ways in which our possessions accrue meaning-value through biogeography. Things come to matter through our intimate relations with them, object and subject combined and entwined, inseparable in mind and memory. Our relations to our things are sensory, bodily, evocative, and profound. They are also enduring, potent, powerful inarticulate, and at times unbearably evocative.

I pay attention to experiences of those with homes that have been, or are being, conceptually and/or materially, reconstructed. Some couples have stayed together, hoping to 'repair' ruptured homes, yet other individuals started anew, or reimagined home after an intimate relationship ended. Divorce and separation affect a large group of people, across generations, and the effects are far-reaching, both spatially and temporally, with a great deal of nuance that is often overlooked.

This chapter begins with attention to gendered constructions regarding geographies of care in the context of heteronormative domesticities. I next outline a key finding of this research: the ways in which inter- and multi-generational affect(s) and meaning(s) are (re)produced in and of the material items in home spaces. I subsequently query the makeup of 'blended' materialities and identities, and the material fragmentation of those who experience serial monogamous relationships. Throughout, I examine in what ways homes - as imagined and material - change due to relationship disruption.

Who cares? Gender and the (under)valuing of care

Care relationships are considered integral to societal functionality (see Brickell 2014; Herron and Skinner 2012). It is, however, notable that caring is marginalised both in paid, but also unpaid, or intimate-familial caring roles. It is interesting, therefore, to understand that caring is also feminised, responsibility for interpersonal care is essentially imposed on women (Lawson 2007). Care within intimate relationships is generally considered

emotional work, or 'done out of love', therefore difficult to measure and account for under positivist scholarship. I agree that care is political as well as practical, and the marginalisation of care,

further the myth that our successes are achieved as autonomous individuals and, as such, we have no responsibility to share the fruits of our success with others or to dedicate public resources to the work of care. The marginalization of care allows ideologies of the 'autonomous self-made *man*' to go unchallenged (Lawson 2007 5, emphasis added).

Respondents in this research underline the taken-for-granted geographies of care within intimate relationships, and how these gendered assumptions continue to work to disadvantage women, especially when relationships fail or falter.

A great variety of living situations and relationship histories were apparent among the participant cohort in this research (see Table 3.1). One example is Beth, a 74-year-old participant. Widowed at 50 years of age after a long, contented, and financially comfortable marriage, Beth subsequently experienced two abusive and financially crippling relationships with men. An older woman who had participated in a farming business with her first husband, later running her own business whilst caring for him whilst he was terminally ill, Beth also had experience in the real estate market, which included trading property on her own. As a partner whose role in her current husband's life began as his caregiver, in exchange for rent and board, Beth's position problematizes conceptions about, and endorses misunderstandings of, her role as loving spouse. Despite scholarship focused on care and how providers contribute to social reproduction, "this research has largely remained focused on the practical organisation of care rather than on the emotional ties" (Valentine 2008 2101). Such shifts in relational roles - from care relationships to more intimate ones - blur boundaries about embodied care, emotions and power imbalances in and of blended materialities. Beth speaks of her discomfort at her current

relationship status, and loss of possessions through relationship fracture in her diary:

Beth: [Terry, an acquaintance] was widowed, and when I bumped into him a few months [after his wife died] he came up to me and said he was struggling on his own and needed help. [He said] he knew of my situation and asked if I would like to house share. He had a four-bedroom house. I could have my own bathroom, lounge and bedroom. At the start, I was reluctant to get involved with anyone again and wished he would just go away. I [eventually] said, 'okay, I will come for two weeks and see how we get along.' We laughed every day, he was easy to be around and so pleased to see me come home from work. We eventually got married and I enjoyed caring for him. He recently had a stroke and is now permanently in a rest home. I continue to live in *his* home, he has made provision for me in his Trust that I can live there as long as I want [before his children can 'claim' the house as their inheritance]. Although I am very grateful for this, it has given me mixed feelings, [including] huge disappointment that I do not have my own home anymore because I was too weak to stand up for myself. I still feel like the [paid] caregiver and always have, because I do not own [a] half share of the property it does not feel like my home, plus the Trust is still in the name of his last [deceased] wife and himself. So, when one of his daughters told me I was sitting on the pig's back¹², that I had family I could live with and I had plenty of money, I felt shocked and angry and very uncomfortable being in this position. Being a very independent person and telling him from the start that I wasn't there to fleece¹³ him, it makes me feel like it is charity to remain in his home even though I am legally married and we have love and respect for each other (Beth's diary entry December 2016, emphasis added).

Beth outlines her experience as fluid, without hard boundaries between her at first platonic 'care' role, and later her romantic 'spousal' role, as they bleed

¹² A colloquialism for affluent living.

¹³ A colloquialism for financially benefitting from another.

into and over each other. This is not the first relationship that has contributed to Beth's identity as a carer, as her first husband died of a terminal illness over twenty years ago:

Beth: my [first] husband's health deteriorated and he was diagnosed with [a terminal illness]. I decided to become the main income earner, and bought a business. I was able to take him to work with me and still care for him (Beth's diary December 2016).

Beth's conception of her identity as carer, conforms to normative behaviours, whereby she relates that owning her own business allowed for her to care for her ill husband, as "women, if they are to have access to feminine respectability, must either stay at home (femininity as domestication), or be careful in how they move and appear in public (femininity as constrained mobility)" (Ahmed 2004b 70). Societal expectations have shifted in recent times to expand commercial ideologies into areas of care (Lawson 2007). Within a paradigm of shifting moralities of caring, and a political climate which allocates less public funding to care, I agree with Lawson (2007) that this has further marginalised those in caring roles. Terry and Beth initially negotiated strategies that would help him, an amputee, retain some independence, and her secure some stability in her living situation by pooling their skills and resources to share a house, and help each other out. This strategizing is in line with hegemonic concepts regarding personal responsibility. Being the less financially privileged partner who has moved in with the home-owning partner, Beth voices her discomfort at being considered financially unequal to Terry. This highlights a power inequality that is present in her relationship in the form of the home being widely viewed as Terry's, and that his daughters are expected to inherit the home on his death (see also Gorman-Murray 2006):

Beth: I don't feel overly comfortable, knowing that, um, this is Terry's place, his daughters' (interview 11 December 2016).

Negotiating and re-distributing power between couples who begin to live together is thought-provoking from a gendered perspective (Morrison 2010). Age is a perspective that is often overlooked in the literature. As well as the

changing roles of caregiver/spouse, intergenerational tensions of home ownership and re-partnering with the effects of blended families and inheritance laws is apparent in Beth's worries about her financial security in this later period of her lifespan.

Analysing Beth's experiences, I identify embedded gender roles and inequalities that have contributed to her feelings about her lack of power. This reflects how Beth has conformed to motifs of heterofemininity, by gender traditionalists, as desirous of love and intimacy, almost 'at any cost' (Berlant 2014). I argue that heteromascularity, in contrast, is socially prescribed as somewhat indifferent to love, furthering the emotional-rational binary imaginary that reflects that of feminine-masculine. I hold that this dualistic interpretation helps to shield men from loss of agency. Men are 'supposed' to be less emotionally vulnerable. It is however, important to realise the "diversity of heterosexualities which women and men inhabit; and the agency of women (and men) within institutionalised heterosexuality" (Hockey *et al.* 2004 231). Unfortunately for Beth, her experience with love traced the more destructive nature of such narratives. Beth attributes her enculturation in what is considered 'appropriately feminine' as a contributor to her lack of agency being a factor in her material downfall:

Beth: I often wonder if constantly being told as a child to **do as I was told** and **only speak when I was spoken to** had any bearing on my inability to stand up for myself when my gut feeling was telling me no (Beth's diary entry December 2016, emphasis in original).

Beth now finds herself in a precarious geography, which includes anxiousness about her socioeconomic wellbeing. She is concerned not only about her access to accommodation, but also about her place in society, particularly the way she is judged and labelled as a possible exploiter, especially by her husband's children.

Another participant, Steve, also touches on the gendered geographies of care. Steve's story includes an extra-marital affair. After the affair was discovered by his then-wife, Polly, they attempted to repair the rupture to their relationship for several years, but eventually divorced. Domestic,

gendered care relationships are highlighted in this dialogue regarding Steve returning to the joint home after a period of separation:

Steve: When I came back there, to Polly, it involved basically just her helping me put my clothes back in the wardrobe.

Paula: So, after that, how did you personalise it, kind of 'cleanse' it? Maybe change the furniture, or arrange things differently, that kind of thing?

Steve: Well, she had already got rid of our bed, and some other things in the house, which was weird to me, I didn't ever 'do anything' [have sex with his affair partner] in our bed. But I get that she was uncomfortable about me having brought the other woman into our home, that was shitty of me (interview 31 January 2017).

When pressed about his feelings about his home space, and how he makes it his own, Steve struggles, indicating that he feels the home space is largely his ex-wife's area, and he has no desire to interfere. I observe in my research diary that, although we spoke at Steve's 'man-cave'¹⁴, I initially met him at his home:

The home is set up much as it was when they shared the space. Almost like Polly never left. Except there are a few less photographs, and gaps in the furnishings, where Polly has taken property to her new place. Steve has moved nothing around, nor bought anything new, to perhaps fill any gaps, as far as I can ascertain (research diary 31 January 2017).

I ask Steve a bit more about his home:

Paula: How did you find your home? What appealed? Is it sunny, warm, all that kind of thing, and what have you done, since Polly left, especially, to make it more 'homely'?

¹⁴ A space dedicated to a man's hobbies and leisure activities, usually separated from the main part of a house.

Steve: Um, Polly did all of that, to be fair. I just went along with what she wanted. She's [sic] always made life easy for me, you know? Still does a lot, checks in on me. Even [previously] down to what I eat and wear [sic], and it wasn't, you know, horrible, like you think of that as having another mother, eww. Quite the opposite! She has great taste. Like we touched on earlier, she even bought my underwear [*laughs*]. I just never even thought about it, there was always clean underwear, like magic, pouff! I guess it made me feel loved that she cared enough to bother, that I never had to think about that stuff.

Paula: Was that something you ever did for her?

Steve: Not really. I think I showed my love in other ways (interview 31 January 2017).

Steve's lack of consciousness about the materialities and care dynamics of his domestic life, illustrated in the form of his underwear, and so on, is noteworthy in consideration of constructions of gendered domesticity (Park 2013). The materiality of their home and contents, all designated to the domestic sphere, is an area that Steve was able to disregard in general, due to the silence of patriarchal norms regarding embedded gender roles. Sharing of this information allows a look at the ways in which care of an intimate partner is practised, often in an embodied manner. It also illuminates the ways in which intimate ties are not always abruptly and completely severed on relationship breakdown, and that care can, and does, transcend emotional and physical distance (Lawson 2007). A spotlight is also shone on the ways in which intimate relationship breakdowns, rather than always being terminal can instead mobilise individuals and couples "beyond critique and toward the construction of new forms of relationships ... that enhance mutuality and well-being" (Lawson 2007 8). This aligns with Valentine's argument regarding Giddens' (1992, cited in Valentine 2008) outline of 'pure relationships' – as those that are based on happiness and imagined as possibly temporary, lasting merely as long as they feel pleasurable - as outmoding obligatory relationships with regards to coupledness. Valentine (2008) goes further to theorise that family

relations and intergenerational interdependence remain enduring components of identity. In the case of Steve and Polly, those ties have transcended divorce.

The basis of most intimate relationships is mutuality and trust, and once these are breached, the uneven distribution of power becomes more apparent. Although Lawson's (2007) work concentrates on care for the ill and infirm, I maintain that the themes are applicable to intimate relationships. One may consider any rupture to the relationship as creating an 'illness' that, in much the same way as described by Lawson's work on care, highlights any power imbalances between the individuals involved.

Two participants in this research mentioned that partners' illnesses have affected their decisions about, firstly, whether to stay or leave. Both Gretel and Pixie spoke of partners who have experienced cancer diagnoses in recent years. Gretel's partner, Rich's diagnosis came on the heels of having a new baby with health issues, and after moving to their current property, creating further strain on their already stretched relationship:

Gretel: Then Rich found out that he had cancer of the pancreas here, and it was malignant as well. So, he went through all of that. I was in the process of doing my, you know, starting up a business, which is just madness (interview 11 January 2017).

The emotional and moral ties to a partner who is experiencing health issues create more tensions and pull on gendered discourses about love and care when that relationship is already experiencing pressures. Pixie's experience includes her husband's three-year affair with a co-worker, which she believes has been over for some time. They have never spoken of it with each other. Attachment to, love of or loathing for place - in the form of topophilia and topophobia (Tuan 1977) - and the moveable feast that is the spectrum of contradictory emotions experienced in-between (González 2005), anxiety about splitting the material items of their marriage, and hegemonic conceptions about divorce and the effects on children, have played large parts in Pixie's deliberate avoidance of addressing the tensions in their marriage. Somewhat in opposition to this discourse, I document how

Pixie describes the atmosphere in her house – which I interpret as embodied affect – as, “heavy, the kids feel it too” (Pixie’s diary January 2017) when her husband is present. Pixie, confided in me that as she was just gaining the courage to leave, her husband received a cancer diagnosis, which they have chosen not to disclose to anyone:

Pixie: I got to the point where I was walking out the door. Two days later, Kevin was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma. And, so, I haven’t been able to make that shift, because [voice breaks] yeah. So that is why I’ve had to come back, and be settled in the house ... I’m kind of there, in a loveless relationship, I guess. But, I’m there for him (interview 18 January 2017).

She explains that this has shifted her focus, to help him get through this difficult period, and feels this will bring them closer together. Assumptions about gender roles, and Pixie’s self-construction, as the family ‘carer’, are apparent. Pixie’s self-abnegating adherence to what she feels as obligation to her caring role, demonstrates a gendered reading of the importance of placing the needs of others ahead of her own, and a gendered, and generational resilience to contemporary debates regarding the pursuit of individual happiness (Valentine 2008).

Intergenerational materialities and power: the (imaginary) ‘happy home’

Lisa, a divorced and subsequently remarried woman, is struggling to decide whether or not to continue in her current, difficult relationship. Influential to some of her decision-making processes are some of the materialities of her relationship, including the house itself. This uncovered some of the power imbalances that Lisa feels in her relationship - that she has to be the responsible one. Lisa and her husband recently bought and sold houses in the same small town, suggesting during the interview that this was part of her strategy to help her decide whether to leave, or perhaps help repair or reset her relationship with her husband. She also outlines some of her usually unspoken frustrations at some differences between her husband

and herself, framing his approach as his lack of agency or ambition, but giving insight into how the power is (perhaps sometimes reluctantly) held and used within their relationship:

Lisa: [on the recent sale and purchase of houses] I'm the one, [out of] my husband and I, I'm the one who deals with all that sort of stuff. It's all the legalities, the selling of the home, and I get to a point where I'm so overwhelmed by it all, I'm just like, 'what the fuck? I'm over it! Just do it.' We had a big, four-bedroom home, two storeyed. We'd spent six years renovating it. During that time, I completed my degree. My son was going through a lot of stuff, cutting [self harming], and all sorts of things. I was just ready to be out of there ... it was [located in] a small community [with lots of social problems] ... so, I ended up taking on the role of the unofficial body corp[orate] accounts and all that sort of thing, and it just became too much for me with everything else going on, and marital problems. So, um, we decided to sell [discusses the amount of capital gain on the house sold came to]. And that was our, or that was **my** whole goal, not so much my husband's, but mine. I'm a lot more driven, he'd rent forever [*laughs*] (interview 12 December 2016).

Lisa also shared her feelings about some small items in her house. These items were given to her by family members and friends, and hold some special significance to her. These items include a figurine that she feels looks like her father (see Figure 4.1), which was originally in her grandmother's house. As a child, she believed that her father was the model for the figurine, and she keeps it on a dressing table in her bedroom, as a reminder of him. This is kept in a private space, despite a self-described difficult relationship with both of her parents. Conflicting meanings are embedded in the figurine. Nevertheless, the figurine is an illustration of how meanings may not be static or fixed, instead can constitute all kinds of emotions, not always just-positive or just-negative ones:

Lisa: [Childhood] home was never really a safe place for me. It was never a nurturing place ... God, it was just um, without going into the

ins and outs of my family life, um, it wasn't, it wasn't a space where, um, I mean, I was the eldest, of two. My brother's four years younger, um, mum and dad split when we [sic] were 11. That was um, a bitter, bollocky¹⁵ thing that went on for **years**, and they actually ended up signing the final divorce papers at my wedding, to my first husband. It's all about them. They're very self-absorbed. If my parents weren't my parents, I wouldn't associate with either of them. But, I still, you know, my mum lives here and I catch up with her, and you know, she's on her own, [aged] 70-whatever. Dad's over living somewhere with his life, um, you know, I still associate, they're still, they're family (interview 12 December 2016).



Figure 4.1: Lisa's figurine, a likeness of her father. Photo author's own¹⁶

Lisa also has a small figurine her mother gave her (see Figure 4.2), on the other side of the dressing table. Representing both of her parents in her

¹⁵ A colloquialism usually meaning naked, but used in this context to emphasise enmity between parties.

¹⁶ All photographs are used with participants' permission.

bedroom – an intimate space - appears to be reflective of dominant perceptions about family and home being things that are positive, welcoming (Blunt 2005), and to be kept close, despite Lisa’s awareness of the difficulties in their relationships:

Lisa: This one here, is my mum. When I was a little girl ... And this is from my grandma, it’s my father. I always thought it was a statue of my father. And so, um.

Paula: You look like your dad then?

Paula: Yeah! And so, I’ve always thought, as a kid, growing up, “oh, how cool is that, that’s a statue of my dad!” And so, now I own it. And it’s my dad. My mum gave me this a little while ago, so I’ve got that sitting there.

Paula: Oh, mum and dad on each side (interview 12 December 2016).



Figure 4.2: Figurine that Lisa’s mother gave her. Photo author’s own

The tensions that Lisa feels about her difficult relationship with both of her parents, is represented in the dichotomous way in which she treasures the figurines, and yet her words tell a different story. The familial “ties that bind” (Valentine 2008 2097) and perceptions about family and home, are difficult

to untangle. Engaging with Valentine's use of the word, 'bind' is interesting in this context, with possible meanings including both a form of security, but also, constraint. Lisa is both comforted by the figurines, as representations of familial normativity, but can see the duplicity of their display, in her own experience of family relational friction. Valentine (2008) points to an absence of examination of intergenerational *relations* in the geographical literature between adult children and parents (see, however, Vanderbeck 2007). This is especially noticeable when considering increasingly "fragmented and reconstituted families or intra-familial negotiations across multiple generations" (Valentine 2008 2101). I extend this to highlight the lack of geographical literature on intergenerational *materialities*, as co-constitutive of familial relationships, through identity construction and the agency of things. Agency can be observed in and of material items, asserting control, repeating, or challenging, structural imbalances (Baxter and Brickell 2014) due to the meanings ascribed to them.

Pixie too, expressed her connection to her childhood, family home, as her point of reference when dealing with challenges to her relationship. She felt a great deal of grief the previous year. Some months after the death of her mother, Pixie's father sold the family home. This sale occurred the year previous to our interview. Pixie has some of the possessions her mother had collected during her lifetime in her current home, describing them as happy things. She is drawing on these 'happy things' to help rebuild a sense of agency, and 'home' in her own home, after she faced a significant relationship challenge. This despite being in her late 40s, married for more than twenty years, and living away from her childhood hometown for more than thirty years:

Pixie: I think I went through a huge deal of grief last year, when we sold the family home in Masterton. In my darkest hours, I could picture everything in that house. Like, I could just take myself away, and I could picture every ornament, lined up, and everything. And that was my safe place. And when, shit hit the fan here, that was where I'd [mentally] go. It was my safe place.

