ABSTRACT

ASSESSING THE DURABLE OBSTACLES TO RETURN MIGRATION AMONG HURRICANE KATRINA EVACUEES

by Stephanie Jane Morrice

The purpose of this research is to assess the return migration decisions of Hurricane Katrina evacuees. This thesis interprets data collected through semi-structured interviews in Houston and New Orleans, in addition to data from "The Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston Project" archive of interviews, to determine what factors are influencing evacuees' desire and capacity to return home. Respondents demonstrated the complex interaction of displacement variables on their return migration decisions. These variables interact and influence evacuees in both 'home' and host societies. Thinking through concepts of belonging, exclusion and capacity to return raises important questions as to the decisions of return and helps us to understand that these decisions are not mutually exclusive. This thesis highlights the durable obstacles to return migration, suggesting ways to ensure the sustainable return of the Katrina displaced by more fully assessing the factors affecting their displacement and return.

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Chapter One: The Context of Hurricane Katrina

1.1 The Vulnerability of New Orleans

The city of New Orleans is well known for its timeless ambiance. The streets of the city are rife with the sound of faint jazz, street performers, and the smell of fresh coffee and beignets. It's laid back, genial atmosphere, historic heritage and diverse cultures makes the New Orleans the jewel of the southern US state of Louisiana. It is not only the culture of New Orleans, however, that makes it unique. The Crescent city, nicknamed because of location amid the curves of the Mississippi River, averages six feet below sea level. This elevation helped New Orleans thrive and grow as an important port city (Comfort, 2006). New Orleans is surrounded not only by the river itself, but also by Lake Pontchartrain, which makes the city particularly vulnerable to flooding (Comfort, 2006). In the years leading up to Hurricane Katrina, scientists and the media repeatedly warned of the possibility of extreme flooding if a strong hurricane were to hit the city (see, for example, Laska, 2004). While the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers established a complex levee system in the 1920's and 1930's to protect the city from the potential of flooding, this system was not adequately maintained (Comfort, 2006). More specifically, concerns were previously documented relating to the evacuation of the some 130,000-city residents who were without personal vehicles or who were in hospitals (FEMA, 2004). These concerns stated that if a hurricane were to strike, these people would have no way to evacuate the city, even if they wished. By all accounts, Katrina was simply "a catastrophe waiting to happen" (Kates et al. 2006: 14553).

Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the southern coast of Louisiana on August 29th, 2005 as a Category 4 storm. When the storm made landfall slightly east of New Orleans, many residents assumed that the city had been spared a direct hit. However, as residents collectively breathed a sigh of relief, many were unaware that the 17th Street levee had breached and the waters of Lake Pontchartrain were flooding the city (Comfort, 2006). Katrina caused an estimated $89 billion damage (Brinkley, 2005) making it the most costly natural disaster in the history of the United States. Katrina also caused the mass involuntary displacement of approximately one million people from the Gulf Coast Region (Morris, 2008). This forced migration was not caused solely by the hurricane itself, but also because of human neglect in successfully preparing for a disaster that was anticipated (Morris, 2008). Approximately 25 per

cent of the population of New Orleans was living in poverty prior to Hurricane Katrina. This pre-Katrina population was also unique in that it was two-thirds African American (U.S. Census Bureau 2000a, 2000b). The delay in calling for a mandatory evacuation left much of this population stranded in the city with no way to escape (Brinkley, 2006). The world watched as these people squeezed into the New Orleans Superdome as a refuge of last resort (Comfort, 2006).

The victims of Hurricane Katrina were eventually displaced to a great number of different sites across the United States. According to Gongol (2005), approximately 10,000 evacuees sought refuge in near by Houston, Texas. Individuals from among the Katrina displaced who are now living in Houston or New Orleans comprise my study population. Drawing from literature on belonging, mobility and exclusion the purpose of my study is to explore the return migration decisions of these Hurricane Katrina evacuees. While there have been many studies that have critiqued the response to Hurricane Katrina (see Brinkley, 2005; Schneider, 2005 for examples), my own work will continue to fill a void in the existing literature (as suggested by Hunter, 2005), which detrimentally separates migration and disaster studies. These two bodies of literature are intricately connected, as disasters often cause both permanent and temporary migration (Hunter, 2005). My study is unique in that it explores these topics in a political, economic and social context that is different from studies in the developing world. Many studies have also suggested that return migration decisions are predominantly influenced by an evacuee's economic stability (see for example, Landry et al. 2007; Li et al 2010). My thesis considers a breadth of social experiences, through analysis of semi-structured interviews and secondary data to determine if this decision is more complex, and whether it is in fact contingent on a variety of social, cultural and economic factors. Ultimately, this thesis will explore the more durable obstacles to return migration that continue to affect Katrina evacuee's years after the storm.

1.2 Composing the Subjects: The Katrina displaced

In this thesis I do not wish to suggest that there is one distinct model for return migration after a natural disaster. I do, however, wish to demonstrate that there are common and complex themes and issues that influence evacuees' decisions to relocate or return. Thousands of evacuees remain displaced and the complicated set of factors that influences their desire and capacity to return

will be explored and analyzed in Chapter 4. The section below illuminates one of the many stories of continued displacement.

A Position of Displacement

Susan* is an evacuee currently living in Houston, Texas. She evacuated from Orleans Parish a day before the storm initially made landfall, and made her way to Shreveport. After a week, she and her dog moved in with some friends who were living in a small house in East Houston. Her interview spoke in depth about her struggle to adjust to life in a city that she was not familiar with. Her narrative expresses how much she continues to miss her home in New Orleans:

> I miss everything about New Orleans. One of the hardest things to deal with now is being away from home – what I know as home. I miss my every day routine, my family – living close by to my family. It's a really family orientated place. – Susan

Her longing to return home is enhanced by her family connections that she remembers growing up with.

In her narrative, Susan goes on to speak about a brief trip she made back New Orleans. Although friends had warned her of the likely extent of damage, she wanted to inspect for herself the level of devastation Katrina had caused to her home. She compares pre-Katrina and post-Katrina New Orleans, noting the difference between. Like many evacuees, she talks at length about the loss of her house and her possessions:

> I've been back once since Katrina. What was once a nice loving neighborhood is now desolate and dry. You can look up the streets now and no-one is there. I thought it wouldn't be that bad, that I'd be able to save something, but it was the total opposite to everything I thought. Nothing was left to go back to. How can you ever even try to pick up the pieces when there are no pieces to put back together? – Susan

Despite a desire to return home, Susan goes on to articulate a concern about her capacity to permanently do so. For Susan, therefore, being able to return to New Orleans is merely the first of many obstacles. Her financial instability represents an obstacle to return as well as a factor that might enhance her struggle to re-establish her life in New Orleans.

* For the purpose of protecting the identity of my participants, all names in this thesis are pseudonyms.

When discussing her life in Houston, Susan expresses the feelings she holds towards her host city:

> Houstonians aren't as friendly as people in New Orleans. Even though they've let us into their city I still don't think they're as friendly and where there was once some compassion, now I just feel like they're getting tired of us. I've heard people get angry and say that we're taking peoples jobs and stuff like that – but we're just trying to get back to some sort of normalcy. If I could go back to my job in New Orleans I would, but I can't go back because of the job situation – Susan

Her narrative discusses the way that Susan feels she is perceived by Houstonians. She also equates the job situation in New Orleans as a factor that is limiting her capacity to return to the city. Despite these issues however, her desire to return remains vivid and strong:

> If New Orleans was a person, I see her like an old grandmother – an old southern woman just sitting on her porch, taking in anyone, no matter what they do. If I could say something to her it would be: Thank-you so much for loving me the way that I am and I'll see you soon. – Susan

Susan's story provides just a small glimpse into the life of an evacuee who, more than four years after the storm, remains in a situation of continued displacement. While she continues to struggle to rebuild a level of normalcy in Houston, her desire and determination to return to New Orleans remains powerful.

There is, however, another side to the displacement story. Although many evacuees have not returned to New Orleans, there are thousands that have indeed successfully returned to the city. Their return, however, does not imply an easier set of decisions. They, like those who remain displaced, struggle to find their place in a complicated post-disaster landscape. These evacuees continue to be affected in both 'home' and host cities by a complex set of variables that impact their return migration decisions. Furthermore, their successful negotiation of the durable obstacles to return is merely the first step of their voyage, as they must then re-negotiate their place in a city that has been substantially altered by the hurricane. The section below provides one example of an evacuee who has returned to the city of New Orleans.

A Position of Return

Jeremy* evacuated from the historic Garden District two days before Katrina hit with his wife and children. Jeremy and his family evacuated to Dallas, Texas, for just three days before returning to the city. His story depicts the displacement of a medium income family, stressing his

continued struggle to adjust to life after Katrina. In a similar way to Susan's interview, Jeremy's narrative demonstrates his feelings towards the city he grew up in:

> I was born here 46 years ago and there's no-where else I'd rather be. Me and my family love it here, the people are friendlier here than anywhere else I've ever been…I'm proud to say from New Orleans. – Jeremy

His narrative explicitly conveys his strong connection to the city of New Orleans. During his interview, Jeremy also mentions the extent to which he felt as if he was being "judged" in Houston, emphasizing his belief that many evacuees suffered similar events in their host cities. Jeremy's narrative, however, does not go into depth about this marginalization and instead, his interview talks at length about how thankful he is that he was financially able to cope with Katrina and her aftermath:

> I know people who have had to leave because jobs have diminished but I've been lucky. My job is still here and we were able to drive back after only a couple of days. It breaks my heart to know that a lot of people haven't been so lucky. Some people have been hit really hard; they've lost loved ones and feel very alone because they don't have access to resources. Sixty percent of the people in Gentilly and the Ninth Ward owned their own home – which is just amazing – and unfortunately those people were hit the hardest. If you don't have the money to rebuild then you're not going to come back. That segment of the New Orleans culture is going to be missing and it's an important segment of the culture. – Jeremy

Jeremy's financial and job stability enhanced his capacity to return to New Orleans. His narrative suggests that many people have not been as fortunate, as they lack the finance and resources to return to the city. He continues:

> Even for a middle class family such as ourselves Katrina was still a struggle – a very, very difficult experience. Just the instability in our lives, and the high stress, I know my wife has struggled a lot and we didn't even lose as much as most people. She has a lot of trouble dealing with what's happened to the city – we all do. – Jeremy

As his narrative demonstrates, Hurricane Katrina has affected the lives of thousands of people in New Orleans and indeed across the Gulf Coast. While Jeremy and his family were able to negotiate their way back to the city, their emotional adjustment to a city much changed by the disaster continues. Although they have overcome obstacles and returned to the city, they are now re-establishing their lives in New Orleans. Chapter 4 will consider narratives of the Katrina

displaced, like the two I have presented here, and analyze them in depth in order to highlight what factors influence the return migration decisions of the Katrina displaced.

1.3 Summary of Chapters

In Chapter 2, I explore concepts of belonging and mobility, demonstrating how these two bodies of literature are inexorably interconnected. This literature supports my research questions and aids my later consideration of the narratives of the Katrina displaced. Chapter 3 demonstrates how and why I conducted my own semi-structured interviews and why I utilized interviews provided by The Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston Project to gain insight into the return migration decisions of the Katrina displaced. These two methods offer the data needed to answer my primary and secondary research questions. In Chapter 4, I interpret the narratives of the Katrina displaced, drawing from the literature explored in Chapter 2 in order to highlight what factors influence evacuees' desire and capacity to relocate/return. Chapter 5 highlights the imbalance between evacuees' desires and capacity to return 'home'. I suggest the need for collaboration between researchers and policy makers, in order to address the durable obstacles to return migration and help those Katrina evacuees who remain in a state of undesired and continued displacement. Ultimately I aim to pave the way for future research questions that will address issues of return migration and the issues surrounding the sustainable return of evacuees after a natural disaster.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction to Conceptual Framework

Natural disasters have the ability to cause widespread devastation to both people and places. As Hannam et al. (2006: 7) suggest, they "bring to the fore the outstanding fragility of complex mobility systems". An event such as a hurricane often causes massive disruption to mobility networks and "effectively immobilizes the most vulnerable" (Cresswell, 2006: 246). In this instance, mobility is less about getting from A to B and more about a hierarchy of power. Urban disasters also have the ability to disrupt people's attachments to 'home' and sense of belonging. Evacuation, for example, causes people to uproot their strong emotional attachments to places constructed as 'home' (Blunt et al. 2006); to leave behind the familiar and head towards the unknown. The context of Hurricane Katrina provides me with a unique opportunity to delve further into an understanding of the interrelationship between mobility, belonging and forced migration as a result of a natural disaster.

The events associated with Hurricane Katrina lead me to the following examination of the deeply interconnected and multifaceted geographical concepts of belonging and mobility. Central to the connection between these issues are theories associated with place and transgression, which interact and influence the Katrina displaced in their host society. Mobility has become an evocative concept over recent years and a powerful discourse that creates its own contexts. Although there are many ways to think about mobility geographically, I draw on Urry (2008) to define mobility as not just the ability for a population to move within and between places, but also the ability to move within different settings and transgress different relationships of inclusion and exclusion. More specifically, my own research focuses on the displacement caused by Katrina, and the ability for the displaced to return to New Orleans. In an increasingly globalized world, theories of belonging have become less about territoriality as boundaries have become more easy to transgress. As Castle et al. (2000) argue, "Belonging can no longer mean being a part of a national community based on common history and culture" (2000:1). I argue, therefore, that belonging is a notion that reflects a feeling of being 'in place', but also is a concept that, like identity, is constantly subjected to reinterpretation. It is concept deeply rooted in power relations often between dominant and subordinate groups (Schein, 2009).

The two geographical concepts briefly outlined above (and expanded on later) can be translated into my primary research question: "How do processes related to belonging and

mobility influence the return migration decisions of Hurricane Katrina evacuees?" I aim to consider, through an examination of the tensions between ideas of belonging and rights, the dilemmas that face Katrina evacuees who were forced to seek refuge in new communities. Hurricane Katrina caused the largest population displacement in the United States since the Dust Bowl of the 1930's (Falk et al. 2006). This thesis will draw from literature on both belonging and mobility, exploring how changing conceptualizations of these two geographical concepts feed into notions of transgression, which then affect the Katrina displaced. This study is especially concerned with how these evacuees are attempting to negotiate their own sense of belonging in an unfamiliar host society.

2.2 Belonging

Cresswell (1996) suggests that something belongs in one place and not another. To belong therefore, essentially means to feel 'in place' (Trudeau, 2006). Schein (2009) continues, "At the very least, belonging implicates an inside and an outside" (2009: 813). Appropriate to consider here is the argument made by humanistic geographers that "we exist in and are surrounded by places, centers of meaning" (Tuan, cited in Cresswell, 1996: 13). They remind us that we live in a world of meaning and therefore pay particular attention to the processes of place (Schein, 2009). This argument is particularly relevant to my study population who are attempting to negotiate their own sense of belonging (and indeed, place) in a complicated post-disaster landscape. Cresswell (2006) and Trudeau (2006) argue that belonging is an inherently spatial concept. It is, "central to understanding the social control of space [and] it is often discussed in terms of membership to a polity" (Trudeau, 2006: 423). Theories of local citizenship are particularly relevant to consider here, as geographical literature on the topic has stressed the importance of belonging (Staeheli, 2003). Citizenship is an intricate concept that involves social interpretation and is rooted in complex relationships. By 'local' citizenship I mean a recently reinvented sphere of citizenship and a legal status in which individuals have access to the rights and entitlements of a particular community/polity (Blank, 2007; Desforges et al.,2005). This thesis investigates the socio-cultural aspects of local citizenship, exploring how it is played out socially and locally through place-based processes.