Paula: And the linkages with your [recently deceased] mum and all that sort of thing?

Pixie: Exactly. Hearth and home. So, now that that's gone, and I sort of tried to, yeah, I think that's what made me feel, start to feel strong again about my house. I've got to create, or make, yeah, so, to me, it's still a house//

Paula: Because your **home**-home's gone? So, this has got to become home?

Pixie: This **has** got to become home. The things that I've brought in from [pause] mum and dad's house are the things that make me happy. Mmm, I've got little perfume bottles of mum's, just little glass bottles, and that [sic] makes me happy. The antique chairs we've got from there. Yeah (interview 18 January 2017).

Pixie's interpretation of her home space is drawn closely to normative models of home as a warm, nurturing, happy space. She performs gendered 'homemaking' practices, as reminiscent of her childhood home. In her work life, Pixie is involved in interior design, and raising the aesthetic value of home is of importance to her. I interpret her homemaking praxes as Pixie hoping that she can (re)produce the affect in and of that home, demonstrating how gendered and heteronormative roles are significant for women in their understandings of home (Morrison 2013). I press further, and attest that Pixie may be underlining her heterosexually forged femininity in doing so, in answer to her husband's choice to have an extra-marital affair:

Pixie: Yeah, so, when I was going through the whole affair [that her husband was having], and just, **existing**, it [home] just meant nothing to me. I couldn't see colours at all. Now I'm finding it, wanting to, put curtains, soften it. Curtaining in, and make it more of a softer home. So, I'm starting to put paintings in, and um, finish it off. 'Cos when I was going through [the affair period], I emotionally withdrew from everything. I just, didn't actually see it ... And it's funny, because the kids are appreciating it, wanting to get things done, and finished. And

they are probably seeing a bit of that warmth come back into the house, as well (interview 18 January 2017).

This illustrates Pixie's identity construction as being heavily dependent on her *coupled* identity, as distinct from, and privileged over, her individual identity. Pixie's identity is informed, very powerfully, by her reading of her parents' 'happily' heteronormative, also coupled - and therefore joint - identity (see Wilkinson 2013; 2014). I understand this as Pixie feeling that if she can be a 'better' homemaker, (re)creating a romanticised version of the childhood home she has remembered, perhaps fabricated, as 'happy' - with more pleasant affective atmosphere in the home - in terms of material items, she can metaphorically glue her family back together. 'Finishing the house' has long been a focus, and she speaks of the mutuality of strength and homemaking - that it gives her strength to work on the house as a project, but also the strength it required for her to start that work. Pixie uses the finished house as a metaphor for healing the rupture in her marriage. She also alludes to the loss of security, the impermanence of feelings about her home that the affair prompted, and her fantasies of starting over elsewhere, that she has never acted on. Pixie is fearful of the temporal effects on her (physically comfortable) spatialities:

Pixie: I've thought about moving. Going. As in, pack my bag, gone. And set up in a new environment. I picture that quite a bit. But, it hasn't actually happened. So, I can picture myself visibly relaxing when I think of it.

Paula: So, it's kind of like, visualisation, that hasn't happened, but kind of like a little dream, but a scary dream?

Pixie: Mmm, absolutely! Yeah, absolutely! And I can see everything! Yeah, I can see everything set up ... I guess, as I've grown stronger, in my situation, knowing that, at the moment, I'm **here**. So, it has changed, as in home is a place I want to be in [Pixie earlier informed that after she discovered the affair, she avoided going home, spending as little time as possible there]. Instead of going to find [happiness

elsewhere], I'm trying to find peace at home. Because that's where I'm at, at the moment, anyway, so (interview 18 January 2017).

The rupture in her relationship that Pixie has felt has created a great deal of questioning of her own agency. The ties that bind have been severely tested, pushing at the limits of the structure (Hockey *et al.* 2007) she felt sure of prior to her husband's affair, and later, his cancer diagnosis. Pixie's world has been figuratively shaken, and re-establishing 'firm ground' requires a great deal of personal agency, but also agency in and of the materialities in that world.

Pixie has confided in just a small handful of friends about her husband's affair, and no one about his ill health. Sexual scandal in small towns may reflect old-fashioned values, but much like the omissions described by Hockey *et al.* (2004; 2007) when talking with older participants, secrecy has been used by Pixie to keep her relationship 'respectable' and whole:

Pixie: [after disclosing her husband's diagnosis to me] Yeah, so, that is why I've had to come back, and be settled in the house, because yeah. I can't, I'm kind of there in a loveless relationship, I guess. But, I'm there for him.

Paula: So, has there been some dialogue between you two, about what happened [the affair]?

Pixie: No. Nothing (interview 18 January 2017).

Whilst Pixie has surrounded her husband's affair with secrecy – self-formulated as protection for herself, her husband, and their children - this has also left her with little or no support system to aid in her/their recovery. I posit that this has had the effect of concentrating Pixie on the materialities of her home, in a bid to reproduce an idealised, nostalgic version of her recollections regarding her 'happy' childhood home. Pixie's feelings, echo those of Chris Philo (2016) in his exploration of the idea of adulthood – and its accompanying accoutrements, such as; material belongings, paid employment and complex interpersonal relationships – as a form of decay. That happiness is idealised by ideas regarding childhood-in-place and that

such discourses matter, not just in children's geographies, but also "matter big-time for *all* human geography" (Philo 2016 636, italics in original).

Beth's financial hardships also placed a great strain on her relationship with the only one of her children still living nearby. He had distanced himself from her problems. This distancing is gendered, with her son seeing his mother's problems as something that daughters 'should' be dealing with, not him, as a son. Beth's subsequent isolation challenges perceptions, such as the one expressed by Terry's children (see Beth's diary entry, page 4), about her familial access to money, and assumptions about financial and emotional support:

Beth: My relationship with my younger son had changed, resulting in me not seeing my grandchildren for a few years. That has added very deep hurt. I shut myself off from extended family for a couple of years only having phone contact with my younger daughter and older son who were both overseas at the time (diary entry December 2016).

Beth's experience reflects that it is not always possible to fulfil the traditional, Pākehā, middle-class role of the elder with the material resources. It also highlights the, hierarchical, mono-directional flow of aid and support that is almost taken for granted. She did not have a soft place to land after her assets were stripped by men holding positions of power over her. Adult children who divorce are often supported by parents as they regain confidence and resolve the financial messiness of divorce and breakups (Moore *et al.* 2012). I ask, in circumstances like Beth's, what about parental divorce? Where is the 'safety net' for her, as a member of an older generation as she experiences swift downward social mobility?

Beth: [after one relationship ended] to survive financially, I had to sell my home [in the city] beside the river that I loved, and bought myself another one [of lesser value in another town] (diary entry December 2016).

Beth explains further in her diary, about her sense of vulnerability, including the ways she felt rushed, and pushed into decisions that she did not feel ready to make. Beth had some awareness of her susceptibility to being told

what she should be doing, and the power relations involved. This included her self-awareness about her emotional fragility after her eldest daughter died:

Beth: After a year in Huntly I started to feel isolated, my niece thought she was doing me a favour and sent a man she knew to see me. [A few weeks later, the man insisted she put an offer on a beach house] I was not living with him, still reeling from losing my daughter [recently deceased] and was quite taken aback with his comment. I had no idea what my future held or where I was going and was in a twirl. I just couldn't get the words out that I did not want to do it, I did not like the property. He kept the pressure up so I found myself just going with it. I told him I would have to sell my property, and he said he would sell his business and we would pay cash for it. After he got me signed up he decided he wouldn't sell his business, and instead [he would] take out a mortgage which I would have to guarantee or the bank wouldn't let him have it. [Beth initially refused to do as she was advised by the man several times, but eventually] I just couldn't get the word 'no' out. Three weeks after taking over the property, his true colours showed. He had a shocking temper [the building was subsequently shown to have major structural problems, she moved out and lost the property]. What a mess I had made of my life, being too trusting and believing men who were only interested in feathering their own nest¹⁷ (diary entry December 2016).

During our interview, Beth spoke of her own agency, and the resistance she attempted when she discovered, after she bought an ex-partner out of their mortgage, that an insurance payment had been already taken out of a joint account:

Beth: So, I said, I'm going to change insurance companies, and [the insurance company] said, 'oh, we'll put the money back into there,' [the joint account which, unbeknownst to her, due to the insurance payment, had gone into overdraft]. But then they started to, um, fight

¹⁷ To make oneself more financially well off, especially by dishonesty or unfairness.

it, because it [the insurance policy] was in his name [only] and he should get the, ah, refund ... I fought them over that (interview 11 December 2016).

Whilst her younger daughter, who is geographically distant, does “check up on me every other day, or every day” (Beth, interview 11 December 2016) her son who lives in the same city as Beth, has kept away:

Paula: So, you have Peter [younger son] he’s in the Waikato, isn’t he?

Beth: Yeah, but I don’t see a great deal of them [Peter and his family] ... Um, we had a bit of a difference [of opinion], when the second relationship went belly up¹⁸

Paula: He wasn’t particularly understanding?

Beth: No. He was still going through the grief of [losing] his sister. And I more or less got told, ‘well, you either go for counselling, and sort your finances out, or [we will have nothing to do with you].’ Drawn a line in the sand. We’re okay now, but I only see them when I go there [they do not visit her]. He has phoned me up and invited me for Christmas, which will be the first time for ten years. [*Snorts and laughs*] we’re going!

Paula: Well, that’s a nice bridge, to start to be built [to reconciliation]

Beth: In the meantime, my grandchildren have grown up (interview 11 December 2016).

I query Western discourses which assume a gendered and mostly one-way – from older to younger - generational flow of resources and emotional support in such circumstances. Beth’s relationship with her younger son is an example of the fluid and complex nature of intergenerational tensions.

Gretel is in her late thirties. Her experience, unlike Beth’s, does reflect a two-way flow of generational, material and emotional, support. As Gretel

¹⁸ A colloquialism meaning died, or ended.

and her partner, Rich, had been dealing with the birth of a child with serious health issues, her own parents divorced:

Gretel: My mum and dad then **randomly** just, ah, split up. And once their farm was sold – which took a while – um, Mum realised that with the sort of deposit she had, she couldn't really get something [property of her own]. So, she gave us the opportunity to find somewhere whereby Rich could start up his own [pause] business. And I could do mine (interview 11 January 2017).

Gretel's mother, after receiving the proceeds from her relationship property division, decided to contribute financially to the smallholding property Gretel and Rich bought, in return for a place to live, and a share in the capital value of the property. The bonds between Gretel and her mother have been strengthened with this material investment, with the physical proximity of their shared living situation, and throughout Gretel's own relationship challenges:

Gretel: I've always said to mum, no matter what happens [even if the property has to be sold] we'll stick together (interview 11 January 2017).

Whilst market-based analyses consider intergenerational sharing of monetary wealth (see Smith 2008), I highlight the gap in the available geographical literature regarding the emotional geographies of intergenerational materialities (see, however, sociologist Goode's 2007 autoethnographic account):

Gretel: [Discussing the move to her current home] having Niamh, and the [health] issues we had with Niamh, really put a huge strain on mine and Rich's relationship. It was [pause] **huge**. Um, yeah, it was really difficult (interview 11 January 2017).

Gretel analyses her relationship with Rich in gendered terms, adding cultural discourses – and tensions - about Rich's non-New Zealand nationality (see Gabb and Fink 2015). Gretel feels his nationality lends a certain weight to Rich's reading of gender roles. She sees this as affecting

how he views ownership of the material assets and expectations of Gretel's role in their relationship, including difficulties regarding power and control:

Gretel: Ah, he still has that, um, sometimes [name of nationality] mindset, you know, which is quite difficult, you know? That the woman belongs in the house, a little bit. And our last place we were at wasn't sort of the best [pause] house. That's where the issues developed. So, I thought [on moving to their current property and home] things would all come together, but they didn't quite. Because then Rich found out that he had pancreatic cancer. I was also in the process of starting up a business, which is just madness. We had some massive pressure there, and this place, it became really interesting, 'cos for a while, he moved out. There's the sleepout up there [indicates rural buildings] (see Figure 4.3). And he moved out and he was in there. And um, he took his money away. So, I literally didn't have anything, and this place [her home-based business] was only **just** covering itself. Um, it's still like that, with the finances. He doesn't contribute. He doesn't contribute to Niamh and everything. It's literally been three years of crazy. A year of Niamh's worst health issues]. A year and a half with him and this cancer thing. And when he came back, he stayed for a bit, but then he went back up there (interview 11 January 2017).



Figure 4.3: Extra locks installed by Gretel's partner, Rich, on their workshop door.
Photo author's own

The materialities and lived geographies of Gretel, Rich, their daughter, and Gretel's mother incorporate the uncertainties of living together, but apart (Barker and Gabb 2016; Klocker *et al.* 2012):

Gretel: So, this property's almost divided. I'm at the stage now whereby, when he first went up there [to the living quarters in the workshop. The lock on the door excludes anyone other than Rich from entering the workshop/living space that he has appropriated], he had the power. He had the power of, the money, you know, that he was contributing and everything, and he said, 'I could just walk out of here, it would go to a mortgagee sale. Your mum would lose her deposit,' and this, that and something else. So, he had all of that [power] (interview 11 January 2017).

Reflecting on the interview and visit with Gretel, it appears she is aware of the porosity, and the effects of scale, regarding her individual and coupled identities, home, and the relationship itself (Baxter and Brickell 2014). I record in my research diary that I almost completely missed that Gretel's notion of home is not really conceptualised as being particularly linked with the physical dwelling, the house. Instead, she has closer connections and feelings about home regarding the outdoors, the opportunities, materialities, and rural aspects of the property itself. This did not become fully apparent to me until we went outside for a walk over the property, at which time I thought the interview was over, and had switched off the recording device, leaving it secured in the house:

Gretel's house was somewhat shambolic. I noted weeds growing in the garden, a weed sprayer plonked on the back deck as I approached the house. One regret I have is in concentrating on the house! It was made obvious that Gretel's identity (and passion) is in her [agricultural] business, the land. I turned off the recorder when we did a property walk. I felt there was rich data in that conversation, about [capital] improvements she has done, and plans to do, to the property, its facilities and equipment. Gretel's connection with the materialities were **far** more apparent there than in her house. Gretel made comments

about her daughter being her [metaphorical] 'home' and the way Rich was offended by this when she voiced this. Rich had proven to be unreliable in her eyes, by moving out of the house twice and removing his financial contributions. The wellbeing of Gretel's daughter and mum are paramount, and place – where they will live - will be negotiated through their needs (research diary 11 January 2017).

Despite the positive aspects of Gretel's mother's financial support, Gretel addresses some of the tensions involved in blending generational living materialities:

Gretel: [On the logistics of moving both her mother and her own nuclear family to the current property] trying to get everything clean, and I had to be quite sort of, **hard** with mum. Just say, 'look, you have to get rid of a lot of this. Ah, are you really gonna use it? Like, you've got three of these [*laughs*]! We'll just get a big, massive skip bin in, and we [will] just get rid of it. Just throw it out, start again. Keep big stuff.' And I think my mum finds it a lot harder to let go than I do (interview 11 January 2017).

Such incongruity is thought-provoking, as Gretel exerts power over her mother, perhaps unaware she is reproducing the very power imbalances she resists and objects to, in the context of her relationship with her partner. Gretel's mother was no doubt feeling the pressures of the temporalities of her home situation and relationship status. Unmaking her married home and self, and then making a new home with Gretel and her family demonstrates that progressing from "linear temporal paths ... a key argument in home *unmaking* is that home is simultaneously made and *unmade*" (Baxter and Brickell 2014 140). This is not simply a case of one home ends and another begins, rather the ways in which meanings of home are in a constant state of flux.

Jen expressed a generational, societal effect that she has observed since her first divorce. She felt she had absorbed many socially embedded ideologies about gender, and her 'place' that have played a significant part in her identity formation. It seems to puzzle her that she took on the

gendered role she did after her first marriage. Her examination of her motivations included an outline of her humanities degree, attending university during a period that included what she described as, “women’s lib and all that” (research diary January 2017). Jen marched for women’s rights and questioned why she compromised herself in the way she mostly adopted the gendered inequalities of the small, rural locale she moved to after leaving higher education. Jen and I discussed what Alexander Thomas *et al.* (2011) describe as urban normativity, but also the possible dualism of ‘real life’ versus ‘academic life’ – that the period of student demonstrations never fully crossed the boundary in her mind, into the small, rural town she found her first teaching appointment in. She married a local, farming man shortly afterwards, in the mid-1980s, and whilst she admits she did question many of the gendered traditions, she wanted to be a ‘good’ wife, and ‘fit in’, joining the local netball club (a bastion of New Zealand, rural, feminine identity) and so on. Jen, as a newly transplanted rural woman, was dealing with circumstances and issues that differed from those that urban women face (Machum 2011; see also Bryant and Pini 2009). Jen mentioned that her two young, adult daughters feel the gendered norms have passed onto the next generation of women, any negative effects – and affects - avoided however, by her three sons. She described to me how her daughters - one of whom completed her secondary education in the same small town of her first marriage, the other a regular visitor, as their father still lives there - feel somewhat shunned by the community. Jen says they experience this as a kind of second-hand judgement on them, they are to be approached with caution, as if they may have the same “radicalised feminist agendas” (Jen, interview 25 January 2017) as their mother.

In focusing on intergenerational materialities of relationship (de)construction, I have examined how familial discourses regarding (im)materialities of intimate relationships and ‘the home’ are often co-constituents of identity (see Blunt 2005; Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2006; 2008a, 2008b; Morrison 2010). Furthermore, these generational (im)materialities that contribute to identity formation are brought into clearer focus during relationship challenges, as individuals

struggle to (re)gain agency during the cleaving of a coupled identity into a singled one.

Blended materialities and fragmented identities. Who gets the ‘stuff’?

When new relationships are formed, after previous ones have ended, the term commonly used to describe this process of amalgamation is to ‘blend’ families (and materialities). I investigate here the innate messiness that is hidden behind the neatness of the word, ‘blend’, and some “queer assemblages” (Park 2013 27) of materialities and identities created in the process of ‘blending.’

Jen’s experiences with relationships have some multigenerational material aspects to them. She reinforces the role that housing and ‘ownership’ can play, when she points out the power inequality she felt regarding holiday homes. On marrying her second husband, each had independent means, and they both brought beach-based, holiday homes to their relationship. He convinced her to sell ‘hers,’ and that they could (re)negotiate ‘his’ as ‘theirs.’ This was very problematic for her, as she felt he never relinquished his hold on the property, and her children were never made to feel welcome in that space, instead losing, or dispossessing, the memories and affective feelings they had developed for ‘her’ family bach¹⁹. She discusses this in the interview conducted in her current bach, at a beach location, purchased by her, after the end of her second marriage:

Jen: Well, this place is important to me, and um, because, I was determined, well, what happened was, when [my] first marriage broke up, the settlement, well, what I got out of that was a place at Onemana [beach]. And we had, so, the kids and I had this family bach at Onemana, and a lot of happy memories there. When I married the second husband, he didn’t force me to - because people can’t force you to do anything - but he strongly encouraged me, to get rid of it, because he had a beach house at Snells Beach that could be ours,

¹⁹ A word used in New Zealand to denote a holiday home. Often at beach or lake locations, and conceptualised as ‘family’ places, with multi-generational ties and usages.

and I saw the sense in that. Thinking that we would have shared, um, involvement in the one at Snells Beach, since I made this huge sacrifice. That was not the case. I got to Snells Beach, and it was his. My kids always felt second-hand there. I always felt second-hand there. Grant and Selena, [brother and sister-in-law] everyone, sort felt they were at **his** house, and so, when we split up, I was **determined** to get a beach place back for my kids. And for me, 'cos I live here, but, mainly it was that [pause] getting back [pause] what I had, been taken. I'd allowed that to happen. [I] totally wear that, but, I was manipulated (interview 25 January 2017).