Historically, citizenship was seen a mark of belonging and a commitment to a specific place (Desforges et al. 2005). During this time, citizenship was generated, managed and

controlled primarily within a national sphere (Blank, 2007). Over the past few years, however, there has been recognition of many different types of citizenship. This is not to say that we want to abandon national citizenship, but merely add it as a site of citizenship. Citizenship has therefore been repositioned to two other scalar domains: the local and the global (Blank, 2007). Understanding the politics of local citizenship is particularly applicable in this study, which examines a population who lack access to the rights and entitlements in their host society due to their displacement. It is important to note here the problem with defining what "local" exactly means. Often it refers to the principles of membership and access to rights and entitlements of a particular city (Desforges et al. 2005). For my study, I argue that "local" refers to a single city and thus "local citizenship" reflects the fact that there exists a local polity (a city) with its own principles of membership and rules of participation (Desforges et al. 2005). An understanding of this concept is important when understanding the politics of belonging that surround the Katrina displaced.

There is, as well, an important dynamic in how the Katrina displaced are tied to multiple sites of belonging, which is partly described by the concepts of transnationalism. Transnationalism, a notion that has become particularly popular since the 1990's, suggests "immigrants forge and sustain familiar economic, cultural and political ties and identities across national borders, in both home and host societies" (Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2006: 1593). The transgression of national borders, however, often reframes the structures of citizenship rights in a way that international migration does not. There are, however, structures of local citizenship that illuminate belonging in sharp contrast even though the bundle of national citizenship rights appear to be unaltered. I argue, therefore, that translocalism is a concept that suggests that internal migrants are able to hold multiple commitments to different territories and ethnic communities across local borders (Desforges et al., 2005); they are not simply tied to one specific community. Understanding these translocal processes are useful when exploring the sense of belonging felt by Katrina evacuees who may hold commitments to different communities and places. During my analysis of the narratives of the Katrina displaced in Chapter 4, I examine how evacuees feel a sense of belonging to their site of displacement *and* New Orleans, or whether this sense of belonging remains focused to one city.

'Home'

Above I have focused on politics of belonging and local citizenship, which are economically and socially important to the Katrina evacuees as they negotiate their own sense of belonging in a post-disaster landscape. My own research requires a deeper focus an understanding of conceptions of 'home', a concept that has become increasingly more prevalent in citizenship literature in geography (Black, 2002; Desforges et al. 2005). 'Home' is a tremendously contested concept in academic literature. As political geographer Richard Black (2002: 126) suggests, "the concept of 'home' is not straightforward". It is a term that is intricately connected to concepts of identity, territory and place and (like identity) is subject to constant reinterpretation. This is, in part, due to the challenge of defining what we mean by 'home' (Hammond, 1999). For the purpose of this thesis it is not appropriate to define 'home' as merely a 'house'. Instead, we can understand 'home' as a socio-spatial entity, a psycho-spatial entity and an emotional warehouse (see Easthope, 2001). As Easthope (2001) argues, "homes can be understood as 'places' that hold considerable social, psychological and emotive meaning for individuals and groups" (2001:135). Humanistic geographers place home at the center of their analogies, exploring the ways in which 'home' is a meaningful place (Blunt et al, 2006). Furthermore, they understand how people create a sense of 'home' in terms of comfort and belonging (Tuan, 1971). More recently, however, academics (see for example, Blunt et al, 2006) have begun to recognize 'home' as both spatial and political.

Again I think it is applicable here to return to the politics of 'place'. As Fullilove (1996: 1516) has identified, "place attachment…is a mutually caretaking bond between a person and a beloved place". Central to theories of 'home' is the concept of 'place'. The connection between these two geographical concepts has been widely documented by a number of theorists (for example, Duncan and Duncan, 2001; Casey, 2001) in a lengthy debate on place-identity. For this study, Doreen Massey's argument is particularly important. Massey challenges the idea that 'home' is fixed and bounded, arguing instead that that the 'home' is a place that, "had always, in one way or another, been open; constructed out of movement, communications, social relations, which always stretched beyond it (Massey, 1992: 14). The meaning of home, therefore, has the ability to change over time, as it is reinterpreted and reassessed in a variety of different ways.

It has been suggested that disasters have the ability to disrupt people's attachment's to 'home' (Blunt et al. 2006). Dugan (2007) illustrates this argument further, via experiences of

Katrina victims settled in Texas. This study demonstrates that evacuees were able to adopt new cultural identities in their new 'home', although notes that the evacuee's conception of 'home', cultural milieu and identities that they held before the storm cannot be easily replaced (Dugan, 2007). It seems clear therefore, that the notion of 'home' is particularly important to the Katrina displaced who have not returned to New Orleans, as they attempt to create their own sense of belonging, and indeed conception of 'home' in their host society. Blunt and Dowling (2006) consider Hurricane Katrina through this lens of a critical geography of home, exploring the fragility, power and scale of home in the contemporary world. (Blunt et al, 2006). They suggest that the destruction of homes by the storm and subsequent construction of alternative visions of home demonstrate a critical geography of home and can be deployed to understand wide ranging issues in the contemporary world:

> Home is both material and imaginative, is situated within a nexus of power and identity and is mobilized and recast over a wide range of scales. Rather than view the home as static, fixed and bounded, the home is in process, shaped by home-making practices and embedded within wider social, political, cultural and economic relations on scales from the domestic to the global. (Blunt et al. 2006: 265)

An understanding of this dialectic between space, home and identity aids me in my analysis of the narratives of the Katrina displaced, as it helps identify how their sense of belonging is grounded, understood and negotiated in a site of displacement. Furthermore, the narratives portray how an evacuee's conception of 'home' might change as they negotiate their own sense of belonging in their host society. Ultimately this will aid my consideration of whether a sense of belonging and conception of 'home' among Katrina evacuees, influence their desire to return to New Orleans.

Many academics have argued that 'home' is often idealized from afar (see for example, Markowitz, 1995) and thus, as lives of the Katrina displaced evolve, their conceptions of home may remain vivid although distorted by both the disaster and their absence. In reference to refugees, Black (2002) contends that the more distant a 'home' is (in terms of both time and space) the stronger a yearning for 'return' becomes. My own study explores this argument further, as I investigate the narratives of the Katrina displaced four years after the hurricane made landfall. Kibreab (1999), however, makes an argument in a current era of globalization, that there is a generalized state of 'homelessness', where we are all refugees. Since we are all mobile, there

is no ‘home’ in a physical, material or national sense. While sedentary thinking roots people to a specific place, Kibreab argues that there is no need for people to belong to a particular place, thus the idea of ‘returning home’ as a solution to the problem of displacement is invalid (Kibreab, 1999). Kibreab’s contention, however, conflicts with literature that grounds our identities to a particular place (Cresswell, 2006, 1996; Sibley, 1995). This literature suggests that people may suffer exclusion in a place that is not their ‘home’. This is because they loose their social relations and the structures of meaning that once surrounded a ‘home’ weaken. If then, the Katrina displaced are subject to potential exclusion in a host society, the concept of home must be legitimate. I consider both arguments when exploring the narratives of the Katrina displaced in Chapter 4.

2.3 Exclusion

In the section above I have explored theories relating to belonging and conceptions of ‘home’ to aid my consideration of the ways that these notions influence evacuees’ desire to relocate/return. What, however, is an evacuee’s relationship to their site of displacement? In geography, a large poststructuralist debate surrounding the politics of place has concerned an emphasis on ‘difference’ and the ‘other’ (Cresswell, 1996). People, both dominant and subordinate create themselves in places as subjects in relation to others and differences (Cresswell, 1996; Sibley, 1995). I have already argued that the Katrina displaced are a population who are attempting to negotiate their own sense of belonging in a host society. They attempt to navigate their way within and between various matrices of inclusion and exclusion, which are developed as a result of the natural disaster. For the Katrina displaced, their site of displacement represents a landscape of potential exclusion and a place where they might feel “out of place”.

Site of Displacement

In their site of displacement the Katrina displaced lack access to rights in a particular community and are outside of their ‘natural’ place/home. I have already argued that belonging is used here to refer to an idea of membership in a local polity (Trudeau, 2006). For the most part then, exclusion, is the opposite of belonging. Being ‘out of place’ essentially refers to a level of exclusion and otherness, which implies a spatial difference where there may be none. Howard Becker initially laid claim to the term ‘outsider’. As Cresswell, (1996) explains:

> Outsider is commonly the term used to describe people new to a place [and] indicates that a person does not properly understand the behavior expected of people in a town, region or nation. Outsiders are often despised and suspected of being trouble makers. They are people 'out of place. (Cresswell, 1996: 25-26)

This definition is useful when understanding the ways in which the Katrina displaced might understand their relationship to their site of displacement. They are people who have been forced to seek refuge in a new city and therefore may be seen as 'out of place' in their host society.

To further my argument I turn to Kibreab (1999) who has conducted extensive explorations into the exclusionary geographies of refugees. Here it is useful to point out that refugees are most commonly defined as people who are outside their home country and therefore subject to local interpretations of informed rights (Cresswell, 2006). This definition, however, ignores the wider use of the term, which refers to those people who are displaced and searching refuge. This definition incorporates my study population who were involuntarily forced to migrate and find refuge as a result of a natural disaster. Kibreab (1999) argues that often refugees "are treated as strangers or as non-members of their host society with conditions that attend 'otherness" (Kibreab, 1999: 387). For a particular example of this, Malkki explores Burundi refugees in Western Tanzania conveying the way these people were "herded into spatially segregated sites" (in Kibreab, 1999: 391). These people, seen as deviant, must be spatially ordered in spaces away from normal society. This body of literature is useful when considering the implications spatial segregation may have on the Katrina displaced. More specifically, it aids my consideration of whether a conception of 'home' among people seen to be "strangers" in a host society influences evacuees' desire to return to New Orleans.

In order to understand how these concepts relate more specifically to the Katrina displaced I will consider the works of Cresswell (1996) and Sibley (1995) in more depth. I have argued that the Katrina displaced are a population who are outside of their 'normal' society and therefore may potentially suffer exclusion from their host society. Cresswell (1996) explores the theme of transgression, delineating the construction of 'otherness' through spatially sensitive analysis. Underlying these arguments is knowledge of society-space dialectics. The explanatory enterprises of Harvey, Soja and others, show that, "space is not simply formed and molded but plays an active role in the formation of society" (Cresswell, 1996:12). This concept of place is

overtly important in considering how one's awareness of being 'in place' is structured around one's awareness of being 'out of place'. For the Katrina displaced, who lack local citizenship in their site of displacement, they are 'out of place' in a new society.

Transgressive acts are those judged to be 'out of place' by dominant institutions and thus provide potentials for resistance (Cresswell, 1996). Deviance is commonly thought of as synonymous with 'abnormal'; something that goes against 'normal society'. For my study, this incorporates images of immobility, no fixed abode and 'refugee' status. David Sibley (1995) attempts to clarify some of the spatial and social boundary processes that separate some groups of society and render deviant those who are different. I use Sibley's exploration into feelings about difference to understand how a host society might view the Katrina displaced. The field of objects relations theory, which suggests the ways in which boundaries emerge, separating the good and the bad (Sibley, 1995), conjures images of segregation between local citizens and my study population.

Building on this theory, Kristeva's abjection assumption objectifies marginalized groups as impure (Sibley, 1995). According to Kristeva et al. (1982) since the outside is situated outside the symbolic order, being forced to face it is an inherently traumatic experience. This assumption highlights one way in which the Katrina displaced may be marginalized. As they are equated with impurity and are therefore situated outside of this 'symbolic order', the Katrina displaced may suffer segregation from their host society. As Sibley (1995: 8) describes, in western societies it is common or even urged, that we make separations, "between clean and dirty, ordered and disordered, 'us' and 'them". Foucault's work (1995) on power, order and dominance, explains how these separations are manifested by spaces of marginalization; images of difference (such as the Katrina displaced) must be spatially ordered. I utilize this literature in my research as I examine how processes related to belonging and mobility feed into notions of transgression. The Katrina displaced, who are not local citizens and therefore are not entitled to certain rights may be marginalized in their host community; a place where they ultimately do not feel a sense of belonging. Understanding the conceptualizations about images of difference is crucial when determining whether exclusionary geographies influence the return migration decisions of Katrina evacuees.

The above arguments demonstrate how my study population, who are outside of their 'normal' setting, may potentially suffer host society exclusion. This literature allows us to

understand how Katrina evacuees understand their relationship to their site of displacement and explore the various ways in which this potential exclusion, marginalization and stereotyping might manifest itself in a host society. These processes of exclusion are analyzed more thoroughly in Chapter 4.

2.4 Capacity to Return

In the first section of this chapter I argued that the Katrina displaced are attempting to negotiate their own sense of belonging as they move within and between matrices of inclusion and exclusion. I also suggested the ways that an evacuee's conception of 'home' might be altered as a result of the natural disaster, emphasizing a critical geography of 'home'. The second section of this chapter utilized literature on the geographies of exclusion to argue that Katrina evacuees might potentially suffer exclusion in their site of displacement. Much of the focus of my argument until now has been on understanding what might be influencing a desire to return to New Orleans among the Katrina displaced. It seems appropriate here, however, to draw on literature that will aid my consideration of the factors that influence an evacuee's capacity to return to New Orleans. There is a range of literature discussing the influence that an evacuee's mobility and economic livelihood have on their return migration decisions (see for example, Desforges et al, 2005; Cresswell, 2006, Landry et al., 2007). This section will consider these notions, examining how these two bodies of literature are closely interlinked. Together, they aid my consideration of the factors that influence an evacuee's capacity to return to New Orleans.

Immobility

According to Desforges et al (2005: 442) the common thread connecting all scales of belonging is mobility; or rather the "disruptive potential of mobility". The earlier sections of this chapter suggest that people's sense of belonging have become much more fluid as boundaries have become easier to transgress by mobility systems. I define mobility systems as the physical and social networks that enable movement across social settings. In turn, these mobility systems have become easier to access as a consequence to globalization. Globalization has heightened communication and transportation networks, making it much easier for people to move from place to place. Hurricane Katrina is surrounded by images of both mobility and, in turn, immobility. There is a range of literature suggesting that post-disaster populations often find it

hard to return home due to a lack of mobility (Cresswell, 2006). They find themselves immobile and therefore stranded. My own study draws on this literature when evaluating the narratives of the Katrina displaced, in an effort to decipher whether mobility is indeed a factor in their return migration decisions.

Katrina ironically immobilized much of the population of New Orleans during a time when the world is exceptionally mobile. This population was constrained within certain forms and paths of mobility. For example, many of the Katrina displaced (a large proportion of whom were African American minorities) were stuck in New Orleans with little or no access to mobility and therefore no way to evacuate. Walshon (2002) explains:

> Of the 1.4 million inhabitants in the high-threat areas, it is assumed only approximately 60 percent of the population or about 850,000 people will want, or be able, to leave the city. The reasons are numerous. Although the primary reasons are a lack of transportation (it is estimated that about 200,000 to 300,000 people do not have access to reliable personal transportation), an unwillingness to leave homes and property (estimated to be at least 100,000 people) and a lack of outbound roadway capacity. (Walshon, 2002: 45).

Furthermore, for the Katrina evacuees in a site of displacement, a lack of access to mobility networks has inevitable consequences for their return migration decisions. Important to consider here is the argument that mobility is differentiated socially (Urry, 2008; Cresswell, 2006). Mobility systems, it seems, have the potential to produce substantial inequalities between people and places, in terms of access to mobility (Urry, 2008). The ability to move is therefore often equated as a major source of status and power (Urry, 2008).