During this research, the theme of multigenerational materialities, came up several times, and it was not always about large, financial investments, such as houses. The neoliberal economic model is not the only means of appreciating the significance of material objects (see Crewe 2011). We have also earlier seen the problematic situation that Beth finds herself in, regarding stepchildren's material expectations versus her own home requirements; Gretel's careful negotiations regarding intergenerational materialities; Pixie's angst at reproducing her childhood materialities and therefore affective feelings of home; and Mulan's hopes to pass the materialities gathered during her marriage, to her children.

During the process of separation, the legal system struggles to address how to divide material items – especially those that hold perhaps more sentimental value than market value. Sociologist Jackie Goode (2007), in an autoethnographic account of her experience with divorce, explores the tensions between legal understandings, and meanings embedded in material items. In Goode's case, these are collectibles originally inherited from her mother, but added to by herself over time. Goode mentions that her husband expressed his understanding of her connection to these items, attempting however, to resign his agency by invoking legal terms. He suggested that leaving the collection to Goode was *legally* out of his control, “[he] added that he did not ‘make the rules’” (Goode 2007 375). Her feelings were described as, “Apart from the ‘cultural capital’ involved, they constituted my (middle-class) self. Divorce is an uncoupling of two selves,

followed over time by the re-establishment of a separate self, and my collections were integral to that journey” (Goode 2007 377). Annie expresses her similar experience when she realises she had left her family cookbook behind in her swift exit from the joint home, followed by her ex-husband’s refusal to return it to her. Firstly, she describes her panic at gathering her material items one day, while her ex-husband was away from the joint home:

Annie: Yeah, so we did that fairly early on in the piece. Um, I haven’t been able to, the one thing, that I wished I could get back, ‘cos he, when I went back to the house, to get my stuff, I had a panic [attack]. And I was trying get outta there as fast as I could. And I was just grabbing stuff – I’ve got a pot with no lid, the lid must be with him some[where], you know, it was real, grab, and get out as quick as you can (interview 23 January 2017).

Earlier in the interview, Annie had alluded to the control asserted over her, by her now ex-husband, in her expressions of joy regarding her agency in choosing items for her current home, but also, in her personal style, as a marker of her identity:

Annie: It was fun, looking online, and buying stuff. I found it really enjoyable.

Paula: Sort of a bit empowering?

Annie: **Very** empowering! This is who I, I feel like how I’ve dressed, how I’ve done [decorated] the home here is how I’ve always wanted to be. But wasn’t allowed to be. Because it was his [her ex-husband’s] style [in the joint home] (interview 23 January 2017).

Similarly, Mulan expressed her emotional attachments to, but also a hope for intergenerational transference of, the material items collected during her marriage:

Mulan: Most of our furniture was collected overseas, and I wanted to be able to pass it on to our children, when they were settled, and had homes of their own (diary entry January 2017).

Mulan's story includes her now ex-husband leaving her for another woman. They had lived in various parts of the world, moving around to further his career. His career was privileged over hers, in a similar field, which took a back seat during those years of work-related travel and constant relocation with their young children. As they travelled, Mulan collected items, such as furniture (see Figures 4.4, 4.5), that were reminiscent of the places they had resided.



**Figure 4.4: One of Mulan's side tables acquired whilst living in the Middle East
Photo author's own**



**Figure 4.5: View of the detail through the glass top of one (of two) of Mulan's side
tables from the Middle East. Photo author's own**

Mulan was unable to afford to continue to pay the mortgage on their home after Simon, her ex-husband, left. Neither could she gain employment in the country they were residing in at the time of separation, due to her professional qualification registration lapsing whilst they were abroad. Pragmatically, she decided to move back to New Zealand, after more than a decade away, with their two, then teenaged children. Her reasons to move back included identifying possible opportunities to re-establish her professional registration, better chances of employment and, hope of familial support. As well as the more practical aspects of what she could afford to discard, or keep and move internationally, Mulan was determined to retain the mementos of their somewhat nomadic lifestyle, as familiar material assemblages of home. This included Mulan's ideas about pieces that 'belonged together.' As I stayed overnight with Mulan, in her home, to gather data, the longer contact period allowed me to catch some of Mulan's beliefs about 'fault' in her comments:

I asked Mulan about how she and Simon had come to an agreement about the household contents. She stated that because he had 'run off' that she felt she had the right to decide who got what. It seems that Simon left this largely unchallenged. (Blame-shame/guilt? A kind of dualistic reading of divorce?) Mulan mentioned that he did ask for one of the side tables (see Figures 4.4. and 4.5) and she told him no, that they 'belonged' together (research diary 17 December 2016).

Together, we spoke of her desire to pass these onto their children, as markers of places they grew up. Mulan felt she had done the selecting, purchasing and placing of these items – the bulk of the homemaking - and that her emotional connection to them was stronger than her ex-husband's:

Mulan: The objects inside our house was [sic] everything that we had gotten [sic] from our travels in the Middle East. [Pause] He's got some of it. [Pause] I got the lion's share²⁰. 'Cos I wasn't gonna let him have it (interview 17 December 2016).

²⁰ A phrase used to describe the largest portion. An interesting use of hegemonic ideas about gender, with the lion, as male, generally considered worthy of the greater portion.

Mulan reiterated these feelings in her diary, about connection to material things, but also disconnection. Mulan expresses her shock at her ex-husband's sudden (to her) disconnection from her and their children. She draws a parallel between this, with his (dis)connection from the material matter of their coupled life. Mulan explores her inner tensions about the changed and changing meanings of those material items, after what she frames as being personally discarded:

Mulan: I took the lion's share of our household 'things.' It was more because I felt like he didn't deserve them anymore. We had spent 24 years building up our home and family and he was walking out without [what I thought was] a good reason. Part of me just wanted to leave everything but the other part had to be practical – I had no job and no one to fall back on. Most of our furniture was collected overseas and I wanted to be able to pass it on to our children when they were settled and had homes of their own. We were such a tight family and he just ran, without warning, he didn't deserve to run off with another woman and be happy with all our stuff. Simon was always driven by money, position and power ... now those things aren't so important to me anymore – more money of course would be nice, but being real and honest and kind are much more important. The 'things' are just 'things' of course with memories attached and I like them but now [I am] thinking of selling some of them to help my daughter finish uni[versity] (diary entry January 2017).

Alongside Mulan's feelings of vulnerability and being personally discarded by Simon, apparent are the symbolic meanings in the (disposable) materialities of a long-term relationship. This also illuminates the fluidity of meanings of material items in a home, challenging the idea that items have fixed, or even the same, meaning(s) ascribed to them by each romantic partner. Material belongings are continually gaining and losing status or favour within the imaginings of those who possess them, illustrating the "importance of topographical potential of things in understanding value creation and destruction" (Crewe 2011 29). Everyday homemaking practices refute any ontological fixity of home nor subjectivities, via the

process of their mutual definition, including the persistence of the reproduction of domesticised and domesticating practices (Morrison 2013).

Several participants who had separated from their partners, reflected that their home décor and mindset about their homes had become more minimalist, less predicated on the monetary value, and prevalence of the materialities within:

Beth: No, material things don't mean a great deal. Um, I think my [twice divorced, thrice married, now deceased] daughter taught me that. You know (interview 11 December 2016)?

Beth's loss of material comforts is pragmatically (re)constructed by her as an opportunity to dematerialise. As such, Beth's "experiences and consequences of [relationship] dissolution [is] both narrated through, and heavily mediated by, domestic materiality" (Brickell 2014 265). Annie also described (de)materialising, and subsequent re-materialising processes involved in her separation and reconstruction of home and identity:

Annie: I built, and I actually did a lot of the designing of the two homes we built together. The last one, we'd only been in for two years. It was huge, like something out of a magazine. It was high-end²¹, um, massive. And I walked out of that place, and it was suddenly just bricks and mortar. I didn't care about it. I didn't wanna be there. It meant nothing ... I took very little out of the house, apart from a lot of kitchen items. I left all the furniture. So, I bought everything [in her current home] off TradeMe²². And it was **fun** (interview 23 January 2017)!

Annie (re)interprets her downward social mobility as empowering and uplifting. She sees it as an opportunity to assert her agency, as resistance to the ways in which she felt her individual identity was suppressed by her husband's power in her coupled identity. The coupled home – regardless of its material comforts – had become a place of oppression, and therefore the ascribed, positive meanings embedded in those materialities had soured for Annie. One effect of this was the rapid and mindful unmaking and remaking

²¹ A term used to describe something as expensive and sophisticated.

²² New Zealand-based auction website, selling second-hand items.

of home(s) as Annie renegotiated what was meaningful to her in her home spaces.

Jen too has experience with making and unmaking of home, with several long-term relationships a part of her romantic history. She talks about the material processes of breaking up as having become less fraught for her, as she has learned to interpret and accept the temporal instabilities of intimate relationships, and to relax her ideas about the (in)dispensability of home materialities:

Jen: [on her first divorce] there's a tension between what's **fair**, and what you're gonna miss, and you've just gotta get over that, and really talk yourself through, um, what is truly meaningful. You think, oh, how am I ever gonna live without that?! It was really nice. And, [*laughs*] oh, look at me, I'm living without it and everything's fine! [On her second divorce] with my second marriage, we'd bought the kids [his two and her four] a little boat for Christmas. All the kids got a boat [to share] for Christmas. He wouldn't let me have it, and it really annoyed me. It was just a thing, and I thought, jeepers, that **really** pisses me off! So what? I'm not even worried about it [now]. I'm an expert at it now [*laughs*]. Look, I lived with Sean [another romantic partner] for a bit, and I just walked out. We haven't quibbled over anything. I had what I needed. And you just [*inhales loudly*] it just doesn't matter (interview 25 January 2017).

Similarly, Steve speaks about the (de)materialising processes that may be catalysed during breakups. I do, however, feel that this may be somewhat reliant on ideologies already at least partially in place, prior to the relationship disruption. As these participants are all reasonably middle class, and most are still earning, the materialities are both replaceable (if desired or required) but, also, are mostly surplus to Maslow's theory of basic human needs (Kellerman 2014):

Steve: You spend thirty years being a hamster on a wheel²³, and you wake up and realise that it's all for nothing. I've never been very into cars, or any of the toys that guys seem to get off on²⁴. Funnily enough, when I drive past the first farm I owned, and where Polly [ex-wife] and I first met and she moved in, it was the happiest time in my life. It was simple [they had few material goods], and it was just young love, we were so in love, it was just bloody awesome. Ten years ago, I couldn't imagine living anywhere but the land, but now, I can certainly imagine living in an apartment ['down-sizing' from large farm ownership], possibly not full-time, but I get it [now] (interview 31 January 2017).

Reducing the material items, deemed by the middle classes as necessary to modern life, appears to create a mind shift that contributes significantly to identity modification. It is perhaps a somewhat practical mental solution, in downward social mobility, to the material realities of (re)establishing a meaningful (single) life, and the (de)materialising effects of breakups and divorces.

Beth expresses fears that many face regarding re-partnered and blended families concerning materialities. Assets which have large economic value, like houses, and the tensions between neoliberal greed, and meanings of home to the person(s) still living, are notable. However, Beth also faces tensions in her own feelings about her current home, and the meanings she ascribes to it, as she does not feel it is 'hers', and the tensions she feels about home in general – as both a refuge, but also a place of confinement and isolation, a trap - due to her past experiences in losing them, but also the discourses and systemic structure regarding home ownership:

Beth: Home, at the end of the day, well, legally [it's mine] yes, but do I really want any hassle over it? No. I mean, I'd probably be like when I was flatting²⁵ [after she lost her homes.] Up stakes and move. Ideally, I'd love to be in a retirement village, with people around my own age

²³ Colloquial phrase referring to monotonous, repetitive, unfulfilling activity, especially when one feels no progress is achieved. Sam uses this here to symbolise the grind of the work he felt he did to build up material wealth.

²⁴ Colloquial term meaning to enjoy.

²⁵ To share rental accommodation.

group, with similar interests and what have you. That would have been my ideal spot. But, because I am in this situation, I can't have it.

Paula: It's not a possibility? You wouldn't sell this and [pause]?

Beth: Um. No, no, I tried that a few months ago, but [*laughs wryly*] it didn't come off [Terry's family opposed the idea] (interview 11 December 2016).

The house she lives in is assigned, in normative terms, as Terry's, by Beth, and she alludes to his daughters holding a similar view:

Beth: I don't feel overly comfortable, knowing that, um, this is Terry's place, his daughters'. But, um, I've always said to him, I'll never take anything away from you. Because I've had it done to me (interview 11 December 2016).

Beth mentions that there is a 'Trust Deed', outlining what happens to the property in the event of Terry pre-deceasing her. This is a form of contracting out of the Property (Relationships) Act, which allows for a 50/50 split of assets in New Zealand after a relationship of greater than three years' duration. Beth expresses her concern about her future, demonstrating the spatial and temporal effects of how older persons' experiences are influenced greatly by their cumulative life history, including their household and community position(s) achieved (see Katz and Monk 1993). Intersectionality, of age, gender and class are highlighted by Beth in her musings:

Beth: I think, if I hadn't have been told to do as I was told, as a kid, I wonder how much bearing that had on me. Whether it's deep in your subconscious? That you've gotta do what other people want.

Paula: It's quite a gendered thing, isn't it? That, as women, we're taught from birth, just about?

Beth: Yeah, that's right! Yeah, that is what it is, the problem [with gendered constructs] (interview 11 December 2016).

Beth expresses that her attitude has changed, questioning the 'rules' and social norms that she took for granted in her childhood and younger years. This reflects calls to be cognizant of changing perspectives throughout the lifecourse – both conscious and unconscious - in order to scrutinize debates regarding identity and equality (Mansvelt 2009). Due to the tensions regarding neoliberal ideologies about ownership, Beth expresses that having experienced large material losses, she is less emotionally invested in the materialities of home, than the popular conception might advocate:

Beth: I sometimes think, well, because I haven't got anything, well, nobody can take anything off me anymore (interview 11 December 2016)!

Mindful of her lack of material belongings, Beth has rearranged her ideas about inheritance, to fit with her material circumstances. She describes the difference she can see between the expectations of her biological children, and her stepchildren:

Beth: Well, my kids don't expect anything. And they know now, that there's nothing left, in the pot ... they say to me, 'don't worry!' They're not worried, but Terry's [children are more focused on what they might inherit] (interview 11 December 2016).

This pragmatism appears throughout this research, in the ways in which individuals rework their circumstances as 'choice,' preferring to frame poor circumstance as agential. Doing so allows those who have experienced oppression within the frameworks of their intimate relationships to shift the balance of power back in their favour, to (re)gain agency over both their thoughts and constructions of their material worlds.

Unpacking binaries: materialities versus emotions

In this chapter, I have concentrated on the materialities of relationship rupture. It is however important to point out that doing so somewhat neglects the emotion and affect involved in not just the material items, but also in the processes of relationship fracture. Materiality and emotion are not easily

separated, neatly sorted into two separate realms. In examining materialities of home, the people whose stories I share in this research explain how emotion and affect embedded in those materialities are also important to them.

Frequently, societal pressure is applied to dissolve a fractured relationship, citing such reasons as individual agency, dignity and self-esteem (see Brickell 2014; Pain and Staeheli 2014; Pain 2015; Probyn 2005). Conversely, there are often also many socially compelling reasons to stay, and perhaps try to rebuild. Some of these may include economic and emotional support found within the networks forged during an intimate relationship, with wider family and friends. Steve, for example, shared accommodation with his ex-wife for several years after their marriage ended:

Steve: [We] got to a place where we could um, cohabit, successfully in the same house – for a while at least.

Paula: Were there any rituals or cleanses that you had to do to live in the same space?

Steve: Rituals? Nah, I don't think so. We just had to make sure we had clear personal boundaries and good communication ... she tended to do her own thing a lot more, she didn't share everything with me like she used to (interview 31 January 2017).

I hold that individuals and couples often experience relationship challenge(s) in ways that are similar to those who experience a more normative loss, such as death of a loved one. Without death - sometimes described as an absent presence, as in Coco's father's words, and so on (see Ginn 2013) - the loss of an intimate partner is marginalised. The fleshy loss is still a factor, however, but most often that flesh, the person contained within – the former partner - and what that represented, touchable, but perhaps now out of reach, certainly in any intimate manner, is still present in some form. I depict this as a present absence, a loss whereby the person is still a bodily presence. I interpret this as creating a different affective atmosphere, a different type of unending grief, and see that this appears to

be missing from geographical scholarship. Whilst I was delving for information about the materialities of separation, several of the participants were keen to discuss immaterial matters, demonstrating to me that dualistic analyses of material-immaterial are neither possible, nor very helpful to those in these circumstances:

Paula: Is there anything I particular that you miss? Like, material items?

Steve: Not really. What I miss most of all is Polly [ex-wife], and that includes her body, the comfort and warmth she always provided. Every day. Every night. The 'stuff' is just stuff. You can't replace a person (Messenger message 18 June 2017).

Coco expresses her feelings about the 'good' relationship she feels she is compelled, in a normative manner, to maintain with her ex-partner, for the sake of their children. In doing so, she admits to her sadness at the loss of the normativity of the relationship, the loss through relationship change and reformation of home, but also a different type of relationship with her children's father:

Coco: I don't know if I have the words to describe [the sadness]. But I do feel it. And sometimes when in the presence [of Brett, her ex] I dislike [him]. On [son's] birthday and it was just us three [Brett, herself, and the son having his birthday]. It was like a normal family for a moment. I felt sadness for [son]. Did [Brett] feel the same? Then the great realisation that my children are also still grieving for that normal family life of having two parents together. The other day when [Brett] came in [to my apartment] with the boys. I kissed the boys and I was about to hug and kiss him like I would have done in the past. Because it felt normal to do. But I didn't, of course, as that no longer happens. Paula, I can't describe in words. That is why sometimes it would be better to not have such a 'good' relationship with him for the sake of the boys. Because it isn't helping me [heal from their split] (Messenger message 21 June 2017).

Therefore, drawing on normative notions of grief is often unhelpful when dealing with loss with regards to relationships. Psychologists recognise 'secondary losses' during times of grief that may include relinquishing dreams, opportunities, relationships, a nuclear family and previous security (Hone 2016). In geographical terms, I point out that relationship rupture is often accompanied by spatial loss(es), or changes – on a variety of scales, from small, personal items to entire homes - that can add nuanced layers to the loss of self, "the old 'you', the person you were before this loss occurred, the person you will never be again" (Hone 2016 65). Steve concedes this loss, at a point in the interview when I was attempting to discuss the materialities of his divorce:

Steve: The title of your thesis is quite interesting. Because, I know for Polly, that home is where she felt the most hurt [Steve's affair included inviting his affair partner into his and Polly's home]. I wonder if we should have moved, but then, me being me, I thought, no, that's just running away. Maybe that was wrong.