In order to further understand the politics of mobility that surround Katrina, I will briefly consider the changing conceptualizations within the field. Early approaches to mobility focused more specifically on the coming and going of people to a place, rather than the movement itself. (Urry, 2008). These approaches not only neglected movement, but also communications and the ways these concepts are politically, economically and socially organized (Urry 2008; Cresswell, 2006). More recently however, Urry (2008) has developed a new mobilities paradigm: "The emerging paradigm examines how social relations necessitate the intermittent and intersecting movements of people, objects, information and images across distance" (Urry, 2008: 54). It is the concept of distance, which is treated as particularly important here. The new paradigm enables the "social world" to be theorized as a wide variety of practices, infrastructures and ideologies

that all involve various types of movement. As examined by Hannam et al. (2006: 10), "the new mobilities paradigm must be brought to bear, not only on questions of globalization and the deterritorialization of nation states, identities and belonging, but more fundamentally on questions of what are the appropriate subjects and objects of social enquiry". My study builds on this new paradigm by examining the ways in which the Katrina displaced represent a particular type of geographical movement. The narratives of the Katrina displaced demonstrate how internal migration is, itself, a complex mobility-system. Evacuees for example, are placed within a context of immobility through their evacuation (by bus or personal vehicle) and are often constrained by immobility in their city of displacement. These narratives therefore demonstrate the way that mobility systems influence evacuees' capacity to return home.

Before I move on to consider literature on the economics of return migration, I see a useful transition in considering the argument that levels of mobility are synonymous with levels of finance (Cresswell, 2006). This contention suggests that people who are more mobile tend to be those who have greater financial stability. While over 85 percent of the population of New Orleans had left before the Katrina struck, many residents (predominantly those with low income) were unable to leave the city (Cresswell, 2006):

> Again and again, they are asked why they did not leave, and the residents have repeatedly informed the incredulous reporters that they could not afford to leave, did not have a car, and had no where to go. Automobility is, after all, central to American life…Evacuation plans included an assumed model of mobility based on privatized automobility, when instead they should have worked on a model of mobility as a public need (Cresswell, 2006: 259-261).

It seems clear therefore, that Hurricane Katrina effectively immobilized a large majority of the New Orleans population. Here, mobility is less about getting from A to B and more about a hierarchy of status and power (Cresswell, 2006). Once in their site of displacement, the Katrina displaced have suffered a continued constraint of immobility. Those that had no access to mobility in New Orleans, remain stranded in their site of displacement, with no way to transgress the different matrices of inclusion and exclusion that make up their post disaster landscape. Their capacity to return is therefore limited by their immobility and financial instability. The section below will further consider how the livelihoods of the Katrina displaced influence their capacity to return to New Orleans.

Livelihood and the Economics of Place

Recent literature on the demography of disasters has addressed the impact of disasters on marginalized communities (Li et al. 2010). These inquiries have demonstrated that racial and ethnic communities face large obstacles to disaster preparedness and post-disaster return (Li et al. 2010). It has also been widely suggested in literature on return migration that capacity to return is largely dependent on finance (Landry et al., 2007). As explored in a study on the return migration decisions of Hurricane Katrina evacuees, economic models of household migration explicitly demonstrate evidence for migration behavior and suggest the socio-economic determinants for return migration (Landry et al. 2007). This study notes, however, a limited literature on the economics of post-disaster return migration (Landry et al. 2007). Research conducted in the year that followed Hurricane Katrina suggests a high degree of uncertainty surrounding the likelihood of return migration (Eliot and Pais, 2006). In particular this study concluded that home ownership and household income before Katrina, influenced people's desire and capacity to return home, although note that those whose homes were destroyed by the storm are less likely to return (Eliot and Pais, 2006). They also, interestingly, find that low-income houses are more likely to return, largely equating this decision to a lack of financial options (Eliot and Pais, 2006). Other academics however, (see, for example, Falk et al. 2006) argue that more financially stable households should be more likely to return 'home' after a natural disaster, as they tend to be displaced to closer locations and have more resources (and thus are more financially able) to make the return journey. These arguments will be further explored in Chapter 4, through a breakdown of the narratives of the Katrina displaced.

In their 2007 study, Landry et al. examine, via extensive survey methodology and utilization of economic household migration models, the decision to return to the post-disaster Gulf Coast region among Hurricane Katrina survivors. Using a sample of evacuees in various locations, their study finds that having a higher household income increases the likelihood of returning home after the storm (Landry et al. 2007). Their second dataset considers the influence on return decisions among evacuees in Houston, Texas in particular. They contend that home ownership, youthfulness and wage differentials are all influential in the return migration decisions of Hurricane Katrina evacuees (Landry et al. 2007). While the study from Landry et al. does not explore whether one's connection to place affects the likelihood of return migration, it

does demonstrate that households do intend to return home in spite of real economic difficulties (Landry et al. 2007). This, they briefly consider, may be attributed to the sense of belonging and connection to 'place' that they hold to the city of New Orleans (although they have present no evidence to support this claim). This study suggests that levels of return migration are at least partly dependent on financial stability. In other words, the return migration decisions of Hurricane Katrina evacuees are likely to be significantly affected by economic constraints, but perhaps not entirely. This argument will be further explored in Chapter 4 where I consider the narratives of the Katrina displaced in an effort to understand whether an evacuee's capacity to return is dependent on their pre-storm livelihoods and financial stability.

Li et al. (2010) further contribute to research on disasters and vulnerable populations through a comparison of African American and Vietnamese American Katrina evacuees. Although this study also attributes decisions to return as partially dependent on financial stability and place attachment, they go on to explore the synergistic role of social networks as an additional influence in the return process (Li et al. 2010). Social networks are, "the trust, mutual understanding shared values and behaviors that bind members of human networks and communities and make cooperative actions possible" (Cohen et al. 2001: 4). As argued by Ritchie et al. (2007), when we contextualize social capital in terms of disasters, they facilitate a flow of information and provide a basis for action, assisting in both community and individual goal attainment. Particularly in reference to minority evacuees, religious institutions have been seen as a major space of social capital (Mohan and Mohan, 2007). In their study, Li et al. (2010) determined that social networks were indeed influential on their return migration decisions; having a social network to return to in New Orleans lead to a greater desire to return, where a creation of a social network in an evacuees site of displacement decreased the desire to leave the Katrina Diaspora. This literature suggests that post disaster return migration is surrounded by a complex set of variables. My study will build on this existing literature to demonstrate the factors influencing Katrina evacuees' desire and capacity to return to New Orleans.

2.5 Conclusion to Conceptual Framework

In the sections above I have argued that the Katrina displaced are attempting to negotiate their own sense of belonging in a host society. I have also argued, drawing particularly on a critical geography of 'home' that an evacuee's conception of home has the ability to change over time

(Blunt et al. 2006). This conception, for example, may become idealized (Markowitz, 1995) or redefined by new experience. Furthermore, through an examination of literature on the geographies of exclusion, I argue that for many of the Katrina displaced, their site of displacement represents a landscape of unfamiliarity where they feel 'out of place'. The Katrina evacuees represent an image of difference in a host society where they are not local citizens and therefore might be subjected to marginalization. I then go further to consider literature on the economics of return migration, exploring in particular the influence that immobility and financial instability have on an evacuees capacity to return home. Together, these conceptual arguments help to frame the factors that might influence an evacuee's desire and capacity to return/relocate after the storm, thus guiding my interpretation of material collected to answer my research questions.

The events associated with Hurricane Katrina have led me to the above examination of the deeply interconnected geographical concepts of belonging and mobility. My study builds on existing literature on Hurricane Katrina (Li et al, 2010; Landry et al. 2007; Eliot and Pais, 2006) exploring, through an examination of the narratives of the Katrina displaced, the way that processes related to mobility and belonging feed into notions of transgression, which influence the Katrina displaced in a complicated post-disaster landscape. The tensions between modern ideas of belonging and rights present the Katrina displaced with a dilemma where they lack the power to control their fate. Drawing from both conceptual and content based literature in the chapters that follow, I explore how their narratives of choosing to return to New Orleans, or stay in their site of displacement, represent their attempt to negotiate this dilemma. Furthermore, I explore whether there is a balance between an evacuee's desire to return and their capacity to actually do so.

Chapter 3.0 Methods

3.1 Introduction to Methods

In order to answer my research questions, this thesis makes use of both primary and secondary data. I collected primary data through semi-structured interviews in Houston, Texas and New Orleans, Louisiana with displaced Katrina evacuees. Furthermore, I collected secondary data from "The Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston Project" online archive of interviews with Katrina survivors. Through an extensive examination of the narratives of the Katrina displaced, this study determines what factors are influencing evacuees' desire and capacity to return home.

The methods in this thesis were chosen to gauge the durable obstacles that face Katrina evacuees years after the storm. Long after the floodwaters subside and media coverage diminishes, what factors are influencing the Katrina displaced when they make their return migration decisions? In order to investigate this, I conducted research in both Houston and New Orleans, over an eight-week period. I spent six weeks in Houston, Texas and two weeks in New Orleans, Louisiana. I spent less time in New Orleans due to financial constraints. I conducted semi-structured interviews in Houston and New Orleans with the Katrina displaced who remain in Houston and those who have successfully returned home to New Orleans. I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews because my study is primarily gauging the personal experiences and decisions of Katrina evacuees. This method enabled me to talk personally with participants, allowing them to share their stories in a more personal setting. The use of secondary data in this project contextualizes the primary data I personally collected and provides a more extensive dataset on which to analyze the return migration decisions of Hurricane Katrina evacuees. The methods I use are gauging an understanding of the factors that influence return migration decisions until a point of data saturation.

My primary research question is "How do processes related to local citizenship and mobility influence the return migration decisions of Hurricane Katrina evacuees?"
Building on this, my sub-questions include:

- *How do conceptions of 'home' affect plans for relocation/return among the Katrina displaced?*

  The situation of the Katrina displaced raises important questions about notions of belonging and 'home'. In thinking about their rights and access to jobs and services, it is useful to consider how their situation might be viewed through the concept of local

citizenship (Black, 2000; Desforges et al. 1999). The Katrina displaced are a population who attempt to negotiate their own sense of belonging in a host society where they lack access to local rights and entitlements. The Katrina displaced might, therefore, create an idealized perception of 'home' (New Orleans) from afar. Furthermore, translocalism suggests that the Katrina displaced may hold attachments to more than one community; they may feel a belonging to their site of displacement *and* New Orleans. This research question is answered as I draw on this literature and the narratives of the Katrina displaced to explore how conceptions of 'home' effect the return migration decisions of evacuees and whether this unique population feel like they belong in their site of displacement and/or New Orleans.

- *How do Katrina evacuees understand their relationship to their site of displacement?*
  Literature has suggested that the Katrina displaced, who are outside of their "normal" society, may potentially suffer exclusion from their host society. They lack access and rights in their new community and might therefore be perceived as different from local citizens (Blank, 2007; Desforges et al. 1999; Cresswell, 1996; Sibley, 1995). Alternatively, the Katrina displaced might feel welcomed in their host society. This research question is answered as I draw from this literature and the narratives of the Katrina displaced and explore whether the evacuees want/wanted to leave Houston and whether they feel/felt excluded in the city.
- *What factors influence the evacuee's capacity to return home?*
  Over recent years, mobility literature has focused on Urry's new mobilities paradigm (2008). My study builds on this new paradigm by examining the ways in which the Katrina displaced represent a particular type of geographical movement. Recent literature has also made the interesting suggestion that mobility is differentiated socially (Cresswell, 2006). I sought to answer my research question by framing the Katrina displaced within a complex mobility system. The narratives of the Katrina displaced are used to decipher whether immobility influences the capacity of evacuees to return to New Orleans. Furthermore, recent studies (Li et al, 2010; Landry et al. 2007) study on Hurricane Katrina, examined the microeconomic decisions of displaced households. These studies suggest that economic factors, such as household income and home ownership are influential in the return migration decisions of evacuees (Li et al, 2010;

Landry et al., 2007). The narratives of the Katrina displaced build on this research and examine the influence economic instability has on an evacuees' capacity to return home.

The most appropriate method for exploring complex process people engage in to make migration decisions is semi-structured interviews (Li et al, 1995). Their flexibility and informal structure allows a complex issue (such as return migration decisions) to be approached and assessed in a variety of different ways. Interviews also allow an opportunity for interviewees to clarify and elaborate their accounts on a one-on-one basis (Longhurst, 2006). They do, however, loose the immediate comparability of surveys. Surveys based on a numeric scale (For example: On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your migration experiences?) can be quantified more easily than the detailed answers provided by semi-structured interviews. The issues I am raising are so complex, however, using surveys a method in my study would not have provided the in-depth narratives that I believe are necessary for me to successfully answer my research questions.

The main value of using secondary data in this thesis is to offer context to my study and to provide a point of comparison. My study attempts to determine what factors are influential when evacuees are making their return migration decisions. It is therefore dealing with personal preferences. It is important to note, therefore that people may answer questions differently or discuss different experiences from one another. Triangulation between the interviews I conducted and those taken from "The Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston Project" archive of interviews increases the validity of my findings by widening my dataset and providing a greater point of comparison between my data. Furthermore, Olsen et al. (2004) suggests the value of mixing data or methods so that diverse viewpoints can shed light on a topic. Through data triangulation, my results will be more legitimate and viable because they will offer a variety of different migration experiences.

The semi-structured interviews I conducted in this thesis were ethically sound. I gained consent from participants prior to conducting any interviews and provided the opportunity for participants to withdraw from my study for any time without reason. I also provided contact information if any of my interviewees wished to discuss concerns after I conducted my research. Furthermore, in order to keep my study confidential, I have ensured that interview materials are kept under lock and key. The interviews taken from "The Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston

Project" archive of interviews are also ethically sound. Participants in this study signed a consent form prior to the interview and then a release form at the close of the interview. The archived interviews are kept in a secure online database, which is password protected.

3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Many academics have used semi-structured interviews in studies similar to my own, which explore concepts related to migration decisions, belonging, identity and transgression (Easthope, 2009; Li et al, 1995; Sastry, 2007; Landry et al, 2007). For example, Li et al. (1995) used 36 in-depth interviews to approach the complex issues of belonging and identity from a variety of different angles. These interviews show how these people situate themselves in a new and complicated landscape of inclusion and exclusion and highlight the discourses that show how ethnic identity is a social construction based on status and power (Li et al. 1995).

Using these studies as a guideline, my research used semi-structured interviews to provide insight into the experiences and decisions of those people who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina and the floods that followed. I conducted interviews with those people who are still in Houston and who have returned to New Orleans. Interviews lasted between half an hour and two hours in length, depending on participants willingness to share their stories. My intention was to interview approximately 20 people in both Houston and New Orleans, although this number changed due to problems accessing displaced persons. In New Orleans I conducted 16 interviews with displaced Katrina evacuees who have subsequently returned to the city. In Houston I interviewed three individuals who remain displaced. While three interviews in Houston was a significantly smaller number than I had initially planned for, the interviews were in-depth and, for the purpose of my study, provided adequate insight into the return migration decisions of the Katrina displaced. I am also supplementing my interview data with data taken from "The Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston Project" archive of interviews. Triangulation with these interviews allows me to focus on analyzing my data through comparisons between those interviews conducted by the project and those conducted by myself.

Due to time constraints in the field I was unable to conduct follow-up interviews with participants in Houston. I am aware of the limitations this poses, as responses might have altered the more I familiarized myself with participants. While, for example, my participants may only have initially provided generalized discourses relating to their migration experiences, subsequent

interviews might have provided an opportunity for participants to offer more in-depth reflections on their experiences and decisions.

My recruitment of participants was carried out through non-governmental and governmental organizations in both Houston and New Orleans. In Houston, I contacted The City of Houston, (including the Office of Emergency Management and the Mayors Office of Immigration and Refugee Affairs) The Red Cross, United Way and ACORN. Additionally I contacted numerous churches, although these proved unhelpful in identifying the Katrina displaced. At times I was restricted in participant recruitment because of confidentiality issues (for example, although ACORN had addresses for Katrina evacuees who were living in Houston, they were unable to pass on this information due to confidentiality agreements). Due to the unique pre-Katrina population of New Orleans (25% of the city was living in poverty as Katrina made landfall) two out of my three participants are economically disadvantaged. I am aware that my recruitment process may potentially have limited my recruitment to those people who are more economically disadvantaged and who have required assistance from such organizations. Therefore, in order to avoid potential bias in my results, I utilized an existing contact from my undergraduate research. This participant was a high income level business owner who had access to a personal vehicle to escape the hurricane.

In New Orleans, I recruited participants using non-governmental organizations (including Contemplatives in Action, ACORN, Common Ground and The Make it Right Foundation). Often, my initial contacts put me in touch with subsequent participants. Again, I am aware of the potential bias my recruitment process may have caused, by limiting my sample to those people who are more economically disadvantaged and who required assistance from non-profit organizations. For this reason I made use of family contacts who were economically advantaged and worked and lived in a more affluent area of New Orleans. Speaking to these people increased my access to people of similar economic status, thus giving me access to a more representative sample of displaced evacuees. Of the 16 interviews with people who had returned to New Orleans, five interviews were with participants from a high income level.

The aim of my interviews was to explore the motivations, perspectives and understandings associated with how this unique and marginalized population construct their own sense of belonging in a host society. Discussions explored their migration experiences and decisions. The topics addressed in my interviews included the respondents sense of belonging to

either their site of displacement or New Orleans, conceptions of home, incorporation into the community (in cases where participants are in Houston) migration decisions, financial stability/instability, mobility/immobility and feelings of exclusion/inclusion. When interviewing the Katrina displaced in Houston, I asked the following questions at some point during my interviews:

- How long have you been in Houston?
- Where are you living at the moment?
- How have you adjusted to living in a new city?
- How much access to transport do you have?
- What policies/agencies have you relied on since your displacement?
- Do you think you will return to New Orleans? Why or why not?
- What factors are you considering when you make your decision to stay in you site of displacement/return home?
- How has the City of Houston aided evacuees in their plans to return home/relocate?

These questions aided me in my investigation into how processes related to citizenship and mobility influence return migration decisions after a natural disaster. While I did not specifically question evacuees' financial stability/instability, my questions prompted the majority of participants to discuss the influence of their economic status in their return migration decisions. For example, by keeping my questions relatively broad I gave participants the freedom to discuss a wide variety of factors and avoided unintentionally directing their answers.

When interviewing the Katrina displaced who have return to New Orleans, I asked the following additional questions at some point during my interviews:

- What city were you displaced to?
- When did you return to New Orleans?
- How did you feel you were perceived in your site of displacement?
- What factors did you consider when you made your decision to return to New Orleans?
- What policies/agencies have you relied on since your displacement and subsequent return migration?

- What did the local government (in your site of displacement) do to aid evacuees in their plans to return home/relocate?

In order to gauge whether or not the return migration decisions of Katrina evacuees are dependent on notions of inclusion and exclusion, I asked the following additional questions during some of my interviews; As some questions related more to certain individuals (such as a mother with school aged children) my use of these questions depended on the individual participating:

- How have/did your children integrate/d into their new school?
- How much access to daycare facilities do/did you have in Houston?
- How easy was it to find a place to live/rent or own a home?
- How much of an issue was crime during your time in your site of displacement?
- How easy was it/has it been to find employment during your time in Houston?
- Do you go to Church? If so, how have you integrated into your new church community?

All interviews took place in a community center (the St. Bernard's Community Center, YMCA, Common Ground Advocacy Center or the Contemplatives in Action Relief House). The setting of an interview is not simply a place, but a complex landscape of hidden biases and researcher subjectivity (Longhurst, 2003). By conducting my interviews in a setting that is not my own home or a place of business, I decreased the potential for outside influences to influence my respondents. My own positionality as a researcher is a factor that was pertinent to consider when conducting my research. This was particularly important because I am a white, British citizen, entering a context where many of my participants were economically disadvantaged minorities. According to England (1994) the relationship between the researcher and the participant is a complex socially constructed realm in which subjectivity is omnipresent. To avoid any unintentional direction or interpretation in the interview process I was reflexive and recognized my own positionality when conducting my interviews. For this reason, before starting my interviews I clearly explained the purpose of my research to my participants. I stressed that I am an independent student researcher and emphasized the ways in which this study highlights the need for improved policies to help aid those who desire to return home but lack the means to do so. Prior to conducting my research I was aware that I might initially face hostility from

persons who were displaced by Katrina. By stressing the purpose and relevance of my research, hostility was never an issue while in the field.

The majority of interviews conducted in my study were audio recorded and subsequently partially transcribed. Recording my interviews enabled me to focus intently on the issues being discussed during the session, without distraction. During some interviews however, participants expressed a desire not to be audio recorded. If this desire was voiced, I relied on notes taken during the interview and spent time immediately afterwards writing up a detailed narration of topics addressed during the session. Where participants discussed a particularly relevant point, I asked for them to pause for me to transcribe the direct quotation.

Once written up/transcribed, my interviews were broken down thematically. This enabled me to determine common themes across my dataset and gain a better understanding of what factors influence evacuees desire and capacity to return home. By taking a step back and considering the interviews as a set of data, rather than individually, I was able to determine differences and similarities among evacuee return migration decisions. Themes identified in my interviews were:

- Belonging
- Host society exclusion/segregation
- Financial instability
- Affinity to New Orleans/Conceptions of home
- Idealized perception of home.
- Immobility

These key words/ideas are central themes from the literature pertinent to my study and aid me in my consideration of how processes related to citizenship and mobility influence the return migration decisions of the Katrina displaced.

3.3 The Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston Project (SKRH)

In addition to semi-structured interviews conducted by myself, my research utilizes data taken from the SKRH Project archive of interviews. The SKRH project, founded by American folklorists Carl Lindhal and Pat Jasper, is the first large-scale project in which survivors of a major disaster have taken the lead in documenting it. The projects goal is:

> To voice, as intimately as possible, the experiences and reflections of those displaced to Houston…The heart of the project is stories: stories told by survivors, to survivors, on the survivors' own terms. While media treatments of the survivors have too often depicted criminals or at best victims, the voices of the survivors have portrayed selfless friends, compassionate strangers, loving neighbors, and, above all, heroes. (Lindhal et al. 2007).

In early September, 2005, the projects co-founders formulated SKRH's basic goals and objectives and secured collaboration with three institutions: The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, The University of Houston and the Texas Commission of the Arts. Since the birth of the project, SKRH has mounted six field schools, during which Katrina and Rita survivors were trained in interviewing, logging, transcribing and dealing with the ethical issues associated with the project. The SKRH project has trained more than 50 individuals, and recorded more than 400 interviews. Their project is explained in detail on a public website (Lindhal et al. 2005). Over fours years after the storms made landfall on the Gulf Coast, the SKRH Project is ongoing and relies largely on volunteers to transcribe collected interviews and input data into the online database.

The SKRH Project initially came from Carl Lindhal, who volunteered in Houston's Astrodome Convention Center immediately as evacuees started moving into the City of Houston. He saw the potential for documenting the narratives of the Katrina displaced and allowing survivors to share their stories of solidarity, community and heroism. Participants were recruited by the co-founders through unemployment offices, The University of Houston, various churches and social service centers and subsequently invited to take part in one of the projects field schools. Due to the unique pre-Katrina population of New Orleans, participants in this project were largely African American. All participants in the project were also over 18 years of age.

In order to collaborate with the SKRH Project I contacted Carl Lindhal directly and explained my research and my interest in the archive of interviews. Despite initially contacting Carl Lindhal, I arranged to meet with fellow co-founder Pat Jasper at her residence in East Houston. During this meeting I further explained the aims and objectives of my research, clarifying what issues I am addressing and what the goal of my study is. I was subsequently granted permission to utilize existing interviews, under the condition that I volunteered with the project and fully transcribed at least two recorded interviews. Interviews recorded are stored in

an online database, which is password protected. The co-founders of the project grant only volunteers transcribing and utilizing the database access to the password. This ensures the confidentiality of the interviews.

As a way to enhance my Houston based dataset, I fully transcribed seven interviews from the SKRH archive of interviews. While initially I was granted access to only one interview at a time (the co-founders identified interviews which contained material which they deemed relevant to my study), I was subsequently granted access to the entire online database of archived interviews. This enabled me to listen to interviews and decipher their relevance myself. While I am aware of the limitation to my research caused because I did not conduct the interviews myself, by listening to and fully transcribing each interview I gained familiarity with this dataset, the narratives of Katrina evacuees and their perspectives from another point in time. The interviews I accessed were collected between January 2006 and July 2009. I am also aware that I have a lower number of interviews with evacuees who remain in their site of displacement. This is because I was confident that I had successfully reached a point of data saturation with this dataset. I have subsequently been granted access to an online database that holds full transcriptions of SKRH interviews. This database is also password protected. The benefit of this database is that it enables transcripts to be searched using keywords (for example "mobility"). While I have used this database to get a grasp of additional material, this thesis only analyzes interviews that I personally transcribed. As I was less familiar with these interviews and realized that they were not providing any new material, I left these interviews out of my final analysis.

The existence of the SKRH Project has made it possible for me to further investigate the topics addressed in this thesis. Triangulation between this dataset and my own semi-structured interviews allows a greater point of comparison within my study. The SKRH are also semi-structured in format and are based around the following 4 main questions:

- Discuss your life before Katrina.
- What happened when Katrina made landfall? Talk about your experiences during the storm.
- Talk about your time in Houston, since Katrina. How is your life different in Houston?
- Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not covered?

These four master questions are purposefully broad in order to allow evacuees the freedom to share their own stories. Additional questions during the interview stemmed from these masters questions. Interviews varied in length from thirty minutes to two and half hours, with the interview length depending on the willingness of the participant to share their stories.

The interviews conducted by the SKRH project were also ethically sound. Prior to the interview, survivors signed a consent form and at the conclusion of their interview signed a release form enabling their narratives to be utilized in the project and for subsequent research. The premise of the project is based on survivors interviewing survivors; As both the interviewer and interviewee will have endured similar experiences, they may have found it particularly easy to relate to each other. This is a point worthy of note when comparing this interview data to the data I personally recorded. While I did not receive any hostility from participants in the field, I must be aware that survivors might have been less inclined to discuss certain topics with someone who has not been through the same traumatic experience. This point, however, makes my data triangulation more valuable, as this thesis offers data collected by survivors (as part of the SKRH project) and an outside interviewer (myself).

After fully transcribing interviews taken from the SKRH Project, I broke down the transcripts thematically. To do this I used the same themes as I used with my own semi-structured interviews. Again this enabled me to determine common themes across my dataset and gain a better understanding of what factors influence evacuees desire and capacity to return home. Once I had broken down both datasets thematically, I was able to look across my entire dataset and determine differences and similarities among evacuee return migration decisions.

3.4 Conclusion to Methods

In this section I have demonstrated the value of utilizing semi-structured interviews in this thesis. Their flexibility and informal structure allows the complex issue of return migration decisions to be addressed and approached in a personal, in-depth way. The existence of "The Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston Project" highlights the relevance of my own study. Using secondary data from this project not only widens my Houston based dataset, but also provides a point of comparison and context around my research. In the following Chapter I interpret the narratives of the Katrina displaced, demonstrating the complex factors that surround an evacuees' return migration decision. In order to protect the identity of my participants, and those involved in the

SKRH Project, all names discussed in Chapter 4 are pseudonyms. I also see value in using pseudonyms to my interviews because labeling each interview numerically would have decreased the personality of each narrative. It is important for this thesis that we remember that each interview is telling a personal story of displacement.

Chapter 4.0 Analyzing the Narratives of the Katrina Displaced

4.1 Introduction

The conceptual questions outlined in Chapter 2 filter into the following interpretation of the narratives the Katrina displaced. These narratives provide an insight into the dilemmas facing Katrina evacuees who are attempting to negotiate a balance between their capacity to relocate or return and their desire to do so. As such, my analysis contributes to the extensive debate on the relationship between place, migration and 'home' (Blunt et al., 2006; Black, 2002; Massey, 1992). Further, I contribute to discussions on place attachment (Fullilove, 1996), the politics of immobility (Urry, 2008, Cresswell, 2006; Desforges et al., 2005) and exclusionary geographies demonstrated in a post-disaster context (Kibreab, 1999; Cresswell, 1996; Sibley, 1995; Kristeva, 1982). It is important to make the distinction here that not all of the factors I discuss below affect every evacuee. Each story is different and each evacuee negotiates the complex set of variables that influence their return decision in an individual way. Collectively however, the narratives show the complexity of an evacuee's return migration decision.

4.2 Migration Decision Factors

The data analyzed in this project aims to answer my primary research question: "How do processes related to belonging and mobility influence the return migration decisions of Hurricane Karina evacuees?" in addition to the following sub-questions:

- How do conceptions of 'home' affect plans to relocate/return among the Katrina displaced?
- How do Katrina evacuees understand their relationship to their site of displacement?
- What factors influence the evacuees' capacity to return home.

Over four years have past since Hurricane Katrina made landfall and there are signs of rebuilding and reparation in many areas of the city of New Orleans. For example, The French Quarter is, for the most part, fully restored structurally. In fact, standing on Decatur street (the main street lining the edge of the French Quarter and the Mississippi River) one might barely be aware of the devastation caused by Katrina. This area is somewhat of a 'tourist bubble', relatively set apart from the damage still evident from the storm. Across Canal Street and over the Mississippi there is quite a different story. The Lower Ninth Ward, Jefferson Parish and St. Bernard's Parish are

areas that were hit particularly badly by Katrina and as a result, still remain largely desolate and deserted. Although there is some evidence of rebuilding, these areas are rife with houses that still appear totally destroyed.

Photo 1: Life returns to the tourist districts. Photo taken in Jackson Square, the French Quarter, July 2009. Source: Stephanie Morrice, 2009.

Photo 2: The Lower Ninth Ward remains a desolate landscape. Source: Stephanie Morrice 2009.

In the sections below I will consider the ways in which the narratives of the Katrina displaced fully answer my research questions. My thesis specifically highlights the complexity of a post-disaster return migration decision. For Katrina evacuees, the decision of whether to return to New Orleans is not a simple one. It is instead a choice that is contingent a variety of social, cultural and economic factors:

	Push Factors to Return	**Push Back Factors to Stay**	**Pull Factor to Return**	**Pull Factor to Stay**
Home	Lack of attachment/sense of belonging.	Altered conception of 'home'	Idealization of New Orleans, family connections, traditions	Creating a new "home"
Belonging to Site of Displacement	Exclusion from host society	Immobility in New Orleans	Familiarity of New Orleans. Sense of place and belonging	Inclusion in host society
Livelihood and immobility	Increasing financial problems in host society	Immobility and financial constraints	Financial/job stability, NGO aid	Increased job/financial opportunities in site of displacement

Table 1: Topology demonstrating the push and pull factors that influence a complex return migration decision.

Through a consideration of the narratives and the topics they address, I will stake out the parameters of the very intense and complicated set of outcomes of displacement that effect the Katrina evacuees years after the storm. I have already demonstrated that the two geographical concepts of belonging and mobility are inexorably connected. Central to this connection are theories associated with place and ‘home’, which influence the Katrina displaced in a complicated post-disaster landscape. This chapter builds on existing literature and demonstrates the ways in which changing conceptualizations of belonging and mobility literatures feed into notions of transgression, which in turn influence the return migration decisions evacuees. These aspects of local belonging and mobility translate into a complex set of factors that are ultimately responsible for pushing and pulling evacuees to stay in their site of displacement, while at the same time pushing and pulling evacuees to return to the city of New Orleans. The narratives of the Katrina displaced will demonstrate how these factors play out in a social setting.

4.3 Composing the Subject: A Position of Displacement

As demonstrated in the topology above, a return migration decision for the Katrina displaced is no simple choice. The narratives of the Katrina displaced demonstrate, from their point of view, how a combination of complex factors interact and influence the return migration decisions of the people who were involuntarily displaced from the storm. In order to see the influence of these variables let us first consider one particular Katrina evacuee. The interview with Sarah*, an evacuee who has relocated to Houston since the storm, collectively embodies the many factors influencing a return migration decision and demonstrates that a return migration decision is not based on one simple entity. While she is not representative of my entire data set, the interview provides us with a fuller understanding of the interactions of the complex set of factors that influence evacuees who are attempting to negotiate a balance between their desire to relocate or return and their ability to do so.