Paula: Was there anything about the houses that you wanted to change? Was there any redecorating, rearrangement, that kind of thing?

Steve: Um, no, I don't think so ... I know getting rid of any old furniture, none of that material stuff ever worried me, but I know Polly was very sad about the places we [the affair partner and himself] had been [having sex and shared intimacies with]. But I can go into any of the houses [we had sex in] and never have any moments where I am reminded of what I did with **her** [the affair partner] in them (interview 31 January 2017).

Steve expresses his understandings of what his ex-wife shared with him about her feelings – and how they differed from his - about the spaces of home after their relationship was challenged by Steve's infidelity occurring in, and transgressing, those 'private' spaces. Doing so not only highlights the differing experiences of binary pairings like men and women, or betrayer and betrayed, but also the ways in which loss is culturally scripted, and

predominantly focuses on death and subsequent bereavement (see Stevenson *et al.* 2016; Valentine 2013). I hold that this marginalises those who experience grieving processes, such as relationship loss, and feelings of grief that sit outside of normative fields - such as death – spatial, but especially temporal perimeters, regarding grief and loss.

Summary

Geographical scholarship regarding the materialities of love and home have tended to concentrate on homemaking, or beginnings – a largely happy experience of place. This research, however, extends this to look at what happens next. I have examined the spatial and temporal pressures that everyday life exerts, including normative expectations regarding gender and coupled identities, on particularly the material and intergenerational experiences of homemaking, love and ‘love gone wrong’. In doing so, I also acknowledge the emotional ramifications of both homemaking and unmaking, and the variety of experiences that can be both shared, but also very individual and isolating, when intimate relationships are challenged.

Homes are spaces that are still largely gendered, and the materialities in and of them and identity are mutually constituted. Some participants illustrated how the materialities, including intergenerational materialities, (re)produce meaning in and of home, and how these materialities are central to their construction of identity. Others use (im)materialities in the making and unmaking of home to demonstrate identity as fluid.

Chapter Five: Emotions and affective materialities

In this chapter I query how and in what ways relationship disruption(s) influence emotional and affective experiences of making and unmaking home. I first discuss the material and emotional 'stickiness' of intimate relationships, and the messiness of 'unsticking' those bonds once a relationship is challenged, and often ended. Secondly, I examine the emotional geographies of 'blended' materialities and identities, and the material fragmentation of serial monogamous relationships. Thirdly, I scrutinize the effects of material agency and the material affects of feelings of guilt and shame in the context of relationship breakdowns, and the ways in which gender is reproduced as domestinformative, especially in rural contexts. I then consider the affective results of material violence on those who are experiencing, or have experienced relationship difficulties. Finally, I look at starting over, and resilience of those for whom geographical distance and intergenerational (im)materialities are a factor.

'Sticky' materialities of intimate relationships: unsticking the bonds

Human geographers have increasingly looked at intimate relationships in the last two decades (Valentine 2008). This means that personal lives have been considered in a relation to place and space. In terms of this research, participants have been generous in sharing some aspects of and insights into their private, and at times painful lived geographies after their most intimate relationship has been severely challenged. Morrison (2010; 2013) examines the role of love in making of home through the materialities of home. I press further, temporally, in an almost longitudinal manner, to look at what happens to identity, place and space when heteronormative constructions of love and home are disrupted, and perhaps dismantled.

Relationship dissolution is a common experience, but geographers have not often looked at the material and emotional effects of this on identity and place (see however, Brickell 2014). Furthermore, examining the effects of relationship rupture of couples who choose to stay together has been largely

overlooked. Whether this is due to the inherent 'hiddenness' of relationship challenges, or discourses that marginalise the experience, as nothing appears to have been materially changed, is debatable. The perhaps micro changes of discarding, or re-purposing material items that have – or had, prior to the disruption - certain meanings embedded in them are mostly overlooked. The empirical data gathered in this research offers a glimpse into the phenomenon.

Hearing the stories of my participant cohort prompts renewed consideration of the stickiness of intimate relationships. Endings are difficult, and many speak of the ways in which either themselves, their (ex) partners, or both, clung – some continuing to do so - to the normativity of coupledness, including the materialities to varying degrees, long after relationships felt the convulsions of sometimes enormous challenge. The grip of both lingering love, and the emotional and material magnitude of separation is strong:

Beth: By the end of the sixth year [of the relationship] I had had enough and pointed to the front door and told him to get out. I did not know he had been seeing another woman, and grooming her, so he moved in with her. I was shocked to learn this as I had really loved this man and it took me a long time to understand the real reason he had attached himself to me in the first place. He had seen me as a rich farmer's widow, and thought he could live with me without costing him a cent. [When] the truth eventually came out, he did admit to me that greed was a factor, only then could I let go. Funny how everyone else around me could see it. I didn't, love is blind (diary entry December 2016).

Some participants spoke of separation, and reconciliation, sometimes several times:

Paula: My next question is usually about people who have separated, and that doesn't sound like it is the case with you?

Lisa: We were. That was why we were selling the house.

Paula: Oh, sorry, how did you negotiate who lived where?

Lisa: Ah, okay. We'd come to a head. We've actually come to the same head again this year. I was just, done. I dunno, can't do this anymore. It was really interesting, because once that happened, um, my husband's quite defensive. [Once the difficult marriage] dropped away, all of a sudden, we were able to get the renovations finished. When we decided to separate, he was in agreement. Things started moving, we sold the house, and we didn't end up going our separate ways. I was still in the [head] space of leaving, but we were offered a little unit for two or three weeks because we hadn't found a place to buy. We went there together, and it was almost like we were gonna keep trying. I was thinking, 'man, we've got cash in the bank, it would be easy to just chop it down the middle' (interview 12 December 2016).

Lisa's story explores the blurring of materialities and emotions in the durability of her relationship. Neoliberal economics would suggest that splitting the money would be easy, but modern relationships are made of more than economic need. There are emotions involved, as well as the hegemony of discourses regarding coupledness versus singledness, and this is a contributor to the stickiness of intimate relationships.

Alongside such an experience, Jen's personal conundrum regarding divorce was layered with cultural and societal expectations, such as those of the Catholic Church and family, but also community, about togetherness, and the permanence of marriage. This viscosity held her in place, and she speaks of the work involved in trying to stay in the marriage for quite some time:

Jen: I gave [the marriage] a really good try! But there's some things you can't do (interview 25 January 2017).

Mulan speaks of the ways which her coupled identity contributed to her feelings of home and belonging, regardless of the fact that she moved, internationally, several times during her marriage. This is addressed in retrospect, as she talks about belonging and her current emotions about place(lessness) - and I surmise, singledness - despite owing her current home, in small-town New Zealand. She discussed her emotions as she

recently drove through on a recent trip through the Waikato city she and her ex had originally lived in:

Mulan: It hurts more [*voice breaking*] going through Hamilton now.

Paula: [*Nervously*] so, this is um, home? But it's still not home, in that it is, um, your base for now? Do you think there is such a place as home anymore, for you? Or do you think it's something you're gonna have to create somehow?

Mulan: [*long pause, answers in a very low voice*] I. Don't. Know. Probably create. Because when you dream about winning Lotto²⁶, I could build a house wherever I want. And then I go, where's that? [*Wry laugh*] where the hell do I want to be? I have **no** idea where I'd like to be. Absolutely none. [*Snorts*] well, that's depressing (interview 17 December 2016)!

Mulan also shares that she was prepared to try to repair the rupture to the marriage that Simon's affair caused, preferring to stay together, rather than divorce if he stayed faithful. They tried reconciliation, briefly:

Mulan: He came back for a month. [*Long pause*] just over a month. About six weeks. And I said yes, because I wanted my family back. But, after three days, he got made redundant. And he had nowhere else, and he started back down the track of [*pause*] lying his little teeth off again. And contacting **her** [the affair partner] again. [*Inhaling loudly*] and then he cheated on me again [*snorts*]. Then he refused to leave! Because he had nowhere to go! And **that** was awful. But, when the redundancy was official and [*payments*] kicked in I said, there's no reason for you to be here anymore, you're not working, go and live with your **sluuuuut**. So he did. And that's the last we saw of him (interview 17 December 2016).

Mulan's coupled identity was important to her. Within geography, there has been a propensity for 'family geographies' to concentrate on children's geographies, and the links between parent(s) and child(ren) (Wilkinson

²⁶ New Zealand's national lottery game.

2014). This has the effect of somewhat overlooking the geographies of romantic couples, especially those whose 'coupledom' itself is disrupted. It is apparent that, "simultaneous processes of detraditionalization *and* retraditionalization, with the emergence of new freedoms accompanied by new forms of constraint" (Wilkinson 2014 2455, italics in original) are occurring, and push and pull individuals in their decision-making processes. Coupled identities are another component in the jigsaw that adhere people to each other, but also to place. Mulan describes herself:

Mulan: [My] identity was Simon's wife. Mooshu and Calvin's mother (interview 17 December 2016).

During this exchange, Mulan does, however, identify both how the gradual and painful processes of unsticking the bonds affects her perception of identity, and worldview, and the increased flexibility that this can contribute to:

Mulan: I suppose my identity's a bit, I'm getting back to who I used to be [prior to marriage]? Stroppy, loud, juvenile [*laughs*]. Stuff being the responsible adult anymore! Does that work? But yeah, [divorce] certainly throws you for a six.²⁷ [E]specially when you don't see it coming (interview 17 December 2016).

One case whereby stickiness has ensured that the couple have remained together, is Pixie's experience. She indicates that her reluctance to leave, or even discuss her husband's affair, is largely due to her desire to retain a normative life, with its associated, prescribed beneficial 'family values' – and I argue, materialities - intact. Wilkinson (2014) challenges such perceptions, suggesting that adjusting social norms to view singledom as potentially productive, and not necessarily temporary, may indeed be key to more inclusive attitudes about intimacy and connection. I extend this and theorise that doing so may create more positive emotions and affective spaces in our lifeworlds. Pixie expresses her push-pull feelings about her home, and

²⁷ To be completely devastated.

how she gauges how 'healthy' she feels the relationship is by the sense she has of her home's physical completion:

Pixie: When I think of setting up for myself [leaving her husband and current home] I can picture everything, and every minute.

Paula: Is it quite different from what you've got now? Or is it just spatial arrangements, or, like, would you do an older villa again?

Pixie: Probably more contemporary. I think because it was too hard to focus on home, because that is where I feel the most hurt. It's where I've seen the texts, and the emails [between her husband and his affair partner]. [But lately] the things I've brought in from mum and dad's house are the things that make me happy. I did think, in the last few years, oh, we need to shift [house], we need to go to a place that's finished. [But] this year, we talked about finishing the house [renovations], and I'm thinking that doing that will make us stronger (interview 18 January 2017).

Other examples of how sticky love and indeed coupledness is, include Steve and his now ex-wife Polly. They attempted to reconcile and rebuild their marriage after Steve's extradyadic relationship with another woman. Steve speaks of the love that is still present between the two of them, despite their divorce. This illustrates one way in which emotions are sticky, and persist even after relationships end, or in this case, is significantly changed. The language that Steve uses about his relationship with Polly is often still in the present tense, as if they still live together:

Steve: She [Polly] got rid of linen and stuff like that.

Paula: Did you notice at the time? That it was different?

Steve: I'm a bit retarded²⁸ about home stuff changing, she just does [sic] it [*laughs*] (interview 31 January 2017).

Steve also speaks of the separations, and reconciliations he and his ex-wife underwent:

²⁸ Used colloquially to mean slow on the uptake.

Paula: When you separated the first times, how did you negotiate who lived where?

Steve: Um [long pause]. I don't know that there was any negotiation. It just seemed like because I was the one who caused the difficulty, that it was best for me to [leave].

Paula: Did you ever reconcile and live together again?

Steve: Yes. We separated and reconciled three times. I don't know what your definition of reconciling is, but the last time, we got to a place where we could, um, cohabit, successfully in the same house. But we were no longer living as a couple, with the intimacy and that (interview 31 January 2017).

The continued contact that he and Polly have challenges popular understandings about the finality of divorce, highlighting how love changes, and can transcend socially prescribed constructs such as divorce, creating tangled (un)togetherness:

Steve: Even now, Polly often asks me if I am looking after myself. You know? She knows I have some things that I shouldn't really eat, to stay healthy, and she always took care of that.

Paula: Does that make you feel like she doubts you can look after yourself?

Steve: No, no, not at all. It's more, um, that she cares. I like that actually. One of the hard things about divorce is that the person you always counted on to always be there for you, well, they're not always, anymore. It can be a bit lonely (interview 31 January 2017).

Coco also expresses how the stickiness of her separation affects her. She identifies the 'amicable split' as dichotomous, with the shared custody of her children with her children's father reproducing caring behaviours that she does not always feel:

Coco: Sometimes it would be better not to have such a 'good' relationship with him, 'for the sake of the boys.' Because is isn't helping me [move on with my life] (Messenger message 21 June 2017).

Ongoing contact, often due to shared parenthood, produces a variety of emotions and affects in a variety of spaces, including in and on the body. These feelings can be confusing and evocative. Narratives regarding children's wellbeing pressure individuals to keep emotions hidden, or to exhibit false emotions in spaces considered both public, but also construed in the popular imaginary as 'private' spaces, such as home.

Blended emotional geographies of home

The things people live with become so much more than the commodity value that the neoliberal model can account for, labelling and valuing domestic items is tricky. Jen expresses her feelings about seeing objects and belongings in her bach that have sentimental value, and in keeping with her re-use ethos. It is worth noting here the origins of the concept of the 'Kiwi²⁹ bach'. These homes were traditionally very basic, rustic shelters, often with only rudimentary plumbing and electricity. In recent times, they have become more opulent, are often worth a lot of money, and sometimes outstrip the permanent home in terms of facilities and design. In Jen's more recent interpretation of the bach, she has some re-upholstered armchairs, which were in her (deceased) parents' traditional, rustic bach. Jen tells the story of and expresses her pleasure regarding the chairs' journey to their current placement. The chairs were taken from her family of origin's bach, and stored at her first husband's farm (after their divorce) for many years, playing host to several chickens, as their nesting boxes. When she had a place for them, she picked them up and had them re-upholstered (see Figure 5.1):

²⁹ Colloquial term for New Zealand and/or New Zealanders.

Jen: Those [armchairs] are from Te Kouma [where her family bach, growing up was located]. I got them recovered (interview 25 January 2017).



Figure 5.1: Jen's chairs. Photo supplied by Jen

Despite her practicality in 'letting go' of some of the material items acquired during her relationships, Jen accepts that the objects, assets and material artefacts are loaded with emotion in any separation, and can carry through and over to more than one monogamous relationship. She, for example, holds a strong attachment to a rug she bought when she was building her first new home with her first husband after the birth of their first child (see Figure 5.2):

Jen: In the garage, I've got the mat – it's just in the garage – but, doesn't matter, I see it every day. Um, I remember when we built, our first home, and we didn't have a lot of money, but I remember queueing up outside Carpet Barn from 4 o'clock or something in the morning, with Teddy [eldest child], who was 6 months old, to get cheap carpet for our house, and I bought this mat as well. And the kids have all

crawled around on it as well, and I just can't let it go. And, there's lots of little knick-knack things and so on (interview 25 January 2017).



Figure 5.2: Jen's rug. Photo author's own

I detect some spatial and temporal ripples present in such a material item. Jen's rug has meanings embedded in and of it that transgress its current placement, at the current period in Jen's life. Viewing the somewhat tattered rug in its garage placement gave me cause to reflect on these themes. I observe in my research diary that:

after the interview, we went for a walk through the house to look at specific items, maybe to take photographs. Jen spoke of the way watching her baby grandson lying on that rug – as her own children did - and envisaging him playing with the toys (Lego, cars, dolls) that she has stored at the bach, as he gets older, makes her feel. The quite visceral connection she tells me she *feels* in her body, in her chest, as those thoughts go through her mind is quite palpable. Different space and time, but the same use, which connects [people] to a past time and place. A way of doing some mental time travel (research diary January 2017, emphasis in original)?

In consideration of this observation - that I label as generational material affect - I then consider Pixie's story. I admit I found it somewhat disheartening to hear Pixie speak about her teenage daughter, Rochelle, with regards to Pixie's feelings about generational reproduction of gender and home:

Pixie: On a good day, I can picture, ahh, Rochelle getting married in the garden (interview 18 January 2017).

Pixie also has three sons, but there was no mention of them getting married, or in the garden, demonstrating the immutability of these gendered discourses. This is despite what she shared - and I read as - Pixie's own unhappiness at the hands of her everyday geographies within the institution of (heterosexual) marriage:

Pixie: Stuff that the kids have done, like [school] photography assignments, will take pride of place. Um, stuff that Kevin has done, I don't actually [*pause*] acknowledge it. And that's really bad. I guess there's just no [*pause*] thing there. There's no emotion. He's done a lot of stuff around the house. But it just [*pause*] doesn't mean anything to me.

Paula: Did you find that it did before [*pause*] he had the affair? Because it was done in love?

Pixie: Yeah, because we did it together. We would work on it, plan together. And we do [work on home projects] now. But there's not the communication.

Paula: How much do you have to love? And can you ever love 'properly' again?

Pixie: Exactly! Yeah. And I just don't know the answer to that. I certainly don't feel carefree, and in love ... It's *existing*. It's not [any more than that]. (interview 18 January 2017).

I feel this eager reproduction of heteronormative patterns may be Pixie's perhaps misguided way of trying to nurture and protect the next generation. Social reproduction of gender roles and 'traditions,' such as outlined here

by Pixie, instead, continue to reinforce oppressive patriarchal practices and ideologies. Pixie seems to be appropriating a nostalgic view of marriage as co-constitutive of individual happiness. It seems she is oddly disregarding her own everyday experience and admission that she is unsure about whether love will ever be 'enough' to repair the rupture her husband's affair has caused, despite his contributions to the materialities of their home.

Materialities of guilt and shame

The mahogany table-top you smashed
Had been the broad plank top
Of my mother's heirloom sideboard-
Mapped with the scars of my whole life

Ted Hughes, *The Minotaur* (Hughes and Keegan 2003 1120).

Material items, and assemblages of these, "the distinctive efficacy of a working whole, made up, variously, of somatic, technological, cultural, and atmospheric elements" (Bennett 2005 447) are, I submit, agential. They can help us understand the meanings embedded in social phenomena, such as the everydayness of love and breakups (Böschen *et al.* 2015). Discerning that the agency of materialities, and their sorting and display, is important in the context of home and homemaking practices, especially (still) for women (Morrison 2013).