The social relationships built around a place contain powerful and sometimes contradicting influences on a persons migration decisions. In New Orleans, Sarah's life was based around everything she "loved"; her family, her community work and the city of New Orleans itself. Her interview discussed at length her evacuation to Houston, migration experiences and her struggle to find a sense of belonging in a host society.

During her interview, Sarah speaks fondly of New Orleans:

> I really love New Orleans. I think the biggest thing I miss is just having, my family and friends around me, that's always been pretty much the most important thing to me…I just remember – I mean shoot, just going to visit so many people in one day and just, having a good ole time, going here and there, seeing family, knowing everyone and exactly where everything is, and just, having so many cultural things to do, and so many festivals, and so many good places to eat, and good music. To me it will always be home. – Sarah

Her relationship to New Orleans appears to relate largely to her family connections in the city and the history and traditions that are prevalent there. It is also clear that she has a strong perception of 'home'. The interview with Sarah also demonstrates the degree to which she was subjected to exclusion from her host society. As she conveys:

> In Houston there are definitely places where I don't feel comfortable. Sometimes I feel like I'm being judged just because I'm from somewhere

> different – like I can tell people are thinking 'She doesn't belong here. – Sarah

Furthermore, Sarah's narrative goes on to demonstrate her immobility in Houston and highlights the financial strain of Katrina. She conveys:

> In New Orleans we never really needed a car, everything and everyone was so close and I loved that about the city. In Houston not having a car is a real problem – I mean a *really* big problem. There's no way to get from place to place and no good transportation to rely on here, you know?...I mean I've really struggled with money since Katrina. All these aid people – FEMA you know, they all say they going to give us this and that but we haven't seen hardly anything. I wasn't the richest person in New Orleans, my family had our problems, but at least we had something…Now we have nothing. We're stuck in a place with no car and no money to make our life better. – Sarah

The immobility Sarah discusses above feeds into notions of financial instability and the exclusion she experienced in her host society.

The above section has demonstrated some of the factors that surround a return migration decision. Sarah clearly has a desire to return but a limited capacity to actually do so. I will reveal that this imbalance is a common element demonstrated through the narratives of the Katrina displaced. In the following sections I will examine my dataset to consider the narratives of the Katrina displaced in more depth. In these narratives, subjects who experienced the displacement of Katrina, describe in their own words how issues of 'home', exclusion, immobility and financial insecurity affect their decision to return or relocate. The penultimate section in this chapter will return to consider Sarah's interview in more depth, taking what I have explored through this chapter to further analyze her narratives and examine what factors have influenced her own personal return migration decision.

4.4 Home: Presumed Idealization Place and Social Networks in Place

As Political Geographer Richard Black (2002: 196) suggests, "the concept of 'home' is not straightforward". It is a concept that is intricately connected to notions of place and identity, and is subject to constant reinterpretation. This is, in part, due to the challenge of defining what we mean by 'home'. I have argued that humanistic geographers place home at the center of their concepts, focusing on human agency and creativity in exploring the ways in which places are

meaningful and full of significance (Tuan, 2001). This argument can be used here to interpret the destruction and reconstruction of 'home' as a result of a natural disaster. Disasters such as Hurricane Katrina not only represent a disruption of belonging and attachment to a specific place but can also cause a disruption to the cultural politics of home (Blunt et al, 2006).

Below I contribute to this argument further through the narratives of the Katrina displaced. Understanding the dialectic between place, home and identity is beneficial when considering these narratives, as it helps identify how their sense of belonging is grounded, understood and negotiated in a site of displacement. Furthermore, these narratives portray whether a sense of belonging and the conception of 'home' among Katrina evacuees influences their desire to return to New Orleans. This contributes to the lengthy debate on the connection between 'home', place and migration (Blunt et al., 2006; Massey, 1992).

4.4.1 Sense of 'Home' as Push Factors to Return

For the Katrina displaced, their site of displacement represents a complicated and unfamiliar landscape. Hurricane Katrina shattered the lives of thousands and disrupted the attachments held to 'home' and a sense of belonging to a city they are extremely familiar with. I have argued that translocalism is a concept that suggests internal migrants are able to hold commitments to different territories and ethnic communities across local borders. In other words, they evacuees might feel a connection to both New Orleans *and* their site of displacement. The narratives of the Katrina displaced, however, imply that this is not always the case. Instead they suggest that most evacuees hold a stronger connection to New Orleans than they do to their site of displacement. During an interview with an evacuee who has relocated as a result of Hurricane Katrina, the participant explicitly stated, "This will *never* be home", when referring to their site of displacement. The sense of belonging they feel to their site of displacement is not as powerful as it is towards New Orleans, the city they perceive as 'home'. Furthermore, out of the ten interviews with people who have not returned to New Orleans, only one explicitly stated that they feel an attachment to their site of displacement:

> Houston has been very welcoming…we are very comfortable. I feel no tie to New Orleans and I'm not looking back. Houston is our home now.
> John*

This lack of attachment to their site of displacement represents a factor which pushes the Katrina displaced to return to the city they see as 'home'. For those that who are unable to return, their situation represents one of continued displacement.

Out of the ten interviews with evacuees who have not returned since the storm, nine participants suggest that their site of displacement represents a place where their sense of belonging is not as powerful as it was in New Orleans:

> This is not New Orleans, or anything close to it. And it's, it's, it's that sense of home and that sense of peace that I find in New Orleans that I don't find here. – Mary*

Limited or no attachment to their site of displacement denotes a factor that pushes the Katrina displaced back to New Orleans. Their desire to return is enhanced by their stronger connection to the city they perceive as 'home'. My interview with David* furthers this argument:

> New Orleans is always going to be home. I know some people who think that it's weird to call New Orleans home because so much has changed. The first time I went back it was like, like – like stepping into the Twilight Zone, you know. And it was just heart breaking to see. But I grew up in the city, that's where my parents grew up and that's where their parents grew up. It's always been home – and always will be. There's just something about the city, it's so familiar, even though it's been really beaten up, it's just where I feel like I belong. One of the hardest things for me to deal with now is being away from home. This isn't home, it's just a place I was forced to come to. – David

For participants like Mary and David, their situation represents one of continued displacement in a city they do not feel an affinity to. Their desire to return to New Orleans symbolizes a desire to return 'home' and to a place where they feel a sense of place and belonging.

This argument is also evident through the interviews with participants who returned to New Orleans after Katrina. Of the sixteen interviews with evacuees who have returned home, fourteen participants explicitly convey this argument, stating that their connection to New Orleans was a primary influence on their desire to return home. During one interview, the participant clearly expressed, "This city, *this* is my home…and that – quite simply – is why I came back" (Steve*). Again, it is clear that the stronger sense of 'home' and belonging associated with the city of New Orleans influences evacuees' desire to return to the city. An

evacuees' lack of sense of belonging to their site of displacement represents a factor that pushes the Katrina displaced to return to New Orleans.

Of the ten interviews with people who have not returned to New Orleans, one did note a gradual transition in the way they view their site of displacement. During Katie's* interview she suggests, "It's coming. It's starting to feel like this could be, you know, my home". This narrative reinforces Black's (2002) contention that the subject of "home" is not straightforward. Instead, the meaning of this concept has the ability to change over time, as it is reinterpreted and reassessed in a variety of different ways. Here, the participant suggests that their image of home is changing as they negotiate their own sense of belonging in their host society. While once represented by the city of New Orleans, their site of displacement now embodies the evacuee's perception of 'home'.

4.4.2 Altered Perception of 'Home' as Push Back Factors to Stay

Hurricane Katrina is surrounded in images of uncertainty. Many evacuees struggle to find where exactly their 'place' is within a complicated post-disaster landscape. Some may no longer feel like citizens in New Orleans, but might initially struggle in a site of displacement where they feel alienated. Alternatively, others see a site of displacement that offers a landscape in which they can negotiate their own sense of place and belonging, and ultimately create a new 'home'.

What happens, then, when the image of 'home' held by the Katrina displaced is altered? Here I contribute to literature that has suggested that the meaning of 'home' has the ability to change over time (Blunt et al., 2006; Massey, 1992). All of the participants in this study who have not returned permanently to New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina have, at some point since the storm, made a trip back to the city. Many of these trips served as a way for evacuees to see for themselves the devastation Katrina caused in the city and to their homes. Three out of the ten interviewees with participants who have not returned home highlighted the devastating change between the image of home they left before Katrina and the image of home that was left for them afterwards:

> You can't understand how it feels to leave your house and think that when you return it's all going to be the same and instead to loose everything. I just can't believe how New Orleans looks like a third-world country and it's just devastating. I mean it really just breaks my heart. I can't go home, I can't even walk through the streets without crying. Nothing's the same. – Mary

This altered conception of home represents a factor which pushes some of the Katrina displaced to stay in their site of displacement. This argument is overtly conveyed in through the narratives of those evacuees who have not returned to New Orleans. As highlighted by David:

> One of the hardest things to see in my old neighborhood is that there's nobody there – it used to be full of people and now everything's gone. You can't ever prepare to leave your life behind…I thought I would still be able to go home and save something. My wife kept telling me to go into the house because it was still my home but I didn't want to go in because it just didn't look the same, it didn't feel the same. I remember it as perfect and I went back to something that was totally different and strange to me. – David

It is clear therefore that the perception of 'home' held by the Katrina displaced has the ability to change over time. For some, their sense of home has been disrupted so much by Katrina's devastation, returning home would represent an unbearable reality. Katrina alters their conception of 'home' and since they cannot bear the thought of returning to New Orleans, it pushes the Katrina displaced back from returning to New Orleans, enhancing their desire to stay in their site of displacement.

Photo 3: For many of evacuees, Hurricane Katrina alters the image of the home they left behind. The devastation caused to the homes of Katrina evacuees is an unbearable reality for many survivors. It shifts their conception of home and pushes the Katrina displaced to stay in their site of displacement. A home in St. Bernard's Parish, marked with a National Guard "Katrina tattoo", which notes the number of people found deceased in this house. Source: Stephanie Morrice, 2009.

4.4.3 Idealization of 'Home' as Pull Factors to Return

As contended by Allen et al. (1994:1), it is "generally assumed that most refugees want to go home". This desire, or even longing for 'home' can sometimes develop an idealized conception

or an almost mythical status (Black, 2002) associated with a place they assume as 'home'. My findings contribute to this argument. Of the ten interviews with participants who have relocated as a result of Hurricane Katrina, nine participants continue to conceptualize a positive, idealistic vision of New Orleans as their home. My interview with Shelia expresses this idealization of New Orleans:

> There's no place like New Orleans, no people like New Orleans and you have to be a part of that community to really understand what we're saying. There's nothing like that city, nowhere. It's such a wonderful, special place with so much character. – Shelia*

This narration highlights the survivor's deep connection to New Orleans and strong conception of 'home'. Furthermore, here we see the idealization of New Orleans' social networks. Literature contends that strong social networks can enhance an evacuees desire to return home (Li et al., 2010). The narratives of the Katrina displaced support this argument, as many demonstrate the influence of a strong social network in New Orleans. As conveyed by one participant:

> In New Orleans there's a big social scene – not just with friends but with family too – and a strong community feel. Most people get jobs because of who they know and they do things because of the connections they have with different people. It's a tight knit area. If you meet a new person, odds are they'll know someone you know. It's always been like that…I remember once my son was sick, he was real sick with pneumonia when he was young – and my neighbors all came in to check on him. Some of these people I really didn't know that well but it was like once they knew he was sick, they came running! It's just like that in New Orleans. – Rachel*

The connection to 'home' and idealization of these strong social networks represent factors that pull the Katrina displaced back to New Orleans.

In addition to this, it is important to note the influence family connections and traditions impose on evacuees when they are making their decisions to return home or to stay in their site of displacement. Of the sixteen interviews with participants who returned to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, all sixteen participants expressed a strong family connection to New Orleans. In many cases this connection was a primary reason to return home. During my interview with Steve* , the participant discussed:

> When you have nothing, it's your home that pulls you through. The familiarity, the traditions, the history. I came back because my family has

> been in St. Bernard's Parish for 235 years and we have a tendency to stay where we go. This area is unique. People say why do you want to come back and I try to tell them: this isn't just where we live, it's the way of life. I don't think you'll find friendlier people anywhere in the country. This place, this city – *this* is home. – Steve

This interview passage shows that for the Katrina displaced, a sense of belonging, historical connection to home and familiarity are all factors that pull evacuees back to New Orleans. This seems particularly true for low-income evacuees. While these people may struggle financially to return, their connection to home is an overwhelming influence on their desire to return to the city. While they may return to a find their house destroyed, they feel such a connection to the city that there is no-where else they would rather be. One evacuee conveys this argument concisely when speaking of their fellow survivors:

> This is where just generations and generations of their family has lived. And really they love this city so much that despite how many hurricanes threaten to hit the city, despite the threat that another Katrina could happen, they decide that they want to come back because this is their home. They grew up here, they lived here all their life and they will die here. Because that's what they know and some of them don't even evacuate. That's just how much they feel a connection to this city. – Anna*

Here, the participant demonstrates the immense power of a conception of home. Though their sense of home might have been altered, it remains more powerful than any affinity they feel to a site of displacement. For many, the historical connection they hold to the city of New Orleans is an overwhelming influence on their return migration decisions.

4.4.4 A New Sense of Belonging as Pull Factors to Stay

Despite such a strong connection to the city of New Orleans, many of the Katrina displaced have not returned home. They remain, instead, at their site of displacement. I have already demonstrated that during one interview with a participant who has relocated as a result of Hurricane Katrina, the interviewee suggested that their site of displacement was beginning to feel like home and one interview during which the participant refers to Houston as 'home'. These narratives suggests that as the Katrina displaced negotiate their own sense of belonging in a new city, they may develop a connection to their site of displacement. As the concept of translocalism

suggests, for some, their site of displacement represents a landscape where new connections and ties can be forged (Desforges et al.,2005). While this argument represents a factor pulling evacuees to stay in their site of displacement, the overwhelming majority of interviews with people who have relocated and those who have returned convey that the sense of belonging they feel towards New Orleans is a stronger influence on their return migration decisions. Although the narratives of the Katrina displaced do not largely support the argument of translocalism, they do contribute to debates surrounding the connection between place, migration and 'home' in the context of a post-disaster environment.

4.5 Relationship to Site of Displacement: Belonging and/or Exclusion

So far I have demonstrated that the Katrina displaced hold a powerful connection to New Orleans and a strong conception of 'home'. I have also illustrated and contributed to literature that suggests the ways in which disasters disrupt the cultural logics of home (Blunt et al., 2006), as they fragment and alter people's senses of attachment and belonging to different places. Furthermore, I have highlighted the complexity of the term 'home' and the ways in which its meaning can alter and be reinterpreted in a variety of different ways (Massey, 1992). For the majority of the people who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina, their desire to return is influenced by the tie they feel to New Orleans (the city they perceive as 'home'). How then, do these evacuees perceive their relationship to their site of displacement and how does this relationship influence the return migration decisions of the Katrina displaced?

I have argued that mobility is a powerful discourse, which creates its own contexts. Hurricane Katrina is surrounded by images of mobility and in turn immobility. For example, the storm effectively immobilized a large proportion of the city's population who were unable to leave when Katrina made landfall. Furthermore, many evacuees have, since the storm, struggled to negotiate an ability to move within and between different social settings. This demonstrates the ways in which disasters have the ability to disrupt complex mobility systems. Not only did Katrina leave thousands stranded in New Orleans with no means to evacuate, those people who sought refuge in other cities were often left immobilized in their site of displacement.

As the practical implications of both citizenship and mobility unfold across space, various matrices of inclusion and exclusion are developed. Within political geography there has been much debate about the normal displacement return cycle. For example, Hammond (1999)

considers the ways in which return, after displacement, is assumed to be a good thing because people are assumed to belong to a certain place ('home'). Within this debate, some academics have argued that 'return' represents a return to 'natural order' that is presumed to have existed prior to displacement (Cresswell, 2006). Furthermore, academics have suggested that displaced evacuees are 'out of place' in their site of displacement and must therefore be put back in place (Cresswell, 1996; Sibley 1995). They represent images of difference in a host society. Kristeva's (1982) abjection assumption, theorizes one way in which the image of difference portrayed by the Katrina displaced might be marginalized. For those who are citizens of a local city, being forced to face 'impure' Katrina evacuees might be seen as a traumatic experience. For the evacuees therefore, the image of 'home' they associate with New Orleans might therefore represent a world of order and stability (Warner, 1994). How influential therefore, is the evacuees desire to return 'home' and therefore back to what it perceived as the 'normal natural order' of the homeland? In the following section I will interpret the ways in which the relationship between Katrina evacuees and their site of displacement influences their return migration decisions. Further, I will contribute to existing discussions in literature that suggest the influence immobility, host society marginalization and financial instability have on evacuees desire and capacity to relocate or return after a natural disaster.

4.5.1 Exclusion as Push Factors to Return

The narratives of the Katrina displaced demonstrate that evacuees feel pressure to leave their site of displacement because they are subjected to exclusion from their host society. According to Cresswell (1996) and Sibley (1995), the Katrina displaced, who are outside of their 'normal society' in their site of displacement, might potentially suffer exclusion from their host society. The narratives contribute to this debate, demonstrating how the Katrina displaced are subjected to this exclusion. The Katrina displaced represent an image of difference due to their homelessness, poverty and immobility. For local citizens of a host society who have access to mobility systems, a home and are not living in a state of poverty, the Katrina displaced are representative of an image of difference that must be segregated. Of the ten interviews collected with participants that have not returned since Hurricane Katrina, nine participants expressed that they had encountered some degree of host society exclusion. Narratives of the Katrina survivors demonstrate the different ways in which this host society exclusion is manifested. My interview

with Mary conveys the racism and exclusion the participant encountered in Shreveport, at a new place of employment:

> I had a rough time there and I mean nothing I could do was right and they would go out of their way not to say good-morning to me and would walk past me in the hallway and I'd say, 'Excuse me' and – I mean it was really bad. But – and, and they would always throw it in my face that I'm from New Orleans and that I have nothing and – it was a really, really demeaning experience for me and that almost broke me down because I just – it was just one of the hardest things for me to deal with – loosing everything, moving to a new city, and then, you have to experience racism – and just not being treated fairly. – Mary

In this particular narrative, Mary demonstrates the ways in which images of difference (such as the Katrina displaced) must be ordered and controlled. In a host society, where normality is equated with homeownership and access to mobility, the Katrina displaced (who are largely immobile and 'homeless') convey an unfamiliar image of difference. Foucault's argument (1995) on power, order and dominance highlights how the Katrina displaced (who represent an image of difference), might be dominated by 'normal' members of their host society. In this narrative Mary is marginalized at work exhibiting one way in which separations are created between those who are seen as more powerful (and thus 'in place') and those who must be spatially ordered (because they are 'out of place').

The narratives of the Katrina displaced also demonstrate the ways in which those participants experience exclusion from their host society in everyday life. During my interview with Rachel, she explains:

> For the first time in a long time, I had people look at me as soon as I opened my mouth and know exactly where I'm from. When I went to the doctor's house and saw people afraid of me just because I'm from New Orleans…In some ways then it's been very difficult to adjust to Houston – I felt people judging me just because I wasn't a Houstonian and had come from New Orleans. – Rachel

This narrative shows the stereotypes associated with images of difference. As Cresswell (1996) has suggested, transgressive acts are judged to be 'out of place' by dominant institutions. The Katrina displaced, who are local citizens of New Orleans, are seen as an object of difference in a host society where they lack access to certain rights. They are therefore seen to be outside the symbolic order of the local citizens of a particular city. This symbolic order equates to a level of

local citizenship in a particular society. This narrative describes how this evacuee, who is living in a society where she is not a local citizen, is seen to be committing a transgressive act. As such, she suffers abjection in Houston, as local citizens create boundaries between themselves and the Other (England, 2008). Rachel's treatment in Houston illuminates our understanding of evacuees' experiences with difference and adds to literature on host society marginalization in the context of post-disaster populations.

Of the sixteen interviews collected with participants that have returned to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, thirteen also expressed that they had encountered some degree of exclusion from their host society. This exclusion does have an influence on the return migration decisions of evacuees. Interview Paul* illustrates this argument:

> In Atlanta they wouldn't hire me. They all said 'You people from New Orleans give off a bad vibe, we know what you're like'. That's one of the main reasons I came back to New Orleans – I couldn't get a job and was tired of being treated that way. – Paul

This narrative further highlights the ideas of Sibley and Cresswell demonstrating how Paul was stereotyped and refused employment on the basis that he is not a local citizen of Atlanta. Again, this personal account with difference helps to demonstrate one way in which evacuees are subjected to exclusion and marginalization in a host society. Here we see how the Katrina displaced represent an image of difference (on the basis that they lack local citizenship and are thus 'out of place' among local citizens of Atlanta) which must be ordered and segregated. The transgressive act of non-citizenship status equates to the level of abjection they suffer in their host society. For local citizens of Atlanta, being forced to face evacuees is a traumatic experience (England, 2008). As such, these local citizens create social boundaries, by excluding people from their place of employment, in order to separate people they deem as different.

A further example of how difference was encountered by evacuees is provided by my interview with John. During this interview the John suggests that exclusion is differentiated socially. He contends:

> I have talked to people and they felt very unwelcome, but – I hate to make a judgmental call but the majority of people who said that were the people with the least amount of education – and, and people who weren't as economically sound as some other people. People – my peers – people that were professionals and business people see – and saw Houston as, as a wonderful place, of being welcoming. But the people – a lot of people

> who were – aren't as educated as I am, didn't have – had a very lower socio-economic status feel the hatred that they believe is there from Houstonians onto them. – John

This participant was one of the higher income participants in this study. The contention is an interesting one: that low-income persons represent a stronger and more threatening image of difference in a site of displacement. My data supports this contention illustrating that for these evacuees, the exclusion they encounter enhances their desire to return to the familiarity of New Orleans. For low-income evacuees, the powerful connection they hold to the city overpowers this financial instability (in the face of exclusion from their host society) and pushes survivors back to New Orleans. As demonstrated Steve, "When you have nothing it's your home that pulls you through". These evacuees perceive New Orleans as a place of familiarity and safety where they are not subjected to exclusion from their host society. The desire to return to the 'natural order' of 'home' represents a factor influencing the return migration decisions of the Katrina displaced. It therefore seems clear that a state of homelessness is a major source of difference between evacuees and local citizens in a host society. While evacuees transgress different social settings through their displacement, they are seen to be without a permanent home and therefore different to the local citizens of a host society. This unstable status leads to the abjection of evacuees, as those who are local citizens make boundaries between evacuees and themselves. The desire to return 'home' among Katrina evacuees (and back to a state of normalcy through home ownership) is therefore a powerful influence on their return migration decisions. For most evacuees, however, this desire to return 'home' to a landscape that is familiar is merely one of the many factors influencing the return migration decisions of evacuees.

For low-income Katrina evacuees who feel heightened exclusion from their host society, their financial instability is often accompanied by images of immobility. One element of this immobility is illustrated in Carl Lindhal's description of "The Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston Project":

> The survivors asked how, without cars, they could get to their jobs, or even find one, in this most pedestrian- and commuter-unfriendly city. People without cars were housed in complexes literally miles from the closest bus routes. (Lindhal, 2007)

This demonstrates the constraint immobility places upon Katrina evacuees in their host society. For those who do not have a car in an auto centric host society, their capacity to return is minimized. Continuing this argument, participants who expressed a lack of financial stability were also those who expressed the restriction this immobility posed on them in their site of displacement. Mary discusses:

> Houston is a city where you need a car, and not having one makes things extremely difficult. There is a bus system, but it's pretty unreliable. So not only can I not get around here, but going home is virtually impossible. I'm just stuck in a city where I'm not comfortable, but there's nothing I can do. – Mary

In this thesis I am drawing from Urry (2008) to define mobility as not just the ability to move within and between places, but also the ability to move within different settings and transgress different relationships of inclusion and exclusion. Academics (Urry, 2008; Cresswell, 2006) have argued that mobility is differentiated socially, and thus mobility systems have the potential to create substantial inequalities between people and places in terms of access to mobility systems (Urry, 2008). For the Katrina displaced, who have little access to mobility networks and thus are unable to easily negotiate movement within different settings, they represent an image of difference between those people who are local citizens in their site of displacement and therefore do have access to these mobility systems. In a landscape and society where immobility is seen as synonymous with deviance (something which goes against 'normal society'), the immobile Katrina displaced are subjected exclusion from their host society. Here immobility is seen as a trasngressive act; evacuees who lack the ability to move within different settings and are judged to be deviant in a landscape that is very mobile. This exclusion influences the return migration decisions of the Katrina displaced by enhancing their desire to return to New Orleans. There is an imbalance, however, between this desire and the capacity for evacuees to return home. Their immobility places a restraint on their ability to return to New Orleans, despite a desire to do so.

4.5.2 Immobility as Push Back Factors to Stay

Above, I argued that Hurricane Katrina caused huge disruption to peoples' ability to move within and between different places and social settings; ultimately to their ability to be mobile. For many, their site of displacement is a landscape of immobility, which poses certain constraints to their return migration decisions. The narratives of the Katrina displaced clearly express this

argument. Of the ten interviews conducted with participants who have not returned to New Orleans, eight stressed that a lack of mobility in their site of displacement influenced their decision and ability to return home after the storm. Shelia explains, "So even if we wanted to go home, we have no means to get back. And once we're back, then what?"

With no ability to negotiate movement between their site of displacement and New Orleans, and no access to mobility systems if they were to return home, the Katrina displaced are pushed back from returning to New Orleans. Since the storm, New Orleans has become less accommodating to those who are left immobile by the storm. The narratives of the Katrina displaced support this argument showing that of the 16 interviews with evacuees who have returned to New Orleans, three demonstrated that a New Orleans has become much less accommodating to those who have been left immobile since Katrina. My interview with Anna demonstrates this argument:

> I was pretty surprised at how quickly we got out. We was watching the news before we left and they was talking about the contra flow and we kept thinking 'Oh my god this is going to be bad – I mean this is going to take us hours to get out' but once we all got into my friends car and got going we just seemed to get out fairly quickly…Now New Orleans is a ghost town, there's nobody, nobody on the streets and no public transport. It used to be a city where you could rely on the buses or the trams but not anymore. – Anna

Literature suggests how disasters such as Katrina cause disruption to mobility networks (Cresswell, 2006). This narrative bolsters this argument and conveys how Hurricane Katrina has caused disruption to public transport systems, which in turn has limited evacuees' capacity to return to the city. With limited public transport left in New Orleans, the city has become less accommodating to residents who do not have personal vehicles and therefore rely heavily on the transit system. A lack of public transport therefore influences evacuees' return migration decisions. This narrative also contributes to literature on evacuation and return-migration, highlighting the similarities between these two concepts; they both involve the same population who are extremely dependent on access levels. It is clear therefore that immobility at a site of displacement and also back in New Orleans, is a heavy influence on evacuees' capacity to return to New Orleans.

4.5.3 Sense of Belonging as Pull Factors to Return

Schein (2009) reminds us that the term belonging implicates both an inside and an outside. The narratives of the Katrina displaced substantiate this argument. To the Katrina displaced, New Orleans represents a landscape of belonging and familiarity; a place where they feel 'in place'. In the face of exclusion from their host society, this familiarity and sense of place pulls evacuees back to the city of New Orleans. Out of the sixteen interviews with participants who have returned to New Orleans, six interviews discuss the ways in which New Orleans represents a city of familiarity and inclusion:

> This, this, this is the place where I belong. It's where I grew up and it's all I've ever known. It's comfortable knowing where everything is, knowing my way around the city, and being able to walk around and feel proud that I'm from this city. - Steve

This narrative shows that for the Katrina displaced, New Orleans is a symbol of familiarity. This familiarity and feeling of being 'in place' is a factor that influences evacuees' return migration decisions. Furthermore, of the ten interviews with participants who have not returned to New Orleans, four interviews discuss the influence sense of belonging to New Orleans has on return migration decisions. During my interview with John, he spoke explicitly of his child's relationship to New Orleans:

> He's a quarter rat who is not interested in Houston. All he has ever known is New Orleans and he's still young, so that's it for him. He feels a tie to the city, to his home – anywhere else he just feels out of place. – John

This narrative explores the idea that for the Katrina displaced, New Orleans represents a landscape of inclusion: a landscape where they feel a sense of safety, belonging and similarity to those around them. A return to New Orleans after Katrina represents a return to the normal order of society and to a landscape where evacuees feel 'in place'. The marginalization, segregation and abjection felt by evacuees in their site of displacement works with this pull factor to influence the return migration decisions of Katrina evacuees and pull the displaced back to New Orleans. Despite this however, I am reminded of the complex set of variables that surround a return migration decision. While processes related to both exclusion and inclusion work to pull the Katrina displaced back to New Orleans, other variables remain influential in an evacuees'

desire to return home. The processes demonstrated merely heighten an evacuees longing to return to New Orleans.

4.5.4 Inclusion as Pull Factors to Stay

While many of interviews discussed the extent to which the participants encountered exclusion from their host society, some participants discussed the degree to which they felt welcomed by their host society. Of the ten interviews with those people who have not returned to New Orleans, eight participants felt welcomed by their host society. Liz* expresses this sentiment:

> I can't say enough for the people in Texas. I mean from the moment we got here they, they had – I – you know – they went more than out of their way to take care of us and welcome us and, and to, to Texas – and Houston wherever we went. You, you just can't say enough – every time I think about it, it brings tears to my eyes. I mean they've done so many wonderful things for us…I mean it was, it was – that's a powerful story within itself – that Houston stretched out their arms, I mean they really, really stretched out their arms. We were in shock that that many people cared and that, that so many people – felt our pain. - Liz

Interestingly, of the sixteen interviews with those people who have returned to New Orleans, only five spoke of feeling welcomed in their host society. During my interview with Anna, she explained, "I was wonderfully received in Atlanta, they really welcomed me with open arms and I am forever thankful".

While these interviews discuss the welcoming behavior they encountered at their site of displacement, none of the interviews explicitly state that this behavior influenced their return migration decisions. In contrast, those participants who spoke of the exclusion they encountered in their host society expressed the direct influence this exclusion had on upon their decision to return to New Orleans. It would appear fair, therefore, to conclude that in this sense, exclusion from their host society is more influential than inclusion in their host society among Hurricane Katrina evacuees. For example, during an interview with an evacuee who had returned to New Orleans, the participant noted:

> Sure, some people were really opened their arms to us in Atlanta – but it wasn't enough to outweigh the racism we experienced. You can only stand a certain amount of mistreatment, especially after being through Katrina, you know. It's like at first people were nice and helpful, but then they got tired of us. And what were we supposed to do, you know? We had to come back. – Paul

This narrative contributes to literature that suggests way outsider groups are marginalized in a setting where they are perceived as different (Cresswell, 1996; Sibley, 1995). Particularly, this narrative explores the manifestation of exclusion through racism. Here again, racism represents a form of abjection (Kristeva, 1982) as the Katrina evacuees are objectified as impure. The boundary constructed by this racism separates Paul from the local citizens of Atlanta. Paul highlights the lesser extent to which being welcomed in a host society influences return migration decisions. Ultimately it seems that the Katrina displaced are influenced to a greater extent by the exclusion they are subjected to in their host society, thus representing one of the many factors that interact to affect an evacuees' decision to either return to New Orleans or negotiate a sense of place in a new city.