In terms of material agency, and with temporal distance from the events of her divorce, Jen conveyed some disappointment about the decisions she made regarding her smaller share of joint property from her first marriage. She admits the part guilt played in her decision-making process. Jen felt that because it was her, and not her husband, who felt unhappy in their marriage, she was the one transgressing her marriage vows, and should therefore leave the majority of the joint property with her first husband. She was concerned about the way her children would read the materialities of divorce, and leaving their paternal home with materialities that were both familiar and familial, seemed to her to be, "the right thing to do" (Jen,

interview 27 January 2017). Continuity between the generations, with regard to materialities of home, were, for her, privileged over her own sense of loss. I hold that she sensed the agency embedded in the material items of home would help smooth the way, reduce friction, in the linkages and slippages between materiality and identity for her children, during their experiences of parental divorce. In unpacking some binarized notions regarding material agency, it can be argued that, “the rhetoric should be softened to more accurately reflect the fact that the force of culture ‘shapes’ or ‘inscribes’ nature but does not materially *produce* it” (Barad 2008 143, emphasis in original). Jen’s is an interesting perspective - gendered, laced with emotions, including guilt, as a single, working mother (Longhurst *et al.* 2012) – when one considers that she had the larger portion of time with the children in her custody. Mixed and fluid readings of material agency by Jen, and her visceral responses to emotion are touched on when she refers to some special items in her current home, and how they make her feel:

Paula: So, all those [family] things, how do you feel about seeing them in different spaces?

Jen: Yeah, good question! I find it soothing.

Paula: Grounding? This is who I am, and where I’ve come from?

Jen: Yeah, yeah! And this is what I *chose* to bring with me. I’ve been through a lot of iterations. So, I’ve got lots of things, from all kinds of places. Like, that time I spent at Cambridge High [School], as HOD [Head of Department, Jen was working as a secondary school teacher], the teacher aides gave me something [a knick-knack for her home] there. I’ve got that [in her current beach home]. You know, all sorts of little things like that. [Pause]. They’ve got//

Paula: Embedded with meaning (interview 25 January 2017).

Jen’s referral to her previous home - where her (now ex) husband remained - as “the home base” (Jen, interview 27 January 2017), exhibits that moving out of the joint home does not immediately relinquish her of her sense of belonging. Her sense of social justice was, I propose, a somewhat gendered

reading of what divorce might entail (see Wright 2010a). Such a display of agency (in leaving the marriage) to Jen, felt like a betrayal of the structure, and ‘seriousness’ of marriage, but also a betrayal of the promises she made to her husband, and further, to their wider, extended families. Jen’s identity includes a diasporic referencing of her parents’ strong Irish Catholic faith, and her absorption of those values. Her first wedding ceremony was held in the church, to a man who was also brought up in a Catholic family, from a different generationally-reproduced European diasporic ethnicity:

Jen: The other thing for me was the Catholic thing. So, if you, we were told from a very young age, it’s selfish, to put yourself first. And also, in Matthew’s [first husband] case, the Italian thing. I was trying to please, not just him, but his family, and that’s such a patriarchal society, all those Italian values were down on Rapurapu Road (interview 25 January 2017).

Despite her, in general, rejection of the religious part of the faith, I hold that there is an ‘ethnically’ Irish Catholic facet to her identity. As such, shame – both in falling in love with a partner who she later realised was unsuitable for herself, but also in later admitting this and leaving him, and her guilt at feeling she had let down both families (Probyn 2005) - was a factor in her feelings about divorce. Shame can be felt as “an intense and painful sensation that is bound up with how the self feels about itself, a self-feeling that is felt by and on the body” (Ahmed 2004b 103). Jen echoes this in her embodied reaction to the shame, and stress she felt in leaving both of her husbands:

Jen: [after leaving first husband] my whole body ached. I lost my voice and had nasal drip! [After leaving second husband] I didn’t sleep and had anxiety attacks. They [medical staff] put me on the ECG³⁰ thing a couple of times, but it was just panic (Messenger message 2 April 2017).

³⁰ An electrocardiogram. A test that checks for problems with the electrical activity of the heart.

Jen embodied reaction(s) mirror those of Elspeth Probyn's (2004) to leaving, moving, and the emotional effects of the process. Probyn (2004 328) describes her negative embodied reactions to moving as "shame born of the body's desire to fit in, just as it knows it cannot". Writing further, Probyn (2005 x) also outlines the parameters of individual shame:

If you're interested in and care about the interest of others, you spend much of your life blushing. Conversely, if you don't care, then attempts to shame won't move you. Shame highlights different levels of interest. Shame goes into the heart of who we think we are. In this sense, shame puts one's self esteem on the line and questions our value system. The things that make me ashamed have to do with a strong interest in being a good person ... My list will be different from yours. What shames me may not shame you. But whatever it is will be something that is important to you, an essential part of yourself.

I contend that to assuage some of this guilt and shame, Jen made these material sacrifices to her own creature comforts, as a form of penance, by leaving the bulk of the material items in her ex-husband's home:

Jen: Um, when I left Matthew, [I took] all the kids. I wanted to leave the original home set up so they didn't feel as if their home had been raped. So, the kids and I went to the Thames second-hand shop, and with \$1500 I furnished the house [we moved into]. That's second-hand beds for the kids. [*Pause*]. God! Second-hand everything. After living in a brand-new house, with brand-new everything, we started from scratch again. I just felt it was the right thing to do, so that they had continuity back at the home base.

Paula: Yep [*Pause*] And I think, once someone makes the decision to leave, there is some guilt with that? Even though you know it's the right thing to do, you tend to ... I know my father gave my mother ... their beach section. Over and above the other part of the settlement, because he felt bad. It was Mum's choice to divorce, but it was due to his infidelities [and non-heterosexual identity] that she felt she had no choice.

Jen: That's why, that's probably why I did what I did. And my lawyer at the time, told me I was an idiot. And I said, 'no, I'm doing the right thing, it's me leaving,' but jeeppers, she was right (interview 25 January 2017)!

Despite Jen's outline including requesting a reduced share of the marital assets, the share of the material assets on divorce she receive did include a beach house. I surmise that her perception of the family farm as her children's home - despite spending more time living with her – ensured the farm did not have to be sold in order to split the assets evenly. Her focus on maintaining a caring relationship between herself, her husband and his family was perhaps a conscious and unconscious means she used not just as 'image management' - to appear to be abiding by societal expectations and norms - in her shame, but also to ensure her own material comfort. Although in paid employment, Jen's strategies in dealing with the tensions after her first marriage ended, typify those that Longhurst *et al.* (2012 296) describe of participants in their research on single mothers in higher education,

In navigating dilemmas associated with their circumstances, participants illustrate that although they do not function outside of structuralist relations of power they do exert agency in the management of their own and other people's emotions in the production of space.

Jen explains her thoughts regarding that time, and the choices she made, as influenced in no small way by societal norms:

Jen: When I split up from Matthew, the kids' dad, I had no choice, because I was the one who decided that the marriage was over, and he was a farmer – well, I **thought** I had no choice – so I ... was the one who had to go ... taking my children away from the only home they'd ever known. So, pretty big. And I didn't feel like I had a choice with that, because it would have been cruel of me to kick him out (interview 25 January 2017).

On reflection, Jen later questioned of many of the discourses surrounding the emotions and materialities of marriage, divorce, (single) parenting, and gender roles:

Jen: I didn't leave the community, and I should have, probably. Because, um, it just wasn't far enough. When you're in a small community, people make their judgements, and they decide who's, who the bad person is. And in my case, it was me (interview 25 January 2017).

Moving close to extended family, however, contributed to her ability to continue to advance her career. This included financial, practical and emotional support from family (Hughes 2011). I also allege that Jen was actively resisting class assumptions about lone parents, as urban and under-resourced, but also messy, ugly divorce scenarios which are counter-discursive to ideologies about marriage being best for families (Hughes 2011), as a protection mechanism for her children. There were, however tensions in the decision to stay in the small, rural town, as Jen described how she felt subjected to excessive scrutiny by the area's residents.

Jen's intergenerational affects extend to her construction of home. She drew a picture of home (see Figure 5.3) that she described as:

Jen: That, in my head, is an amalgam of North Street [her childhood home, which was a weatherboard house set on a large, quarter acre section, with fruit trees and a large vegetable garden] and the house I built with my first husband, and this place [her beach house]. As I was drawing it, it dawned on me that it could be any of those places.

Paula: So, there's a theme that runs//

Jen: Yeah! And it's got to do with light, windows, and greenery (interview 25 January 2017).



Figure 5.3: Jen's drawing of home

Jen engages with the themes in her drawing (see Figure 5.3) as important facets of her identity composition, and that she is conscious of the importance of affective indoor-outdoor feelings, “the lights, windows, and greenery” (Jen, interview 25 January 2017) but also, wide-open space. Although the drawing appears to be quite stark, Jen clarifies her emotional connection to and construction of home, including the way she felt about leaving her materially comfortable marital home for the first of a series of other dwellings. The marital home was designed with and by her, and Jen represents the homes that came after this as of inferior quality in comparison:

Jen: [on leaving her first husband] I only went five k(ilometres) up the road, into a school house. **Shitty** little school house. Absolute oh, you know, mouldy bathroom, all that stuff (interview 25 January 2017).

Sometime later, Jen moved to a nearby town, purchasing another house, but has moved around many times since then:

Jen: I haven't had a home since [her farm home with her first husband] really. I bought a little house in Te Kauwhata, that was quite cool. But since then, that's a long time! I haven't had a home ... where you go, 'oh, you're going home.' But none of the Auckland [where she has lived

since, including during her second marriage] things, until I had my own little apartment, have been home-home. Home's a feeling. Isn't it? Home's a feeling (interview 25 January 2017).

Jen's ability to articulate her understandings about what home means – both to her, but also in socially normative terms - is apparent in this exchange. Geographers have long known about the links between emotions and affective spaces of home (see Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2008c; Morrison 2010). Jen's feelings of belonging to (at least) two home spaces and places, reflects recent scholarship on trends that include mobility and "residential multi-locality" (Schier *et al.* 2015 439). As well as the beach house in which we conducted our interview, Jen also owns a small, one-bedroom apartment close to Auckland's CBD³¹, where her work is based. Discursively, the work-life dualism has been construed as occurring from one home base. Jen, however, demonstrates a more recently studied social phenomenon – one could argue a result of affluent living in the West - whereby differing activities are conducted largely from split, sometimes multiple, residential locations (see Ellingsen and Hidle 2013; Hay and Visser 2014; McIntyre *et al.* 2006; Paris 2010; Schier *et al.* 2015). I understand Jen's desire for both homes is not just to 'have the best of both worlds,' but to also centre herself in an area she has familial and emotional links with. The region her beach home is in is important in her formulation of identity:

Jen: [Location] **is** relevant. Because one of the reasons I chose this [beach location], is proximity to Auckland, and it is the closest and easiest drive. But my children are in the Waikato. And my grandchild. So, I come this way [when I drive down], and drop in [visit with my family], and the idea is that they can quickly get here.

Paula: Just pop over. Especially with the dairy farming lifestyle [of her son and his partner]. Because this can be a day trip.

³¹ Central Business District.

Jen: Yeah, it's forty minutes from Thames [where her dairy farming son and his family live], and they can come, and still get the cows in by 3 o'clock (interview 25 January 2017).

In an apparent reversal of norms regarding second homes, Jen's beach house is larger, and framed as the primary home, even though she spends less time at the beach. The city apartment is treated as a convenient, but much-loved platform for her work life. She outlines how she balances the emotions she feels about her two current homes in terms of their difference in size, outlining the love she feels for the two vastly differing spaces:

Jen: Well, you imagine, there's 25 Kelly's here [referring to her large group of siblings, their partners and families, who visit her beach often]. There's that big space, there's this, there's kids playing [with] Lego down there, and that's I saw all that when I got it [the house]. So yeah, then the other [home] ... I moved into my little unit ... which I love as well ... because it's like this little nest. In the middle of the city, which I love.

Paula: So, it's the best of both worlds, you're balancing out both sides?

Jen: Two very happy moves (interview 25 January 2017).

Jen's sense of contentment and self, embedded in her material geographies of home(s), are discernible in this interview extract.

Lynette has now decided to sell the home she still lives, in but once share with her ex-husband, Ryan. The negative affective atmosphere in parts of the home, alongside feelings of shame, at her naivety, but also in choosing a partner who behaved in a manner she finds repugnant, have had some bearing on her decision:

Lynette: It's been hard, because of some of what, um, happened [in this house]. Well, he was cheating, and using a lot of internet porn[ography], which I didn't really realise fully. I mean, I knew he liked it a bit, but it turned out he was using it **a lot!** He was bringing the woman he was having the affair with into this house, and well, you know, it kind of taints the place, if you like. I now realise the taints are

there, and they really do, um, affect how I feel about the house. I don't know, it's hard to explain [pause] like, mostly I am fine, but then there are moments. Like, if I'm cooking my kids some dinner, and I get this, um, really **visual** image of him, um, you know, shagging her on my kitchen bench, or where the kids are sitting [indicates the currently empty couch] (interview 5 December 2016).

Later in the interview Lynette explains her feelings about the slow process of discovery, illustrating the fluidity of her emotions and affectual feelings about her home:

Lynette: At first, I didn't know he had brought her here, or about the porn. So, the home was kind of a safe space, it was 'ours' and, um, I s'pose I saw it as almost a kind of refuge from the shitstorm³² of what had happened? I could be myself, cry, I didn't have to put on a front to my work colleagues and clients. But then, when more or the truth started coming out. Oh, I can remember the first time I realise he'd brought her into our home! I was standing there, by the kitchen sink. I just kinda [paused] crumpled to the floor ... I recall thinking, holy shit! In **my** home! What the fuck?! Then a whole bunch of questions, about where, what did I need to dispose of or burn? ... I just felt so [pause] fucking **violated**, that they came here (interview 5 December 2016).

Lynette articulates her feelings of abjection about one of the spaces in her home. Her feelings arise from the solo sexual acts that her ex partook in in the room. Such acts, including masturbation, are perceived as somewhat objectionable in the context of normative coupledness, something intimate that is not shared with one's intimate partner, secretive and 'singled':

Paula: So, do you think there have been any changes to how you feel about your home?

Lynette: Changes? [Pause] oh hell yeah! I forgot to tell you the next part, when I realised he had a really bad porn habit! He had been locking himself in that room, down there [indicates a lockable door off

³² Colloquialism meaning confused and chaotic situation.

the hallway] (see Figure 5.4). I thought he was working, and didn't like to disturb him. [I] didn't think until later that a lock is probably a bit weird for an office? Perfect for viewing non-stop porn, and, well, you know the rest. Yeah, so that room, he's been gone ten months, and I haven't been in there. I doubt the door has been opened. It makes me feel sick when I think about that room (interview 5 December 2016).



**Figure 5.4: Door knob to what was formerly Ryan's office.
Photo supplied by Lynette**

Abjection can be described as strong feelings of disgust, felt on and within the body as,

affect or feeling of anxiety, loathing and disgust that the subject has in encountering certain matter, images and fantasies – the horrible – to which it can only respond with aversion, nausea and distraction (Longhurst 2001 28).

Lynette voices her revulsion at the idea of touching the door knob, whilst conceding the effect of passing of time, but also the pragmatic need to clean prior to selling the house, has had on reducing the strength of her repugnance about the space:

Lynette: I guess I am almost ready to go in there, as the property is going on the market, and I need to, um, clean, eww! I hope it isn't as bad as I imagine [*laughs*]. It is fine now. I know (interview 5 December 2016).

Annie discusses some material attachments, and techniques she has employed to mitigate their meanings. In the case of the cookbook she no longer has in her possession:

Annie: So, I was pretty happy to be away from there. But, my recipe book. I left that behind. You know, your handwritten ones, the ones your mum's given you, your grandma's? People, throughout my life. And, actually, it knocked my confidence, with my baking! So, Mum just last week gave me a new cookbook, hand-written out//

Paula: So, you haven't ever recovered that?//

Annie: He won't, he won't give it back to me.

Paula: Oh, ugh, 'cos he knows [its emotional value to Annie], yip.

Annie: I've asked.

Paula: [*laughing*] Is he a baker? What's he gonna use it for?

Annie: [I've] asked, and asked, and I've just resigned to the fact, I'll just start a new recipe book ... So, that was probably the only material thing that I've missed (interview 23 January 2017).

Annie valued the cookbook far more than her ex-husband did. It held little or no value to him - other than as a tool he could use to wield as his power over her waned - nor in economic terms. Annie's ex-husband's anger at Annie not succumbing to his will was enacted by denying her possession of an item he knew was important to her in her construction of self. Her sense of loss, was not just for the materiality of the book itself, but flowed through to her sense of identity as a skilled home baker, her confidence taking a blow without it. Her connection with her cookbook is an example of how meaning and value are attributed to items by our personal connections to them (Crewe 2011). Annie valued her cookbook as a type of family connection and heirloom, tying her identity to her family, who have been her main support during a very difficult divorce. The cookbook has no monetary value, instead, its meaning "rests in its social history and geography, in the traces of wear and use embedded within" (Crewe 2011 29).

In terms of emotional value, Annie also related a story about her wedding dress. Wedding dresses are culturally ascribed symbols indicating a specific but temporary identity, that of the bridal self (Laskey and Stirling 2017). Annie and her sister deliberately destroyed Annie's dress, in a symbolic move designed to shed past hurts, and encourage new beginnings:

Annie: I burnt my wedding dress. Went to my sister's [home] ... I didn't burn it out of rage, I burnt it to [symbolically] set my younger self free.

Paula: So, it was a ritual, rather than a rage thing?

Annie: It was. Pure ritual. We felt like a couple of witches, performing a ritual.

Paula: [Was it] cleansing?

Annie: Yeah! It really was ... we got some branches outta the bush, and we put the dress up//

Paula: In a 'dress shape?'

Annie: Yeah, it looked like someone was wearing it. And I talked about, that poor woman, you know? ... We set her free. And that was it, it was a single plume of smoke (interview 23 January 2017).



Figure 5.5



Figure 5.6

Figure 5.5 and 5.6: Burning wedding dress.
Source: Stills from YouTube clip (Zara 2016)

In burning her wedding dress in a ritualistic and 'freeing' manner (see Figures 5.5 and 5.6), Annie was reconfiguring her personal narrative about marriage, divorce and identity. Taking control of her feelings about the marriage, the lack of agency she felt as a married woman, and later, her emotions during the process of uncoupling, are symbolically dealt with in the arguably violent act of burning the dress. Through the (de)materialities of divorce, Annie was creating opportunities to recreate her identity, to morph into the person she felt she was prior to the controlling forces that her now ex-husband asserted over her. Her realisation that narratives about marriage, depicted as somewhat immutably tying her to a certain identity, were negated, and the symbolism of the burning was a ritual freeing of herself, reinstating her personal power. I discuss how in doing so, Annie enacts a re-distribution of care. Whereas her perception of identity was once largely constituted by her perceived role as 'wife,' and the 'selflessness'

embedded in the domestic normative, therefore as coupled, Annie is currently (re)constructing her identity as a single woman. In doing so, Annie is exploring and questioning narratives regarding gender, materialities, their agency, and normativities, in what Wilkinson (2013; 2014) outlines as a queering of singledom.

Violence is a theme focused on in Rachel Pain and Lynn Staeheli's (2014) look at intimacy-geopolitics. They state that intimate violence "crucially ... does not rest on physical harm to bodies; while this threat is almost always at its core, all forms of violent oppression work through intimate emotional and psychological registers as a means of exerting control" (Pain and Staeheli 2014 344). Furthermore, it is argued that such violence may even be sanctioned by mutual constitutions of state, institutions, and social norms. Although there is more contemporary attention paid to what is often described as 'domestic violence' than in previous generations, I point out that gendered power imbalances regarding partner violence are (in)visible in several of my participants' relationships. The language used is telling. Domestic violence is largely viewed as a gendered phenomenon, with men's violence towards women most prevalent (Ministry of Social Development 2017). A key concept that many geographers feel strongly about is that scale matters (see Jonas 2006) and as such it is apparent that, "gendered violence works through intimate control and fear at multiple scales" (Pain 2014 352).