4.6 Capacity to Stay/Return: Livelihood and Immobility

In the two sections above I have focused on illustrating the factors that influence evacuees desire to return to New Orleans, contributing specifically to literature addressing the connection between migration, place and home (Blunt et al., 2006; Desforges et al., 2004; Massey et al. 1992). The narratives of the Katrina displaced have thus far shown that the powerful connection evacuees hold to the city of New Orleans is a primary factor that influences their return migration decisions. The city they perceive as 'home' is idealized from afar and represents a landscape of inclusion, safety and belonging. Moreover, I have supported arguments exploring the extent to which evacuees might be subjected to exclusion and abjection in a host society (Kibreab, 1999; Cresswell, 1996; Sibley, 1995; Kristeva, 1982). For example, the narratives of the Katrina displaced conveyed the influence that social exclusion from a host society and access to mobility systems has on their decisions to relocate or return. Ultimately it seems evident thus far that a return migration decision is surrounded by a set of complex variables that interact and influence the Hurricane Katrina evacuees. It also seems evident that there is a strong desire to return 'home' among the participants in this thesis. Despite this, over four years have passed since the hurricane and thousands of people remain displaced. What then, in spite of such a desire to return 'home', influences their capacity to return to New Orleans? The following section will consider this question in more depth.

In their 2007 study, Landry et al. examine the decision to return to the post-disaster Gulf Coast region among Hurricane Katrina survivors. They use surveys, two distinct datasets and economic household migration models to explore the microeconomic decisions of displaced households to return home. Using a sample of evacuees in various locations, their study finds that household income increases the likelihood of returning home (Landry et al., 2007). Furthermore, their second dataset considers the influences on return decisions among evacuees in Houston, Texas in particular. The study finds that home ownership, youthfulness and wage differentials are all influential in the return migration decisions of Hurricane Katrina evacuees (Landry et al., 2007). While their study finds no explicit evidence that connection to place effects the likelihood of return migration, they do find that households do intend to return home in spite of real economic difficulties. This, they argue, may be attributed to the sense of belonging and connection to place that they hold to the city of New Orleans (Landry et al., 2007). Even more recently, Li et al. (2010) further contribute to research on disasters and vulnerable populations through a comparison of African American and Vietnamese American Katrina evacuees. Although this study also attributes decisions to return as partially dependent on financial stability and place attachment, they go on to explore the synergistic role of social networks as an additional influence in the return process (Li et al. 2010). Through the data collected in this thesis, I build on these arguments, shedding further light onto the factors that influence the evacuees' capacity to return to New Orleans and highlighting the complexity of a return migration decision.

4.6.1 Increasing Financial Problems as Push Factors to Return

The narratives of the Katrina displaced suggest that some evacuees face growing financial problems in their site of displacement. These financial problems include increasing debt and an inability to find stable employment. Of the sixteen interviews with evacuees who have returned to New Orleans since the storm, five participants suggested that escalating financial problems influenced their return migration decisions. As portrayed during Paul's interview:

> Since the storm we've really struggled. We suffered a total loss from the storm – our finances took a huge hit, my husband lost his job and our house was – yeah, it was just a total loss. For a while we was relying on FEMA money but when that never came we decided we couldn't stay – we were just creating debt in a city that we were only supposed to be

> staying in temporarily. Since we had family come back to New Orleans before us, we decided to stay with them while we get sorted out. - Paul

This narrative shows how hurricanes, like Katrina not only disrupt the peoples livelihoods and attachment's to 'home' and place, but they also disrupt peoples finances. Many evacuees suffered extensive damage from the storm and as a result struggle in a site of displacement to stabilize their finances. Accumulating debt in a site of displacement is a factor that pushes evacuees to return to New Orleans, where they feel they have more opportunities and will be more easily able to alleviate their financial problems. Employment and financial opportunities in the environment of origin are factors that increase the likelihood of a sustainable return (Gent et al. 2006). Therefore, for evacuees who are continuing to accumulate debt in their site of displacement, the opportunity to sustainably return to New Orleans pushes them back to the city.

4.6.2 Immobility and Financial Restraints as Push Back Factors to Stay

The narratives of the Katrina displaced contribute to the discussion in literature on the economics of post-disaster return migration (Li et al., 2010; Landry et al., 2007).

Photo 4: For many evacuees, the prospect of being able to successfully rebuild is simply not a reality. A house in Jefferson Parish, New Orleans. Source: Stephanie Morrice, 2009

For evacuees of a lower income level, their desire to return home is overpowered by their financial incapacity to return. Of the ten interviews conducted with people who have not returned to New Orleans, all ten participants indicated that financial stability and job opportunities were primary considerations to them when they made their decision to stay in their host society. For

those that were not financially able to return and had no job to return to, they looked to the opportunities offered by their host society.

During one of these interviews, the participant clearly explains, "You just want to go back, but you can't". Mary further explains:

> But it's something that's unexplainable, when you're forced to leave and you want to go back but you can't. There's no way to get back and no job to go back to. - Mary

Despite a deep affinity towards New Orleans and a strong desire to return home, their capacity to do so is constrained by their low-income level and the prospect of unemployment at home. Furthermore, the cost of returning to New Orleans and rebuilding their lives in the city is, for low-income evacuees, an impossibility in the face of few income prospects in the city. Throughout my dataset the narratives of the Katrina displaced highlight that many businesses, in addition to the people themselves, have not returned to New Orleans: "The streets were deserted – nobody was there. There were huge piles of rubble in the strip malls" - Shelia. With a lack of business in many areas of the city and thus few income opportunities for low-income evacuees, the Katrina displaced are pushed to stay in their site of displacement.

4.6.3 Financial/Job Stability and Aid Organizations as Pull Factors to Return

Landry et al. (2007) attribute the decision to return to the Gulf Coast region among displaced households, to pre-Katrina household income levels. As recent study by Li et al. (2010) also states the influence financial stability and home ownership have on decisions to return home among African American and Vietnamese American evacuees. The narratives of the Katrina displaced provide a more nuanced rendering of this argument. Of the sixteen interviews conducted with people who have returned to New Orleans, fourteen interviewees discuss the extent to which financial stability influenced their capacity to return home. These fourteen interviews state that their return migration decisions were partially dependent on their economic status and income level. My interview with Bill* illustrates this argument:

> For me it was never a problem, my family and I are lucky enough to be in a situation where we have the money to pick up the pieces and start again. Sometimes I feel like financially people aren't able to come back, those that do some back, come back because they are financially stable or because they have job stability. - Bill

The narratives of the Katrina displaced demonstrate that people of a higher income have the capacity, financially, to be able to return home. If we further consider the interviews with low-income evacuees, the narratives demonstrate that there is a damage differential from those who were living in areas associated with lower income housing. Approximately 20% of the city of New Orleans did not flood as a result of Hurricane Katrina. People of a higher income level inhabited many of the areas that escaped Katrina's floodwaters (the Central Business District, French Quarter and areas of higher elevation). As a result of this, my interviews suggest that people of a higher income level incurred less damage than those living in areas that were hit harder by the storm (such as the Lower Wards). My interview with Russell* explains:

> We really had minimal damage to our house – we live on high enough ground that for us, floodwater wasn't really a big threat. It was the trees, the trees that were the biggest threat to us. We knew, because of the wind that they might fall and cause damage to our house...but we are lucky enough to be stable enough financially to be able to go back and pick up the pieces, you know? We actually came back after only 10 days, I was itching to get back. We're the lucky ones, I knew I had my job to come back to, but there's a lot of people out there that weren't so lucky. Our company did everything they could to make sure that their employees could come back. – Russell

This narrative demonstrates the influence job stability and financial stability have on the return migration decisions of Katrina evacuees, contributing to literature on the economics of post-disaster return migration. For those who have a job to return to, who have financial stability and

Photo 5: Financial capacity. For Katrina evacuees who are more economically advantaged, they have the financial ability to rebuild. Picture taken on in the Lakeview region of New Orleans. Source: Stephanie Morrice, 2009

who had minimal damage caused to their possessions, their capacity to return home is increased. Richard explicitly states, "I came back because I had a job here".

While some of the Katrina displaced struggle to return because of their financial instability, others are pulled back by the aid they will receive in New Orleans. Since Katrina made landfall, non-profit organizations such as ACORN, The Make it Right Foundation, Common Ground and Contemplatives in Action have scrambled to provide hurricane victims with relief and refuge from the consequences of the storm. ACORN, for example, has a specific Gulf Coast Recovery project, which organizes New Orleanians to rebuild their city in their own terms (ACORN, 2009). Contemplatives in Action, an urban ministry and retreat experience which aims to provide hospitality and relief to those affected by Katrina, connects volunteer groups to current projects in and around New Orleans (Sideco, 2009). Most of these projects center around structural rebuilding; for example, volunteers aid in the rebuilding of survivors' homes in the city.

Brad Pitt's Make it Right Foundation has a clear vision, "To be a catalyst for redevelopment of the Lower Ninth Ward, by building a neighborhood comprised of safe and healthy homes inspired by Cradle to Cradle thinking, with an emphasis on a high quality of design, while preserving the spirit of the community's culture" (Make it Right Foundation, 2009). Cradle-to-Cradle building is based around a sustainable architectural vision that seeks to minimize negative environmental impacts of products through employing sustainable production, operation and recycling (Make it Right Foundation, 2009).

Photo 6: The Common Ground Relief Center is located in the Lower Ninth Ward, New Orleans. This center offers returnees a place for rest and reflection and access to certain resources that they may not otherwise have contact to (Internet services, phone lines etc.) Source: Stephanie Morrice, 2009.

Photo 7: The Make it Right Foundation coordinates volunteers to rebuild houses to those who might be otherwise unable to return home. A newly constructed Make it Right house in the Lower Ninth Ward, New Orleans. Source: Stephanie Morrice, 2009.

Non-profit organizations are particularly helpful for low-income Katrina evacuees and evacuees whose homes suffered the most damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina (Make it Right, for example, focuses specifically on relief work in the Lower Ninth Ward). While otherwise unable to return due to extensive or total damage to their property, for the residents of the Lower Ninth Ward, organizations such as The Make it Right Foundation enhance their ability return to New Orleans.

Of the sixteen interviews with those people who have returned to New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina, seven talked of the aid they received from organizations such as Common Ground and the gratitude they feel towards volunteer relief efforts. During my interview with Steve, he discussed:

> It's the volunteers who are the real heroes. I say to people, when you walk through that door and give up your time to make life a bit easier for someone else, you become a hero…Common Ground have been a huge blessing to us here – they send volunteers all over St. Bernard's parish, and they truly make a difference. So many of us wouldn't have been able to come back if it hadn't been for the volunteers. - Steve

This particular participant lost both a house and a partner from the floods of Hurricane Katrina. It seems clear therefore that for low income Katrina evacuees, their ability to return is made more feasible by the aid offered from non-profit organizations. It is perhaps worthy of note, however,

that this aid can be disproportionally allocated and is often only a short-term solution to people's problems.

4.6.4 Increased Opportunities as Pull Factors to Stay

For the low-income Katrina evacuees who face the prospect of unemployment at home, some see their site of displacement as a landscape that offers opportunities that might have been destroyed in New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina. Out of the ten interviews conducted with those people who have not returned to New Orleans, five discussed the influence these opportunities had on their decision to stay in their site of displacement. During my interview with Mary, she conveyed:

> Houston can offer me jobs and resources that I can no longer find in New Orleans. My kids can go to better schools here and there's just more opportunities available to us. – Mary

This narrative represents a factor pulling the Katrina displaced to stay in their site of displacement. The heightened opportunities appeal to those who have little left for them in New Orleans. This argument coincides with my suggestion that Hurricane Katrina can alter perceptions of 'home' held by the displaced evacuees. New Orleans as an idealized image of 'home' and place offering job security has been distorted as a result of the storm; such a place may no longer exist. For high-income evacuees, host society opportunities also appear to have an influence on their return migration decisions. During interview John, the participant expressed the opportunities they saw in Houston:

> Sure we could go back, but the city has changed so much since Katrina. To us, it just seemed like a better decision financially to stay in Houston. This is a wonderful, cosmopolitan city with plenty of opportunities for us. – John

Again, John reveals the ways in which a site of displacement may represent a landscape rife with opportunities. These opportunities influence the decisions of those people who lack opportunities in New Orleans, after Hurricane Katrina.

4.7 Recomposing the Subject: A Position of Continued Displacement

In the sections above I have attempted to demonstrate, through a detailed interpretation of the narratives of the Katrina displaced, the complexity of an evacuees return migration decision. I have highlighted the wide variety of variables that interact to influence evacuees' desire and capacity to return home through a critical lens of human experiences. Moreover I have contributed to literature exploring the connection between belonging and mobility through the lens of a post-disaster population. Let's return to consider Sarah's interview, which I began to analyze at the start of this chapter. During her interview, Sarah spoke of her powerful connection to New Orleans and strong conception of 'home':

> I really love New Orleans. I think the biggest thing I miss is just having, my family and friends around me, that's always been pretty much the most important thing to me…I just remember – I mean shoot, just going to visit so many people in one day and just, having a good ole time, going here and there, seeing family, knowing everyone and exactly where everything is, and just, having so many cultural things to do, and so many festivals, and so many good places to eat, and good music. To me it will always be home. – Sarah

Her idealization of New Orleans' social and family networks represents a factor which influences her strong desire to return to the city. This desire to return is further enhanced by the exclusion she is subjected to at her site of displacement:

> In Houston there are definitely places where I don't feel comfortable. Sometimes I feel like I'm being judged just because I'm from somewhere different – like I can tell people are thinking 'She doesn't belong here'. – Sarah

Sarah demonstrates the way that she is subjected to host society exclusion in every day life. The earlier sections in this chapter have suggested that Sarah, who is not a local citizen of New Orleans and who is in a position of potential homelessness, represents an image of difference to those who are local citizens of Houston. She is therefore marginalized in her host society, which influences her desire to return home to the city she "loved".

It is clear therefore that Sarah's desire to return to New Orleans is surrounded by complex concepts and processes related to 'home' and exclusion. Her narrative supports debates exploring the fluidity of the concept of 'home' (Black, 2002), the way in which evacuees can be

marginalized in a site of displacement (Kirbreab, 1999; Cresswell, 1999) and the power of place attachment in a post-disaster context (Massey, 1992). Despite a desire to return to New Orleans, however, Sarah remains in a continued state of displacement. Her narrative explores the multifaceted issues limiting her capacity to return 'home', discussing the constraint of financial instability and the immobility she faces in Houston. She expresses:

> In New Orleans we never really needed a car, everything and everyone was so close and I loved that about the city. In Houston not having a car is a real problem – I mean a *really* big problem. There's no way to get from place to place and no good transportation to rely on here, you know?...I mean I've really struggled with money since Katrina. All these aid people – FEMA you know, they all say they going to give us this and that but we haven't seen hardly anything. I wasn't the richest person in New Orleans, my family had our problems, but at least we had something…Now we have nothing. We're stuck in a place with no car and no money to make our life better. – Sarah

Sarah's discussion contributes to literature debating the economics of post-disaster return-migration (Li et al., 2010; Landry et al., 2007; O Tuathail et al., 2004). Despite a great desire to return 'home' to New Orleans, Sarah's ability to actually do so is limited by her financial instability and immobility in her site of displacement. While Sarah's story is not representative of all of the issues surrounding an evacuees return migration decision, her narrative provides a fuller understanding of the interactions of these factors. Instead of being separate entities, these variables interact to influence evacuees such as Sarah, who are attempting to negotiate their place within a complicated post-disaster landscape.