Using the label 'domestic' with regards to violence suggests a stratification of 'violence', such that domestic violence - presumed as "individualised, pathologized behaviour" (Pain 2015 65) enacted on the body, in private spaces, by those who are supposed to care for us - is imagined as coming further down the harm scale than 'random' or 'stranger' violence. Rachel Pain (2014) holds that geographers have mostly examined violence from afar, whilst simultaneously being a part of the networks that maintain or resist it. With this in mind, I concur with scholars who demonstrate that this stratification is due to the persistence of patriarchal social norms (see Butler 1990; Desai 2016). In turn, stratification implies that it is somehow less harmful than other forms of violence, when the subjects' fear and embodied

affective response is equally powerful. The very location of many domestic assaults - home - marginalises mostly women and children, as the demographic most affected. Despite much social policy in developed nations that attempts to address domestic violence, home is still largely conceptualised as haven. Adding to the blurred conceptualisations of private-public, it is important to consider the politics of domestic violence, even when such violence may not always be read as political by dominant discourse (Pain 2015). Many of those who suffer this type of abuse are disenfranchised and/or displaced not just by the acts of violence, but by the marginalisation of 'domestic' abuse (Bowstead 2017).

Furthermore, through this research, I identify an absence from Mel Nowicki's (2014) work, which challenges some of Douglas Porteous and Sandra E. Smith's (2001) representations of domicide, or deliberate destruction of home. Nowicki (2014) highlights several areas that have been missed by the available literature on domicide, but I highlight one notable absence, on an even smaller-closer scale – destruction or damage on and/or of home by an intimate partner. This type of violence is somewhat perplexing as it is perpetuated on one's own property. I hold, however, that such destruction is often designed to affect most significantly the partner most emotionally, but also physically, connected with the home space, commonly, a woman.

Several participants in this research referred to violence, with violence on the home coming to the fore. I see that this tends to play into some of the established dualisms, such as masculine-feminine and public-private, with the perpetrators of the violence male, and the symbolism of home-as-feminine space. The participants in this research appear to be drawn mostly from a relatively privileged group of white, heterosexual, middle class women. Intersectionality theory, however, helps explain the nuanced differences that exist in even seemingly homogenous groups, such the cohort of this research. I question whether whilst gendered physical violence is less socially acceptable than it may have been in previous eras (Berg 2014), that the physicality of violence on the body, may have been transferred, perhaps seemingly tempered, towards the materialities of the

home. I submit that marginalised subjectivities, such as those of female partners of heterosexual men, are still oppressed in these cases by (less visible) violence. These women do not have to disguise their bodily wounds, their bruises, their broken bones, their stitches, and so on, as women upon whom violence has been enacted on their bodies do. I investigate whether this is then a form of 'middle class', or more socially acceptable, less visible oppression. I ask, whether privileged, white, heterosexual men may be using violence on the home as a (more) covert means of control. Whereas Nowicki (2014) looks predominantly at domicide (or intentional destruction on or of the home) as applied by an external force, I approach it as an 'inside job,' whereby, in this research, male partners commit physical violence on the home as a proxy for the body and mind of their female partner. If this is the case, does this perspective create a climate of shame and isolation for those living in homes in which violence is imprinted on the very materialities of the building(s)? I hypothesise that this is a factor in some of my participants' relationships with both home and their own identities.

Gretel's experience includes destructive acts of violence, and her partner's withdrawal of both his physical presence from the home, but also his financial support, as emotional violence. As she describes it, when he felt his power dissipating, and violence on the home was not achieving what he hoped to, he would periodically move to a separate building on the farm, locking the door (see Fig 4.1). Doing so disallows Gretel access to that building, which frustrates her, expressed after our interview, during a farm walk, in practical terms. The locked building also contains tools that she may require in order to carry out maintenance on the property, but also the toilet that her and her staff member need to access, to avoid having to traipse back to the house whilst working on the farm. This door continues to be locked by her partner, barring anyone other than him from entering the workshop, despite him moving back into their joint home approximately a year ago:

Gretel: Um, we had a – it's still sort of a little issue now and again - whereby Rich will lock everything up here, and I'll turn around and say, 'well, why are you doing this?' Because, at the end of the day, if I need

to use some of those tools, if I need to get into the shed – so the shed's open, but the little office/sleep-out is shut. And it comes back to that thinking that he needs to feel that MINE, MINE, MINE type of thing? Um, you know, because he goes, 'well, you've got all that, stables.' [Pause] And I go, 'well, what are you gonna do with them, if you had them?'

Paula: But, they're not locked, either?

Gretel: No.

Paula: So, he can go there, if he wants to? It's not even necessarily that you want to go there, it's just that you can, if for some reason, you needed to?

Gretel: Yeah. I don't know what the thing is, that he locks it. [Pause] it's just [pause]

Paula: And you haven't got a key?

Gretel: No. [Long pause where both contemplate this] (interview 11 January 2017).

Gretel was forthright about sharing her experience with her partner's acts of frustration, arguably as physical shows of power, in the form of violence on the home. She pointedly asked me to take photographs of the several holes Rich has punched or kicked into her house's internal walls (see Figure 5.7). Gretel urged me to take photos of the damage, without any prompting, maybe as a means of getting someone to bear witness:

Gretel: We've had [pause] a bit of violence in here. Which I can show you, take photos, you can (interview 11 January 2017).



**Figure 5.7: Hole punched in a hallway wall by Gretel's partner, Rich.
Photo author's own**

Gretel is conscious of the power struggles that have, and continue to, press into and onto her and her family's life. She speaks of the way in which she interprets Rich's resorting to violence on the materialities of the home as he grapples with the fluid nature of relationship power. This power shift is outlined in terms of both Gretel's independently improved economic circumstances as her business establishes, but also when considered in terms of gender and consanguine relationships with three generations of females, in the form of Gretel, her mother, and her daughter all living in the home, and the close relationships they share:

Gretel: I'm at the stage now whereby, when he first went up there [moved into separate accommodation on the farm], he had the power. He had the power of – he had the money, you know, the money that he was contributing ... he said, 'I could just walk out of here, it [the property] would go to a mortgagee sale, your mum would lose her deposit,' so, he had all of that [power] (interview 11 January 2017).

Gretel later added that her relationship with her mother is now privileged over her intimate relationship with Rich. She puts this down to what she perceives as his selfish and controlling behaviours in stepping back from contributing to their nuclear family, both financially and physically:

Gretel: I've always said to Mum, no matter what happens, we'll stick together (interview 11 January 2017).

For Gretel to get to the point where she was able to gain more agency and power in the relationship, she had to face some of her fears. Women are often enculturated to defer to male decision-making regarding finances, and trace heteronormative gender roles. Gretel's agency in resisting Rich's gendered ideologies have created great friction. Rich has reacted to this with frustration, feeling such rage that he has inflicted violence on the home. Although Rich's anger is enacted upon an object (the walls of the home) the intention is rather to create an atmosphere of low-level, but pervasive, anxiety - intimate terrorism - as a control mechanism (Ahmed 2004b; Pain 2015).

Pixie's experience, on the other hand, demonstrates the way in which the power dynamic between herself and her husband, and his violence on the home, has created an even larger power imbalance. Either as a by-product, or a deliberate action, violence on the materialities of home have (re)produced affects of fear and anxiety that circulate and resonate amongst Pixie and her children's experience of home. I have known Pixie for several decades. I have observed her transform from a bright, carefree young woman, whom I met whilst we were both university students in the mid-1980s, to her - at the time of the interview - timid, saddened, even self-described depressed, self. Pixie uses emotional language, to illustrate her feelings, but also the trajectory she is aiming for, with an awareness of her agency, and power relations that affect her home and sense of self. Listening to her story, and her inner metanarrative about her home and the relationship she has with the material items in it as such a strong theme in her ideas about her identity:

Pixie: Um, so I've sort of used my power in a way to get, um, well, to get things I've wanted for a long time. Um, a swimming pool, get the house finished (interview 18 January 2017).

Pixie alludes to the ongoing renovations to their home often during the interview:

Pixie: I am feeling like, there's a house, 'cos I was being a shell. If I can start to turn it back into something that I'm proud of, and something that I want to, then I think I might draw strength from that ... 'cos I did think, in the last few years [the period since she discovered her husband's affair] oh, we need to shift, we need to shift, we need to go to a place that's finished. And, no. Oh actually, this year, we talked about finishing the house a couple of weeks ago, and I'm thinking that doing that will make us stronger. I think we will draw strength, and start to communicate as it gets, not such a noose around our necks. I want it to be a happy place. But, for me for it to be a happy place, it needs to be completed. And I think that when it is, then I think Kevin and I will sort ourselves out as well ... Then I think, oh, maybe I am meant to be here. Long term (interview 18 January 2017).

And yet again, she talks about finishing the home, but his time, how she is gaining in confidence to express her wants as almost demands, to reclaim some power and agency:

Pixie: there's that part of me where I can say to Kevin [*laughs*] I want curtains, and maybe there's that part of him that feels, oh, really, I stuffed up here, I'm gonna buy you curtains ... it's kinda like an empowering thing, and when I wanted to get the pool put in, and wanted some other stuff done – it was stuff where he'd [previously] say, 'no, no, no!' Suddenly he said yes! I was like, hmm [*makes a disapproving face*] (interview 18 January 2017).

Pixie expresses a prevalent sentiment, that having more, or 'nicer' things will make you feel better, or somehow compensate a partner, for damages done by the other, to the relationship. In Pixie's case, the damage includes an extra-marital affair, but also the violence her partner has imparted on the house itself. The language, including metaphors, that Pixie uses about herself, and the materialities of and in her home, reflects the way she has created linkages regarding agency (Miller 2001; 2008). That agency exists

in the objects, and that she does, and will in the future, draw agency from them.

The role of place with regards to starting over

Participants like Lynette and Coco, who have few material connections between generations, due to geographical (international) separation, refer to generational affect, through those very missing materialities. Lynette's situation has her living in a rural Waikato locale, with her two children. Her parents live in the United Kingdom, and neither are they emotionally close. Lynette, who works in a lucrative rural profession, briefly toyed with 'going home' to the UK after her divorce, but realised that her life is in New Zealand now, she understood the way that she had developed strong emotional attachments – a sense of belonging - to the Waikato region, despite her feelings of residual attachment to her country of birth (Foote and Azaryahu 2009; Taylor 2009):

Lynette: I want to stay around [the Waikato]. The kids like their schools and I'm not moving back to the UK, so why would I leave this area? I have friends, a career, and connections here now. This is more my home than the UK is now. I did wonder about relocating elsewhere, but couldn't find anywhere that really appealed (interview 5 December 2016).

Lynette's material belongings add to the emotional connections she now has to New Zealand, via her children; friends; the house she collaborated with her now ex-husband to design and build; and her career:

Lynette: I found this property, it was me who wanted to live on a bit of land, not in town. I had the house we lived in before this, before I met him. All the 'stuff' in this house, I earned, and chose. My parents are in the UK, so I haven't got any 'stuff' from the family at all. I do have some quite English things here though, I mean my taste is a bit [pause] English-countryside [in style]. I mean, yeah, he did earn, too.

But it is more 'me', the décor (see Figure 5.8) (interview 5 December 2016).



Figure 5.8: Lynette's drawing of home

In mentioning the earning-potential imbalance, with Lynette earning a higher salary than Ryan, she draws attention to the gendered power dynamics. The gender pay gap is in effect in New Zealand, as in much of the Western world (Stats NZ 2014). Lynette feels a sense of pride in her career and earning potential, flipping gender discourses and dualistic expectations. Lynette informs however, that she was also performing many of the other gender-specific, domestic roles of nurturing, caring, and managing the aesthetics of the 'family' home. Her claim to a greater share in the 'ownership' of the home and chattels, especially due to the emotional labour she contributed is made clear.

Coco, although living in Adelaide, Australia, feels a connection to the Waikato, as her hometown is located in the region, and several family members still reside there. Coco's drawing of home (see Figure 5.9) has two large persons, and four smaller ones, squashed around a table. Coco describes this is a depiction of her large, extended family, mostly still based

in New Zealand - as many as she could fit inside, even spilling out of the drawn boundaries - the cosiness - of home.

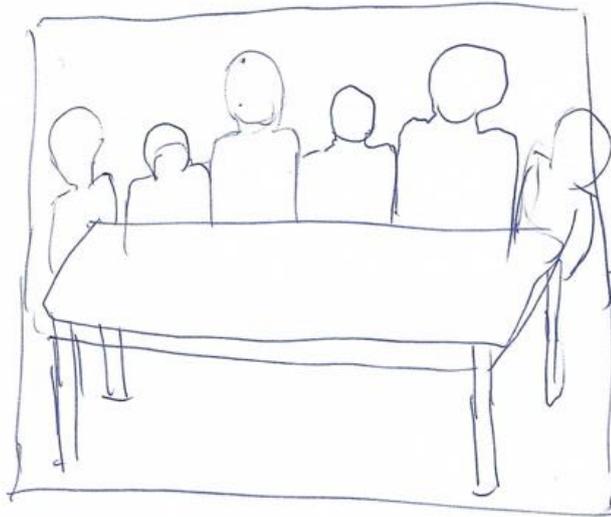


Figure 5.9: Coco's drawing of home

Whilst Coco has no large items in her home that reflect her links to previous generations, she does cherish some small family keepsakes. During the difficult period immediately after separation from the father of their children, one of her sisters arrived to provide emotional and practical support. She wrote a message for Coco on leaving (Figure 5.10), which Coco discovered after her sister had returned to New Zealand. Coco then taped these words inside her wardrobe, near her mirror, to remind herself she is loved and supported despite geographical distance.

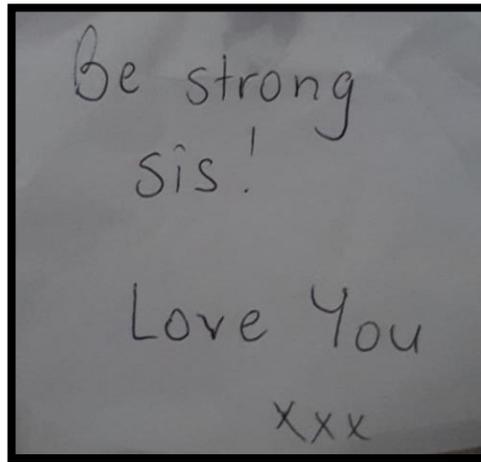


Figure 5.10: Message from Coco's sister. Photo author's own

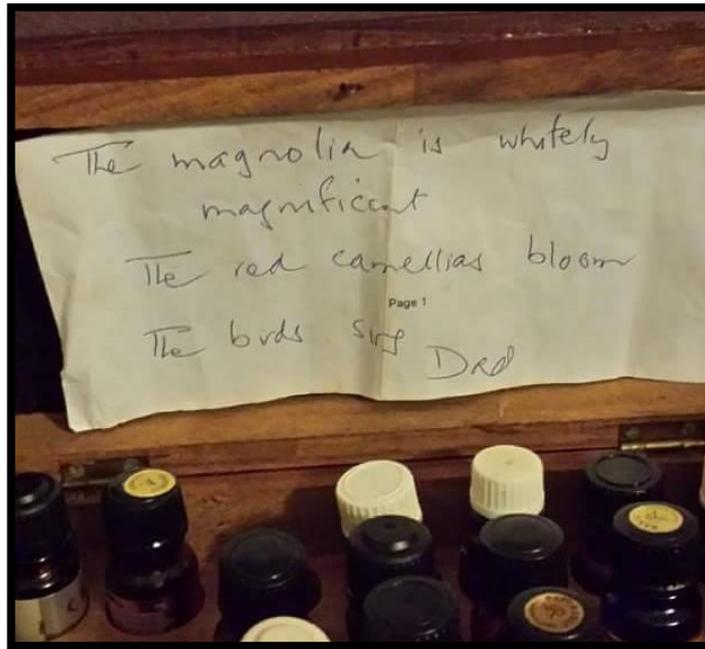
Family is a strong theme in Coco's life, with close adult sibling relationships across international borders, and high levels of reciprocity (Milligan *et al.* 2005). The support she has received during her relationship breakup has been in the form of small amounts of money, to help with legal costs, but overwhelmingly in the form of emotional support.

I write, posing questions to myself in my research diary that,

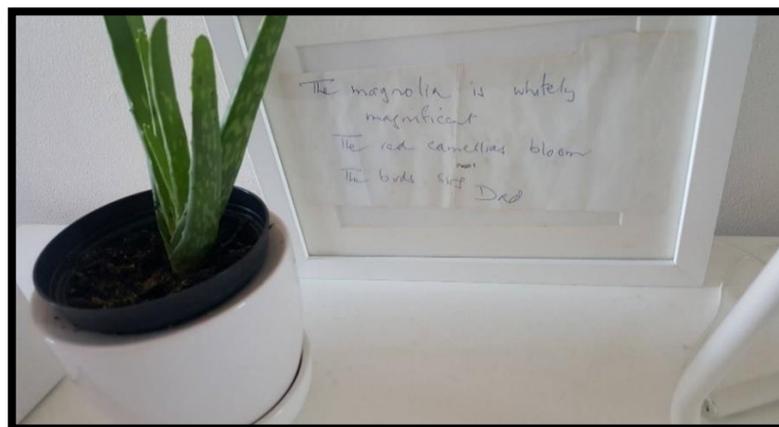
when I asked Coco about moving 'home' [to New Zealand], she said that she would probably have done it if her relationship had 'failed' when her children were very small. But, Australia, including such pragmatic themes as the materialities of home and family, was now 'home' – and her comments about her children's home being Australia – made me feel her dual sense of belonging [to both New Zealand and Australia] is co-constituted with the affectual feelings of and for her children, and her sense of 'fairness', to her ex. She is worried that taking them away from him would be detrimental to their, and her ex's, wellbeing. Is this another gendered trope? Putting their needs ahead of her own? Or has the length of time in Australia now been a factor in her (re)construction of identity (research diary January 2017).

Coco has a special piece of her (deceased) father held close. She has some prose he wrote her, the last piece of writing she received from him prior to his death. Whilst I was visiting with her, she kept this in an antique

apothecary box, in her bedroom (see Figure 5.11). After I returned to New Zealand, she sent me some more photos of this note, as she had since had it framed, and placed carefully on her bedroom office table (Figure 5.12), re-positioning it to reflect its importance to her. I knew her father, and to me – and Coco - this is a wonderful example of his character. This short, handwritten memento is one piece of the jigsaw that makes up the affectual feelings that Coco has about the co-constitution of home and family:



**Figure 5.11: Photo of Coco's deceased father's handwritten note.
Photo author's own**



**Figure 5.12: Newly framed handwriting, (re)placed on Coco's bedroom table.
Photo supplied by Coco**

Materialities, even remembered ones, are significant in Coco's intergenerational assemblages of familial self and other. She reminisces about her childhood home, painting verbal pictures of its agency and affect, which permeate her sense of self, and informs her vision of childhood:

Coco: I do reflect a lot on the Te Awamutu [childhood] house. I dream about it a lot. So, I just think, with reflection on my sons, and what they're going through [post-separation], and the upbringing I had in that house and space. Like I told you before, I like space. And the trees. And the sky. That was in Te Awamutu. Um, the not drinking juice, the water drinking [Coco's family drank water as opposed to sweetened drinks, or juice, as Brett's family did] ... Um, the messy house, I think all my siblings [seven of them] except Rachel, like our houses as aesthetically pleasing. We didn't like the fact that we lived in a messy [house] ... The music, that's from Te Awamutu. [I've been] been shaped by [the (im)materialities and the affect of] 93 East Street (interview 14 January 2017).

Coco often refers to transmission of ideologies, from her parents, through her, to her children, in the form of (im)materialities and practices. Coco expresses her ideology as less focused on materialities, and more on emotional connections, which she positions in opposition to the, particularly technological, materialities favoured by her ex:

Coco: [On Brett's fascination with, and proliferation of, technology in both his current, and formerly their joint homes]. Probably the product of the 'divorce family' [Brett's parents were divorced when he was a small child], you know, they get all these things. Things, things, things. He's from a family where, they would give him lots of things. Um, whereas I was brought up where we didn't have things. We had each other (interview 14 January 2017).

Coco's experience demonstrates her sense of agency in reconstruction of her 'self' after her relationship ended. Feeling that she has compromised her values in accepting Brett's - perhaps generationally embedded - material foci, Coco is actively (re)building boundaries, including embodied

and (de)materialised interpretations of space, particularly of home, demonstrating, “how immaterialities are internal to, rather than in opposition to, matter as an open system” (Anderson and Wylie 2009 328).

Hopefulness is detected in many of these stories. Materialities play a part in contributing to visualisations of personal growth, with items re-arranged, re-purposed, replaced, and new items brought in to build new materialities and imaginaries of home. For example, Mulan was anxious to show off her ‘divorce chair’, placed significantly in the most intimate space in her home, her bedroom (see Figure 5.13)



Figure 5.13: Mulan’s ‘divorce chair’. Photo author’s own

Summary

Disruptions or challenges to intimate couple relationships are instrumental in sometimes rapid changes to emotional and affectual experiences in and of home. Applying a feminist geographical lens - yet again - to home and emotional and affectual geographies, felt somewhat problematic, or repetitive to me at the beginning of this research. It does, however, appear that binarized discourses about gender and space persist. Investigating this

phenomenon, I agree that “emotion, power and change” (Sharp 2009 74) are central themes, and that neoliberal tropes regarding individualism may not be as prevalent amongst heterosexual, partnered women as dominant discourses suggest they are for the men they are partnered with.

Chapter Six: Sliding into home

Emotional and material practices of *homemaking* have appeared on the radar of particularly feminist and poststructural geographical scholarship in recent years (see Gorman-Murray 2006; Johnston and Valentine 1995; Morrison 2010). These scholars agree that home and identity are mutually constituted. This research extends the indicated literature, to explore the same socio-spatial themes involved in home *unmaking*, and *remaking*. Doing so challenges concepts of home as static, but rather as constantly evolving, devolving, and less stable than in the popular imaginary. The dominance of positive representations of home – as safe, warm, loving, and so on - resonate with most people, whether they currently consider themselves homed, or homeless. When intimate couple relationships and normative constructs of love are challenged, home is both materially, but also in the imaginary, changed in a myriad of ways. These changes may be positive, negative, or fluctuate ferociously between the two ends of the spectrum. Changes may take the form of spatial changes - in the ways in which the materials are removed, replaced, or re-arranged - but also, the home itself may be vacated, to be rebuilt and reimagined. This could be in an entirely new geographical location, or remade in the current space, in both cases with new or reconstructed meanings and materialities. Meaning is embedded in the materialities of home, with romantic love and intergenerational factors amongst the contributions to emotion and affect, and vice versa.

This research drew on a small group of people who have emotional and/or physical connections to the Waikato region of Aotearoa New Zealand. Lived geographies of these people - who generously shared their, at times quite intimate and painful, but at others also uplifting and inspiring stories - is drawn on to elucidate the both the unique aspects, and conversely, shared perspectives and experiences about relationship disruption. Apparent in this investigation is the place that normativity has in the ways in which we organise and make sense of our worlds. Home, often perceived to be an immutable site in relation to monogamy, love, and domesticity, is explored

as a site of a multiplicity of “meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life” (Blunt and Varley 2004 3). As such, the way we relate to our homes, the mutual constitution of home and identity, has a very real effect on the ways in which we view our lives, and relate to one another.

This thesis evaluates three central research objectives. First, it examined meanings of home changes, as imagined and material, with respect to intimate relationship disruption. Second, it outlined how meanings and understandings of relationship and home changes are influenced by gender, heteronormativity and romantic love. Third, it analysed how and in what ways the breakdown of intimate relationships shapes emotional and affectual experiences of home. I close the thesis by identifying some possible future research channels, that would interrogate epistemologies and ontologies surrounding love, power, heteronormativity, coupled and singled identities, spatialities and materialities.

Initially, I introduced the reasons for this research, including how I came to the topic of changing meanings of home via relationship disruption. Emotional geographies continue to provide tools to build on knowledges about the mutual constitution of space, place, and subjectivity. Investigating and highlighting people’s lived experiences of de- and re-constituting both identity and place when faced with relationship upheaval has been largely missing from within the discipline of geography.

In the second chapter, I specified the theoretical framework in which my research is situated and reviewed the applicable literature. Interdisciplinary scholarship on love and sexual relationships was acknowledged, including social theorists’ work on relationship challenges and breakups. I outlined how feminist poststructural geographical scholars have analysed the mutuality of bodies and space, and how identity has been approached from these perspectives. Using an emotional geographies framework, emotion and affect have played an important part in my analyses of these geographies. This research engages with feminist theorists for whom the two concepts are ontologically related (see Adams-Hutcheson 2014;

Ahmed 2004b; Thien 2005) challenging scholarship that seeks to marginalise feminised emotion(s) as the binary opposite to masculinised reason (see McCormack 2003; Thrift 2004). In identifying the multi-scalarity of home spaces, and the bodies that live in, are (un)made by and (un)make them (Blunt and Dowling 2006), this research reiterates scale as an important geographical concept. The everydayness of human encounters within and relating to homes – with materialities informing and being informed by emotion and affect - imprints on and in our sense of self. During the course of considering the design and content of this research, the privileging of coupledness, and therefore marginalisation of singledness, became evermore apparent (see Wilkinson 2013; 2014). I am conscious of the effects of such perceptions on social (re)production of subjectivities.

The methodological praxes and epistemologies I engaged with and employed to undertake this research are outlined in chapter three. I explain my use of qualitative methods, describing and critiquing these. I respect the centrality of the use of semi-structured interviews (Galletta 2013; Valentine 2005) but also the methodological tools used to complement them. These include; textual discourse analysis, free-text - or self-completion – diaries (Corti and Corti 2003), and follow-up, online ethnographic methods, using email (asynchronous questioning) and Facebook's Messenger application (synchronous questioning) (Bryman 2012). Tools I employed as I began to code the data included creating a large, wall hung, mind map, as a visual way of identifying, sorting and linking themes (see Appendix K). Reflexively, I consider that some of my own axes of intersectionality; including being a mature-age graduate student researcher, and a research topic 'insider' has gifted me with extra tools, including empathy, to help negotiate the sensitive nature of this research. My position, however, made me mindful to consider the implications of being 'too close' to the research. Accordingly, I was guided by geographers who have negotiated spaces between and through emotional geographies and psychological theory (Adams-Hutcheson 2014; Bondi 2005a; 2005b; 2013; 2014; Bondi *et al.* 2005; Hutcheson 2009).

One focus of this research was to interrogate Morrison's (2010) introduction of love into discussion with home and heterosexuality. I did find, perhaps

unsurprisingly given the state of many of my participant contingent's often negative experiences with love, that it was difficult to draw them very far on discussions of love. Broken hearts (unmaking love) and broken homes (unmaking home) were identified early in the research design as potentially sensitive subjects to approach. In the design of the research, I was mindful to be very considerate of this. Despite this care, there were brief moments when participants fought to retain composure. Many felt 'let down' by gendered conceptions and hegemony's masculinised, disembodied and rationalised privileging of economics over emotions when considering the materialities and spatialities of intimate relationships, affecting decision-making about (de- or re-) construction of disrupted relationships.

Chapter four interrogates the materialities of precarious family geographies, created by disruptions to intimate relationships. Firstly, normative constructions of gender roles in the context of home and homemaking are outlined. Following this, societal undervaluing, and the gendered nature of care is critiqued from a feminist perspective. This reviews how care is (re)produced as a gendered practice, and the ways in which such assumptions systematically contribute to diminishing female power.

Idealised home spaces are disputed by participants' encounters with rupture to their relationships. Home, in the popular imaginary, is expressed as haven, a place of calm, nurturing, peace and comfort. These visions, however, are challenged by the participants in this research, who inform that the rupture to their partnership, has created fissures in their concepts of home. Intergenerational materialities of home were identified as a factor in the (re)production of identity, with meaning handed from generation-to-generation with the material objects themselves, or created from the act of transferring the items. Apparent was the enduring nature of intergenerational meaning through the dominance of family and societal narratives. I also pinpointed some societal expectations regarding intergenerational power. This included Western presumptions of the one-way directional flow of power, in the form of support – both emotional and economic – in times of relationship crisis. Older generations, customarily depicted as stable, are expected to support younger generations, who are

reproduced as less secure. When crises occur outside of these structural perimeters, a gap in care networks is exposed, with older generations often left floundering.

When couples form, as well as when they separate, the messiness of materialities is often neatly packaged by terms like 'blended' or 'split'. Whether merging two sets of materialities, or dividing one set into two, becomes ever more complex throughout the lifecourse as materialities and societal expectations regarding material possessions contribute to tensions. Questions over which set of material items are preferred, and who is to discard theirs, when combining lives, or who has the most 'rights' to the materialities of a coupled life during a breakup, are emotional territories that are ripe for conflict. Materialities can symbolise important aspects of identity for many, and rejection or acceptance of those materialities can be allegories for personal acceptance or rejection. Alternatively, some participants spoke, in pragmatic but also figurative terms, of how dematerialising processes create opportunities for personal reinvention. The freeing aspects of shedding a coupled identity that no longer fits were explored, as well as the limitations that some dematerialising processes created. This chapter concludes with an appreciation that materialities and emotions, whilst often considered in dualistic terms, are mutually constituted. Appreciation is also made of the type of grief that commonly occurs during relationship dissolution. Nuanced differences were confirmed by participants between normative grief - usually framed in terms of death, or the present absence of a loved one - versus the grief experienced by many participants at the loss of ideologies regarding continuous, romantic love, which I have framed as absent presences. Loss is perceived as embodied, and yet, many participants speak of the grief in managing the embodied presence of their ex-partners, when dealing with the materialities, and family links, through for example, normative expectations of shared parenting.

In chapter five I consider the emotional and affective materialities of relationships and their disruption. The stickiness of both the concept, but also the materialities, of coupledness is explored. Participants provide

insights into the agency of material items, and the ways in which this, when laid alongside cultural factors, such as religion, gender norms, and even such considerations as social construction of ideas regarding community - and even what type of community (for example, rural versus urban) - can create pressures to stay in a perhaps unhappy relationship. Sometimes this can be for much longer than social conventions regarding divorce and separation imply. Participants shared the emotional stickiness of separation, conceding that endings are not always neat, or complete, and that sentiments about care can create emotional adhesion that may not ever be loosened entirely.

Revisiting 'blending' of families from an emotional perspective, it is apparent that the materialities of coupled life are more nuanced than the commodity value of the household items. Items that may not 'fit' with neoliberal values regarding the financial worth of goods, or what is currently fashionable, are often displayed, the value being in the love embedded in the item(s). Items can blur hard temporalities and span multiple spatialities, by means of placement and the meanings gathered over years, sometimes generations, of use or display.

Guilt and shame are powerful emotions that are experienced by many people as they negotiate ruptured relationships. Non-normative behaviours are inlaid with assumptions that may catalyse powerful emotional reactions in both parties involved when breached, in breakups, but also when attempting to repair and overcome a relationship schism. Guilt is assigned, or appropriated, and these emotions roll over to affect claims to the materialities. This may include how to split them. Some feelings that can be described as material entitlement, for example; as reimbursement for hurts inflicted on one partner by the other, or to compensate for what may be felt in and on the body as shame. In other situations, the materialities are wielded as weapons, to assert power over an ex-partner, to punish them for perceived (or real) wrongdoing, including something as seemingly simple as leaving the relationship. Home is embedded with a multiplicity of meanings that are emotionally significant, and these exemplify the intimate nature of the space. Transgressing this intimacy, by, for example; bringing

an affair partner into the space, or the implied deviance of pornography consumption in a space embedded with emotionally (and sexually) sanitised notions of 'family' and respectability, including bodily residues, such as semen or pathogens – imagined or real – on, for example; a doorknob, leave deep scars etched into and onto those spaces.

Home, whilst presented as a shared, private space, is further demarcated internally, with zones that are often gendered. Kitchens, for example continue to be regularly depicted as feminine spaces, but men are not excluded, 'women's spaces' are not considered to be exclusively for the use of women, reducing the occurrence of private space(s) for women. Conversely, the requirement for 'man space', as personal and private, not to be shared, is still prevalent, male needs continue to be privileged over those of women, and I argue, present more opportunities for men to practice what many may consider 'deviant' behaviours. As Morrison's (2010) and my own research show, whilst home and its material items are used to consolidate heterosexual relationships, they may also be used to hide those that fall outside of heteronormative rhetoric.

Disconnecting from shared materialities - minimalism as pragmatism - challenging ideas about commodification, is one tool employed by the partner dispossessed of the material articles. Reflecting on Morrison's (2010 306) analysis of how the act of purchasing household goods when making home, is "a performative act of love", I maintain that the purchasing of household goods by a newly single person is a performative act of *self*-love. In opposition, however, to Morrison's (2010) examination of heterosexuality and the 'beginnings' of love and home-making, I found that, in a reverse manner, with home *un*making to the fore, several of my participants were almost eager to share stories about acts and material traces of domestic turbulence. I interpreted this as a form of asking me to bear witness to their experiences with the deconstruction of love, and remained alert to any harm that may be signalled by these participants (see Appendices H and I). Material items that once held significance as markers of love, were deliberately discarded, or destroyed. There appeared to be two main drivers of this destruction, the first being to express one's agency by symbolically

freeing oneself from an oppressed subjectivity, and the other was to diminish a partner or ex-partner, in powerful attempts to exert control over a partner or ex-partner's emotions by destroying, or disabling usually carefully targeted materialities and their meanings, including (partial) domicile (Nowicki 2014). I also posited that violence enacted on the material, may be a proxy for less socially acceptable physical violence enacted on (most often women's) bodies, with the accompanying covert suggestion of embodied violence simmering just below the surface as a fear-inducing form of control (Berg 2014; Pain 2014; 2015).

Home, as a 'completed project', with the material inputs that go into achieving the built, finished home, was used to denote the intact, happy family and home in the imaginary of at least one of the research participants. She communicated that her sense of (in)completion of her home renovation project was a correlated with her interpretation of the (un)happy relationship with her husband.

Situating the role of place with regards to personal resilience and (re)building (newly-singled) identity was considered next. Participants shared how emotion and affect influenced their choice of the location of home when relationships ended. Connections to place held strong, despite relationship dissolution. The intergenerational (im)materialities of their homes demonstrated that links to childhood homes had been disturbed, with newer materialities established as holding privileged meanings, including autonomy and independence, cementing perceptions of home as synonymous with current places, if not current spaces. Memories of childhood materialities were still affecting. The participants who lived geographically the furthest from their families of origin, and childhood homes, expressed the contribution of materials and emotions of those childhood homes to their sense of identity and agency in recovering from breakups.

This research has highlighted the lack of popular, but especially academic, understandings about the changed meanings of home and identity in the wake of romantic relationship disruption. Whilst it has concentrated on

specifically heterosexualised experiences and perspectives about challenges to love, and spaces of home, it adds theoretically and empirically to feminist, socio-cultural and emotional geographies. It offers a voice to those who express that they have felt isolated and misunderstood when enduring the painful processes involved in relationship disruption, and/or reimagining. This is especially so with regards to the transgression of 'safe' home spaces, as the meaning(s) of home are contorted during such events.

Future research pathways

Notwithstanding the growing body of work regarding emotional geographies of home, I identify a gap in the literature regarding emotions and the fluidity of home *unmaking* and *remaking*. Breakups are painful, felt on a particularly embodied level, expensive and fear is created when (the imaginary of) safe, everyday geographies, such as those of home, are disrupted. Investigating this occurrence from differing perspectives is long overdue. Whilst the participant cohort in this research was gathered from a largely white, middle-class, monogamous, heterosexual context, I ask, what about hearing from differing perspectives? Do the experiences of people with differing subjectivities, for example, non-heterosexual identities, follow similar patterns, or does a more marginalised viewpoint afford more, or less resilience, perhaps by offering an outlook that is more, or less constrained than current social norms dictate? Are there differing expectations of romantic love, and how do those who identify as polyamorous, for example, frame relationship challenge and recovery?

Ideally, a longitudinal empirical study would add considerably to knowledges about the longer-term effects, recovery and changes to home after these challenges. For example, do people who remained together manage that long-term, or are breakups and material divisions more common further down the line? Conversely, do people reconcile in later years, and how, in what ways and why do those constructions of home differ from the original, shared home?

I also recommend a deeper look at gender, particularly with regards to which partner feels they are or were the instigator of a breakup, and which partner feels they are the party 'at fault' for a breakup. It appears to be rare that both parties come to the same conclusion about whether or not to breakup, at the same time. Gender is also an interesting lens to use to examine LGBTQIA experiences. Do lesbian women have vastly differing experiences of home and relationship challenge than gay men, for example? What about intersex individuals? I also query 'othered' subjective experiences as the popular imaginary has largely ignored that individuals who identify as asexual, for example, may even form long-term romantic relationships. I ask then, if there are more barriers for these people to do so, does that put further (or fewer) pressures on personal (in)securities about their everyday geographies of home? Focusing on just one sexual subjectivity, as an example, I note that whilst sociologists and psychologists are beginning to consider asexual perspectives in more depth (see Bogaert 2015; Carrigan 2011; Dawson *et al.* 2016) and there is a call for more interdisciplinary work regarding the topic (Przybylo 2013), geographers have yet to turn the spotlight here.

Talking to one of the adult children of my participants, reminded me that although other disciplines have considered the effects for children of divorce (see Everett 2014; Mikucki-Enyart *et al.* 2016; Smart 2006), 'children's' geographers have barely looked at children's spatial experiences with divorce (see, however, Jamieson and Milne 2012). There have been mobility geographies discussing the effects of divorced *parenthood* on mobility (Feijten and van Ham 2013), (young) adult children's perspectives, however, are lacking. Many of these young adults, especially – but older adults can also be included here - are still very connected to parental homes, with the age of 'leaving home' described as relatively late (Champion 2012). They may be living there permanently, or using as a 'home base' whilst completing tertiary studies either in the same locality, or by coming and going as study breaks allow, or as the place they conceive of as 'home' as they begin more independent lives.

Another theme that captivated my research attention, is the use of virtual space in recovery from relationship challenge. There is an almost overwhelming amount of online territory devoted to relationships, and how to begin, improve, or recover from them. Terms or keywords abound that are typed into search engines, but also, the design of 'apps' for mobile devices, and their popular uptake, include those from individuals seeking 'dating' assistance, relationship advice, or solace and solidarity in virtual community spaces. This is rich terrain to consider in modern geographical knowledge-building.

In closing, intimate relationship challenges and breakups are common human experiences, and yet, there exists much misunderstanding regarding the spatial and emotional effects on meanings of love, bodies and home to those affected. Subjective positions are challenged, and many people wrestle with (re)forming positive feelings about their everyday geographies, including home. I suggest this continues for far longer than is imagined, having interesting and varied repercussions on how space is subsequently utilised, as well as the shape and meanings of future interpersonal relationships. In this thesis, I have interrogated a gap in geographical knowledge, and contribute to further understandings of human experience and how the geography closest in impacts on relationships between space, place and identity for a small group of people who identify with feelings of belonging to the Waikato region of Aotearoa New Zealand.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Semi-structured interview schedule – individuals

This schedule outlines some of the topics that I would like to discuss during the interview.

HOME:

- Can you please draw me a picture of what 'home' means to you?
- Have you had to move home recently? Tell me about that experience.
- If your relationship involved separation, how did you negotiate who lived where?
- Did you ever reconcile and live together again? Are you now?
- Were there any rituals you partook in regarding material objects, or the home itself, after the relationship was challenged?
- **If you remain in the same home**, do you feel there have been any changes to how you feel about your home?
- **If you are living elsewhere**, did you bring belongings to this home, or did you start afresh with new belongings and furnishings?
- If you have moved house, have you retained any mementos from the joint home, or have you started with all new or different objects or chattels?
- If you brought some with you, can you share your feelings about seeing these objects in a new space?
- Can you tell me a little bit about this place (if in 'the home?') Eg: how did you find it, furnish it, make it more 'homely'? Is it sunny, warm, cold, et cetera?
- Do you have any favourite spaces within this space?
- Is/was location important, if so, in what ways?
- Or did you find the place and then 'make it work'?
- Do you consider this place your home, now, that you BELONG here?
- If so, how long do you estimate it took for it to begin to feel like home, that you belonged in this place?

IDENTITY

- Looking at your drawing of your home, where would you place yourself in that drawing?
- Can you please tell me how you would describe yourself? For example, a bit about your character, personality, your ideas about relationships.
- Do you think you have changed in relation to home and house changes? If so, in what way?

FEELINGS

- How do you feel about your new (or old) spaces of home?
- Do you think this is how you feel about 'home' in general? What about your feelings about your current home?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B – Semi-structured interview schedule – couples

This schedule outlines some of the topics that I would like to discuss during the interview.

HOME:

- Could you each please draw me a picture of what 'home' means to you?
- Have you had to move home recently? Tell me about that experience.
- If your relationship involved separation at some point, how did you negotiate who lived where?
- If you are living in the same home as prior to the relationship challenge, were there any rituals either of you partook in regarding material objects, or the home itself, after the relationship was challenged?
- **If in the same home**, do you feel there are any changes to how you each feel about your home? If so, can you each please explain?
- **If you are living elsewhere**, did you bring belongings to this home, or did you start afresh with new belongings and furnishings?
- If you have moved house, have you retained any mementos from your previous home, or have you started with all new or different objects or chattels?
- If you brought some with you, can you share your feelings about seeing these objects in a new space?
- Can you each please tell me a little bit about this place (if interview takes place in 'the home'). Eg: how did you find it, furnish it, make it more 'homely'? Did you make any changes to it after the relationship was tested? Is it sunny, warm, cold, et cetera?
- Do you have favourite spaces within this place?
- Is/was location important, if so, in what ways?
- Or did you find the place and then 'make it work'?
- Do you consider this place your home, now, that you BELONG here?

- If so, how long do you estimate it took for it to begin to feel like home, that you belonged – together - in this place?

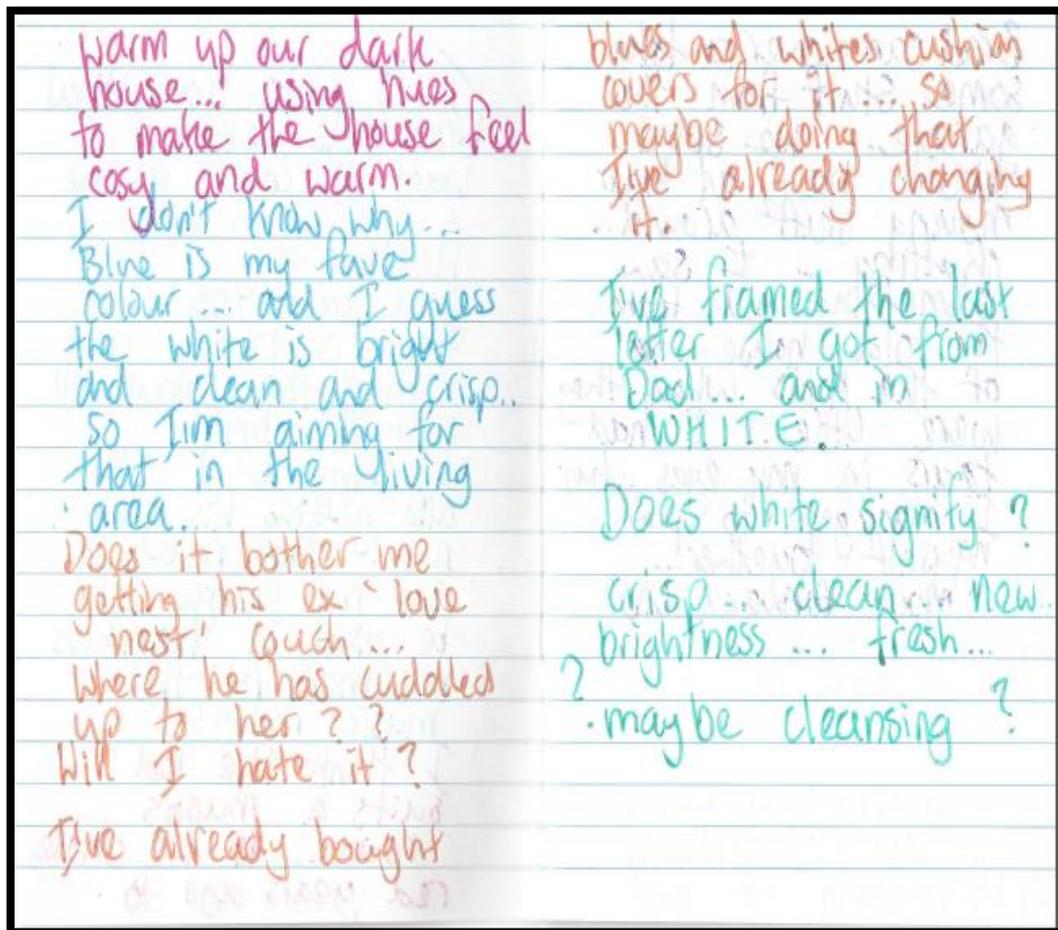
IDENTITY

- Looking at your own drawing of your home, where would you each place yourselves, and/or your partner, in that drawing?
- Can you each please tell me how you would describe yourselves? For example, a bit about your character, personality, your ideas about relationships.
- Do either of you think you, or your partner, have changed in relation to home and house changes? If so, in what way(s)?

FEELINGS

- How do you each feel about your new (or old) spaces of home?
- Do you think this is how either of you feel about 'home' in general? What about each of your feelings about your current home?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix C – Example of a self-directed participant diary



Appendix D – Example of follow-up online questioning to a respondent

Just have a little question. Did you experience any embodied reaction(s) during the divorce phases? I am working on a section on embodied geographical affect at the moment, and I never directly asked this question. Eg, I lost 15kg in the first 5 weeks after I found out, I couldn't eat, and what I did manage to swallow, I usually threw back up. I also have never slept through the night since, with months of no real sleep in the beginning. Did you have anything like that? Even little things, dry mouth, etc? Cheers.

Is a lovely day here, hope it is wherever you are today, too 😊

Hey babe. Lovely day. Yes to the question ... whole body ached when leaving [REDACTED] I lost my voice and had nasal drip! Hard case. With Fuckface.. I didn't sleep and had anxiety attacks... thought I was having heart attacks.. they put me on the ECG thing a couple of times but it was just panic!! All good now though!

(For privacy reasons, name has been deleted.)

Appendix E – Participant recruitment poster

**HOME IS
WHERE
THE HEART
IS ...
BROKEN?**



Have you experienced major relationship challenges in a past or present relationship that affect(ed) your feelings about home?

Share your experience and knowledge to inform research about changing meanings of, and feelings about, home after a relationship is challenged or breaks down.

Whether you are still together, living apart, or permanently separated, any gender, ethnicity or sexual identity, you can be involved in this research.

The researcher is a Masters student in the Geography Programme at the University of Waikato.

To find out more information, please email Paula [redacted]

phone/text [redacted] or contact her supervisors, Dr Gail Adams-Hutcheson [redacted] or Professor Lynda Johnston [redacted]

(For privacy reasons contact information has been deleted.)

Appendix F - Consent form

Geography | Tourism | Environmental Planning
 School of Social Sciences
 Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
 Te Kōwhiri Wānanga
 The University of Waikato
 Private Bag 3108
 Hamilton 3284, New Zealand

Phone +64 7 838 4048
 Fax +64 7 8384633

www.waikato.ac.nz/education
www.waikato.ac.nz/artsandsocialsciences
www.waikato.ac.nz/geography



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
 Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Name of Person Interviewed _____

I have received a copy of the Information Sheet describing the research project. Any questions I have, relating to the research, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions about the research at any time during my participation, and that I can withdraw my participation at any time up to a month after I receive the interview transcript.

During the interview, I understand that I do not have to answer questions unless I am happy to talk about the topic. I can stop the interview at any time, and I can ask to have the recording device turned off at any time.

When I sign this consent form, I will retain ownership of my interview, photographs, illustrations, and/or diary and I give consent for the researcher to use the material for the purposes of the research outlined in the Information Sheet.

Please complete the following checklist. Tick [✓] the appropriate box for each point.	YES	NO
I wish to provide digital and/or Smartphone photographs		
I wish to provide text, in the form of a diary or journal		
I consent to our conversation being audio-recorded		
I consent to a home visit with the researcher		
I wish to have my material returned to me on completion of the project. (If I do not want this material to be returned, the researcher will keep them in a secure place, and they will be destroyed after five years)		
I wish to receive a copy of the report produced, outlining findings on completion of this research		

I (your name) _____ agree to participate in this research and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project Information Sheet.

Signed	_____	Researcher	<u>Paula Smith</u>
Name	_____	Signature	_____
Date	_____	Date	_____
Contact details	_____	Contact details	_____

Appendix G - Participant information sheet

‘Home is where the heart is broken?’: examining the impact of relationship challenges on meanings of home

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this research. I am a Masters candidate in the Geography Programme at the University of Waikato. I am undertaking research on the changing geographies of home after intimate relationships face challenge(s) or break down. Those affected are an under-represented group in geographical research, and their opinions and experiences are nevertheless important. This study aims to give voice to this group and explore understandings of geographies of home, and changed or changing perspectives about home.

Your involvement

In order to begin to understand experiences of changing home spaces and the effects on feelings of belonging, or not, to a place, I would like to ask you to participate in an interview that is semi-structured, that should take approximately one hour. If you agree, a visit to your home would be appreciated, in order for you to show me your space, and for us to discuss the changed or changing nature of this space. Your opinions and thoughts are essential, and I encourage you to bring up any issues which you may view as important to my research. I will also give you a notebook for you to use to diary any thoughts or feelings that you may wish to share.

If you take any digital photos, or produce illustrations, poems, or prose about your material home life experience(s), that you wish to share anonymously, I will receive these, and ensure that they are treated confidentially, and only used in my published research, under pseudonym, with full permission from you. Any identifying features or characteristics of yourselves, your children or pets will be digitally altered to maintain anonymity. It is important to consider the anonymity of your children in this regard. Also, in order to maintain anonymity, please be mindful of submitting any photographs that you feel may identify your home, or children (eg; children’s bedrooms and/or personal items, street numbers, features of the house exterior seen from kerbsides.) Copies of these can be submitted to me either personally at the interview, or uploaded to my email address. You have the right to withdraw these images and texts at any time up until a month after you provide these. These parts of the research are entirely optional, and NOT a requirement of participation. All information shared with me remains your property, as research participant, and you are merely consenting for me to use it as part of my research.

What are your rights as a participant?

If you choose to participate in my research, you have the right to:

- Decline to participate
- Decline to answer any question(s)
- Decline a home visit
- Withdraw from the research up to a month after receiving the interview transcript
- Request that any material be erased
- Decline to be audio recorded, or that the recorder be turned off at any stage
- Ask any questions about the research at any time during your participation
- Decline to use, or submit, a written diary

Confidentiality

I will ensure that all written notes and transcripts will be kept in my personal care and stored in a private office at my residence, or in a locked travel wallet in transit. Any information stored on a computer will only be accessible through a regularly changed password. Only I will have access to the transcripts and electronic information. My research supervisors will retain responsibility for storage of the data produced during this research, and all records are required to be held for a minimum of five years after the completion of the study. These records may then be either further archived, or destroyed, unless you request that material be returned to you. Pseudonyms will be used.

This research project had been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz, postal address, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Te Kura Kete Aronui, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3015, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand, or to my supervisors, Dr Gail Adams-Hutcheson, or Professor Lynda Johnston, as below.

Results

The results of my research will be used to grade me for a thesis for my Master of Social Sciences degree, GEOG594-16C. As such, the findings may be used in presentations, at conferences, and/or in academic publications. If you indicate your interest, by ticking the appropriate box on the consent form, I will also provide you with a brief report of the research findings.

What next?

If you would like to take part in my research or you have any questions, you can contact me, or I will contact you in the next week so we can organise a

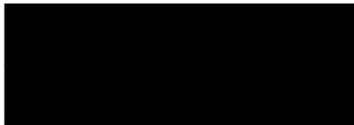
time to meet. If you have any questions about the research, please also feel free to contact my supervisors:

Paula Smith



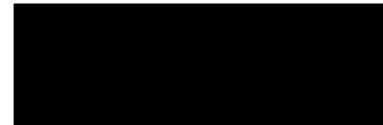
Co-supervisor:

Dr Gail Adams-Hutcheson



Co-supervisor:

Prof Lynda Johnston



(For privacy reasons, contact information has been deleted.)

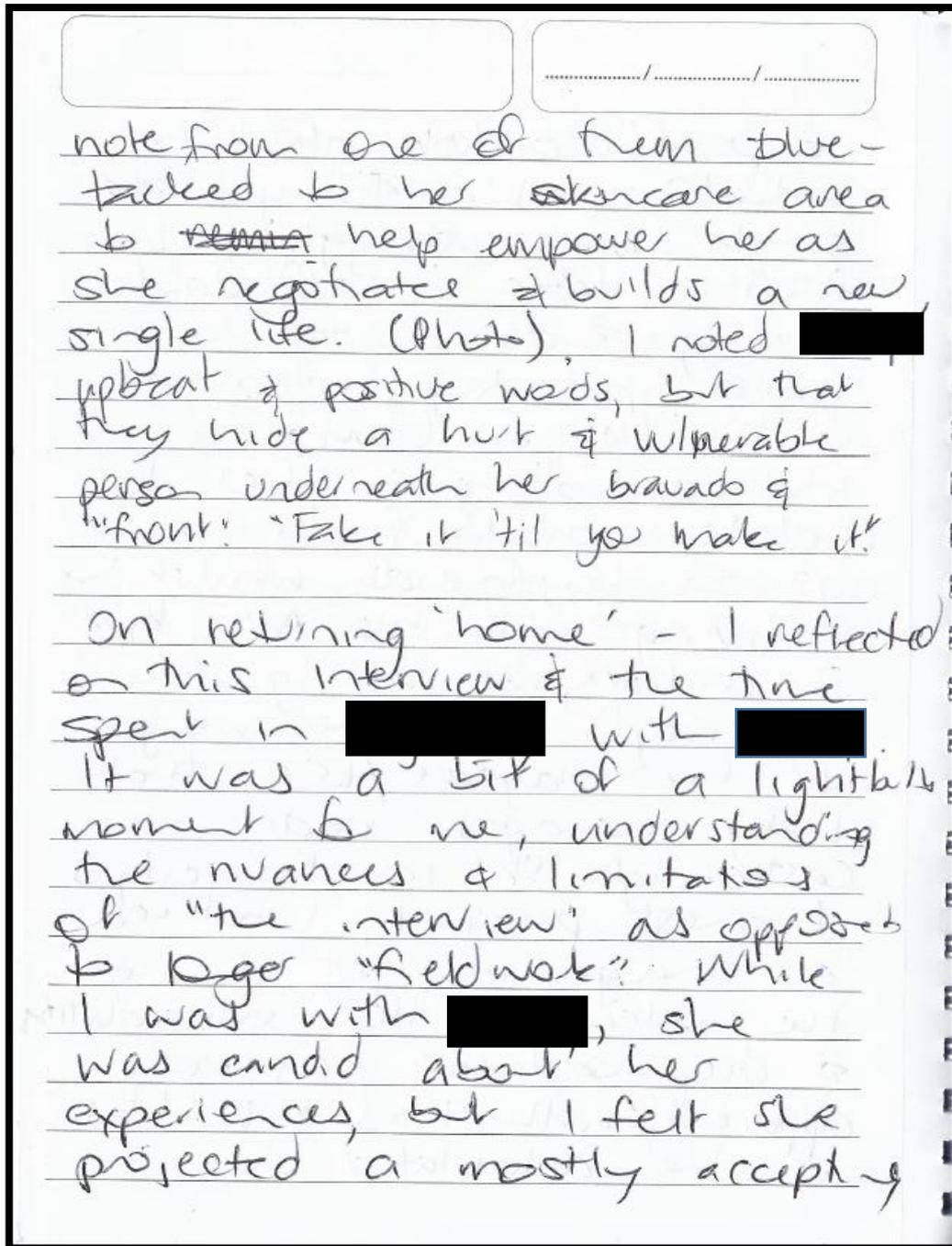
Appendix H - List of counselling/support services – Waikato, New Zealand

	Citizens Advice Bureau	Information about free counselling services available
	http://www.cab.org.nz/vat/fp/r/Pages/Relationshipcounselling.aspx#2	
	Community Law Waikato http://www.communitylaw.org.nz/	078390770
	depression.org.nz	0800 111 557 or text 4202
	Lifeline New Zealand	0800 543 354
	mentalhealth.org.nz https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/in-crisis/	
	Single Parent Services Waikato http://spsw.org.nz/	0800 457 146
	Waahi Whaanui Trust http://www.whanui.org.nz/	078289695
	Waikato Migrant Resource Centre http://www.wmrc.org.nz/	07 853 2192
	Waikato Women's Refuge	24/7 Crisis line 07 855 1569
	Women's Refuge https://womensrefuge.org.nz/	0800REFUGE

Appendix I - List of counselling/support services – Australia

 Beyond Blue	1300 22 4636 Information about depression and anxiety https://www.beyondblue.org.au/home
 Community Legal Centres	http://www.naclc.org.au/
 Citizens Advice Bureau	http://www.cabwa.com.au/
 Lifeline Australia	https://www.lifeline.org.au/
 Single Parent Australia	http://www.singleparentaustralia.com.au/
 Economic Security for Women	https://www.security4women.org.au/
 Women’s Community Shelters	http://www.womenscommunityshelters.org.au/
 Domestic Violence Hotline	24/7 1800 65 64 63

Appendix J - Example of a research diary



(For privacy reasons, personal and place names have been deleted.)