4.8 Conclusion

This thesis considers a breadth of social experiences after a natural disaster through the lens of Katrina survivors. I have contributed to debates on the connection between belonging and mobility in a unique post-disaster context. The narratives of the Katrina displaced have demonstrated the durable obstacles to return migration that affect evacuees years after the storm. The accounts provided by survivors have also answered my primary and secondary research questions:

- *How do conceptions of 'home' affect plans for relocation/return among the Katrina displaced?*

The narratives of the Katrina displaced convey the complexity of the term 'home', illustrating the ways in which its meaning can be altered as a result of an environmental catastrophe. My narratives demonstrate how disasters such as Katrina can disrupt the cultural logics of home, shattering and altering attachments held to specific place. For some evacuees their sense of 'home' has been disrupted so much by Katrina's devastation, returning home is an unbearable reality. The image of 'home' they left before the storm is no longer the image of 'home' that awaits them upon returning to New Orleans. Some evacuees cannot bear the thought of returning to see their house and their city totally destroyed. These evacuees, therefore, attempt to negotiate a new sense of 'home' in their host society. The majority of the Katrina displaced, however, hold an idealistic vision and powerful connection to New Orleans (the city they perceive as 'home'). This connection is a primary influence on evacuees' desire to return to the city. This desire is enhanced by evacuees' family connections and the traditions that are rife in New Orleans. A return represents a return 'home', to a city where they feel an overwhelming sense of belonging.

- *How do evacuees perceive their relationship to their site of displacement?*

  The narratives have also contributed to literature on the geographies of evacuee exclusion. They demonstrate that the majority of evacuees do suffer some extent of exclusion from their host society. This exclusion is manifested in a number of different ways (for example, some are subjected to racism and segregation at their place of employment, others are stereotyped as a threatening image of difference). The exclusion from their host society also appears to be differentiated socially. Evacuees who are from a lower economic status more accurately express the extent to which they feel excluded from their host society. It is clear therefore that the exclusion suffered by evacuees enhances their desire to return to New Orleans. For the Katrina displaced, New Orleans represents a landscape of inclusion and a return represents a return to 'natural order' that is presumed to have existed prior to their displacement. The narratives have therefore demonstrated that an evacuees' relationship to their site of displacement is a complex one. For evacuees who have not returned to New Orleans, their situation represents one of continued displacement as they struggle to negotiate their own sense of belonging in a host society.

- *What factors influence evacuees' capacity to return home?*

  Despite a powerful desire to return to New Orleans, the capacity for evacuees to do so is influenced by immobility and financial instability. For low-income evacuees their ability to return to the city is often an impossibility, due to a lack of access to transport networks and/or financial instability. Their ability to move within and between different social settings is limited, thus constraining their return migration decisions. Non-profit organizations that offer aid to Katrina survivors do enhance the ability to return, although relief aid is often disproportionally distributed (Lindhal, 2006). High-income evacuees often deal with lesser damage from the storm and are more financially able to return the city. Evacuees who have a strong desire to return to the city lack the means to do so. For these evacuees their situation represents one of continued displacement as their financial instability and immobility force them to stay in a city where they do not feel a sense of belonging.

With a clear imbalance between desire and capacity to return 'home', I have demonstrated that for evacuees' dealing with displacement, their decision to return 'home' is not a simple one. While previous studies (Li et al., 2010; Landry et al., 2007; Elliott and Pais, 2006) conclude that a return migration decision is largely dependent on household income level, this thesis argues that a return migration decision is instead a decision contingent on a variety of cultural and social processes. It is not simply economically deterministic. With a recognition of this imbalance between evacuees' desire and capacity to return 'home' and the realization that after more than four years thousands of evacuees remain in a site of displacement, this thesis highlights the need for solutions to help evacuees overcome the more durable obstacles to return that affect displacement outcomes years after the event. As the next Chapter will suggest however, this thesis also brings to bear on questions

Chapter 5.0: Conclusions and Further Research Directions

5.1 Forgotten Evacuees

In the years following Katrina, many academics sought to explore the governmental administration breakdowns of the response to the hurricane (see for example, Brinkley, 2006). This focus in academic and indeed non-academic literature exposed the response to Katrina as a national disgrace. As Comfort (2006: 507) argues, the events and costs of Katrina highlight "serious failures in policy, planning, and practice at all four levels of government – municipal, parish, state, and federal – in reference to a city exposed to known hazards". In this thesis I wish to argue, however, that the Bush Administration was so caught up in a heated "blame game" and debate about a breakdown in communications, they neglected the thousands of people who were perhaps less concerned about what went wrong because they still had to resolve the difficult situation before them. In the months that followed Katrina's onslaught, a power struggle ensued between the local city, the state and the federal government. While administrators quarreled about who was going to do what – people died.

The administrative breakdowns discussed in existing literature have thus far unquestionably merited focus; however, it is now perhaps more valuable to concentrate research efforts on understanding how Hurricane Katrina caused extensive disruption to the way people live, the social relationships they were involved in and their livelihood plans. Consequently, this thesis has explored the return migration decisions of Hurricane Katrina evacuees through the lens of critical geography. For the one million evacuees who were involuntarily displaced as a result of Hurricane Katrina, the decision to relocate or return is not a simple choice. Chapter 4 builds on literature on the demography of disasters, demonstrating that instead, this decision is contingent on a wide variety of social, economic and cultural factors. Instead of being separate entities, the complex set of variables that I explore in this thesis interact and in both 'home' and host locales influence an evacuees desire and capacity to return home.

To analyze these factors as separately would have missed two vital points. Firstly, these factors are assessed by individuals as a single challenge, which they attempt to resolve in the complexity of their individual lives. Secondly, it would have neglected the truism that there is a huge emotional and affective component in the decision making process. This thesis contributes to literature by tapping into concepts of 'home' and family, exploring the feelings and values that are caught up in the changes Katrina caused to individual lives. Furthermore, my research

approach brings to bear on questions related to the sustainability of a post-Katrina return to New Orleans, and questions that consider the connection between place and migration. What constitutes a sustainable return? In the context of post-disaster return migration, does place matter? And what makes New Orleans, as a place, special? The following two sections will consider these questions in more depth.

5.2 Durable Obstacles and Sustainable Returns

This thesis argues that the Katrina displaced must negotiate themselves through a complex post-disaster landscape where it is not always easy to return, and is often even more difficult to stay. Chapter 4 builds on literature that has suggested the influence immobility (Urry, 2008; Cresswell, 2006) and financial instability (Li et al. 2010; Landry et al. 2007, Elliott and Pais, 2006) have on return migration decisions. Respondents discussed the constraint certain economic factors place upon their capacity to return to New Orleans. For low-income evacuees, their capacity to transgress different social settings and return to the city is limited by levels of immobility and financial instability. The narratives of the Katrina displaced, therefore, clearly demonstrate the problems that continue to face and challenge evacuees more than four years after the storm initially made landfall. As the population of New Orleans slowly rebuilds itself and the Katrina displaced overcome these durable obstacles and return to the city, we are reminded, however, that the story of Hurricane Katrina is not over. Now, more than ever, questions are being raised relating to the sustainability of these returns. For example, how can this returning population be better served in their 'home' society? And, once they have returned, what will allow evacuees to stay?

In the context of refugee studies, Hammond (1999) reminds us that, because return is assumed to be a good thing, and people are assumed to belong to a certain place, attention to refugees may be abruptly and artificially ended at the point of repatriation. As a result, too little is known about the diverse experiences of returnees and not enough aid is given to those who are expected to re-establish themselves relatively quickly. In truth, the experience of return might in fact be more problematic than the experience of displacement itself (UNHCR, 1997). While this literature is speaking directly of international and post-conflict return migration, I would argue that the same could be argued in the context of Hurricane Katrina. My research builds on this existing literature by demonstrating that many evacuees who return to New Orleans after Katrina

are simply left to re-establish themselves in a city that looks significantly different to the one they left behind. In this thesis I do not attempt to propose a model for the successful return migration after a natural disaster. I merely aim to highlight the complex durable obstacles to return that continue to affect evacuees, and emphasize the point that it is often not enough that evacuees negotiate and overcome these obstacles. In an effort to avoid a "failed return" and possible re-migration to a situation of social exclusion, the Katrina displaced must then overcome the factors in their 'home' society that threaten the sustainability of their return.

According to Black et al. (2006: 26), the notion of a sustainable return is a "longer term, contextual and challenging understanding of return that encompasses social and economic dimensions". Although many factors surround a sustainable return, they argue that the most important factors are voluntariness of return and the environment at origin (Black et al., 2006). Many academics (see for example, Gent et al, 2006; O Tuathail et al. 2004) have also suggested that a return decision is often largely influenced by economic opportunities at return sites. This literature suggests that a return is more likely to be sustainable if there are economic and social opportunities in the environment of origin (O Tuathail et al., 2004). So, for example, if Katrina evacuees have a job to return to and a family network that remains strong in New Orleans, they will have greater support enhancing their ability to stay once they have returned. Policies and aid organizations (such as the ACORN and the Make it Right Foundation) have the ability to influence the economic and social environment of New Orleans. As I explored in Chapter 4, for some evacuees, aid organizations make the dream of returning to New Orleans a reality. They provide (among many things) the physical shelter and social networks that make returning an attractive and sustainable option. Despite this, however, such supportive mechanisms are not usual, and may themselves be unsustainable. Aid organizations, for example, are unable to help every evacuee and often, the aid is only a short-term solution to evacuees' problems. As this thesis has suggested then, while many Katrina evacuees are negotiating the durable obstacles that limit their capacity to return, it is now pertinent to consider and focus on the factors that will aid the sustainability of returns to a city, that by all accounts, has a very unique sense of place.

5.2 Return Migration Decisions: Does place matter?

Hurricane Katrina, and indeed her aftermath, raises the conceptual questions about place attachment that I outlined in Chapter 2. These conceptual questions point to an understanding of

an evacuee's conception of 'home' and sense of belonging in a complicated post disaster landscape. Ultimately, they can be translated into a comprehension of the ways in which these concepts influence the return migration decisions of Katrina evacuees. Hurricane Katrina, as I have demonstrated, caused a huge disruption to people's attachments to place and 'home'. The narratives interpreted in this thesis begin to explore these issues. For example, respondents illustrate the extent to which they suffered exclusion and abjection from their host society. This conclusion builds on literature that has suggested the way in which evacuees might be marginalized in a host society (Cresswell, 1996; Sibley, 1995; Kristeva, 1982). As local citizens see the homelessness of evacuees to be outside the symbolic order of normal society, they create boundaries to separate themselves from those they deem as different. The narratives show that host society exclusion experienced by evacuees, is a factor that influences the return migration decision of the Katrina displaced. Additionally, this thesis also contributes to the lengthy debate on place-identity and exploration into the connection between 'home' and place (Duncan and Duncan, 2001; Massey, 1992). I have demonstrated how the meaning of 'home' as a place has, as Massey (1992) suggests, become more interpretable: the narratives of the Katrina displaced have shown that the notion of 'home' can be constructed out of movement, and by social relations. An evacuees' conception of 'home' is, as I illustrated in Chapter 4, a primary influence on their desire to return to New Orleans. This desire remains strong over four years after Katrina devastated the city.

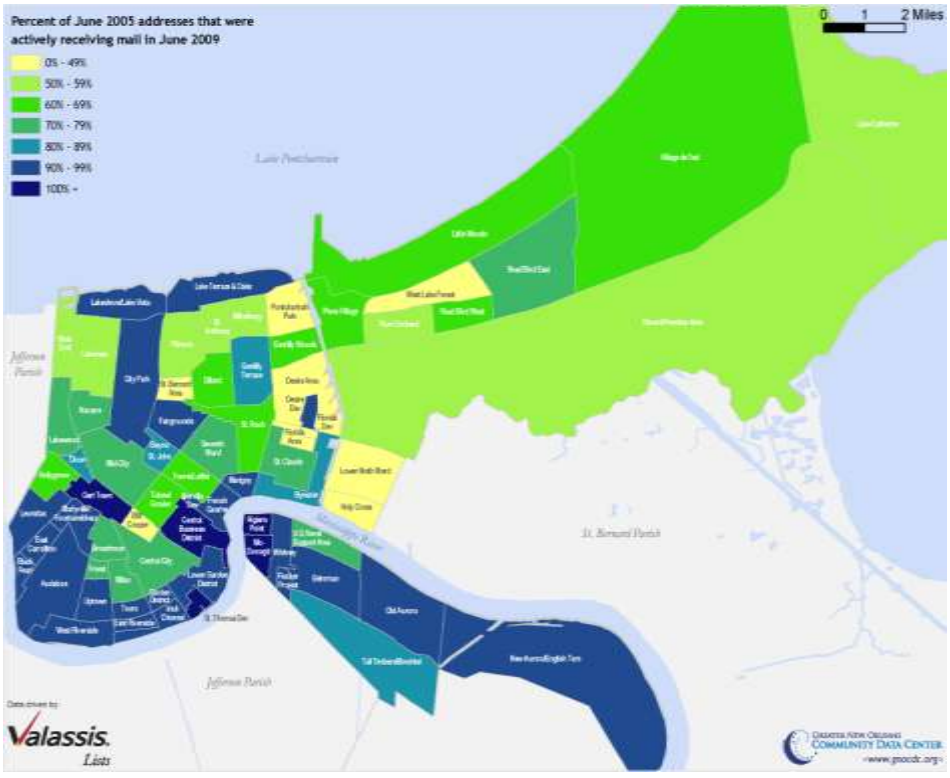
I would like to argue, however, that there is something unique about this case. Literature (see for example, Falk et al. 2006) identifies the important features of New Orleans as a distinctive place in the American landscape. Defined by the slogan, *laissez les bon temps rouler* ('let the good times roll'), New Orleans offers an atmosphere in which tourists and locals alike are encouraged to live without inhibition (Falk et al. 2006). It is, a city that has long been an "ethnic gumbo" (Falk et al. 2006: 119), comprised of a plethora races (African-Americans, European Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans) and cultural traits (Falk et al. 2006). The city of New Orleans is not only the source of jazz and blues, the origin of everything Creole and Cajun and the home of Mardi Gras, it is also a city that expresses a strong sense of place. Place characteristics, such as these cultural traits, have long been acknowledged as important determinants of migration (Walters, 2000). These characteristics make the context of Hurricane Katrina particularly unique.

As I conveyed in Chapter 4, the narratives of the Katrina displaced demonstrate that, as a city and as a 'home', New Orleans embodies a strong sense of place and place attachment. Place attachment is, as Fullilove (1996: 1516) identifies, "a mutually caretaking bond between a person and a beloved place". As I spent time in the city and with Katrina evacuees, it was strikingly evident that New Orleanians hold a powerful attachment to New Orleans. Again and again, the narratives of evacuees explored the influence their attachment to the city had on their migration decisions: "There's no place like New Orleans". In this respect, I do not present the narratives of the Katrina displaced as stories that could be representative of just any evacuee. The distinctive character of New Orleans enhances evacuees' desire to return. For New Orleanians then, their sense of place is unique and for many evacuees, the decision of whether or not to return is not a purely "rational-actor" decision. Consequently, I argue that Hurricane Katrina tore apart a city that presents a conflicted cultural landscape in the American consciousness; one that highlights the tensions between competing interpretations of place and the conflicting needs of a diverse population.

It is the idiosyncratic nature of New Orleans that is particularly important in the context of Hurricane Katrina. While other post disaster settings would undoubtedly raise similar conceptual questions relating to belonging and place that I outlined in Chapter 2, New Orleans and indeed Hurricane Katrina, offer a unusual lens through which to explore the decision making process behind post disaster return migration. Again, while it is not appropriate (or realistic) to suggest that there is one clear-cut model of return migration among Katrina evacuees, I have moved towards a deeper understanding of the affective component associated with Katrina, building on literature that highlights the connection between migration and place attachment (see for example, Walters, 2000). As this literature suggests, place characteristics are significantly influential in return migration decisions. Additionally, I offer a fuller comprehension of the durable obstacles to return and the issues surrounding the sustainability of these returns. These concerns continue to affect displacement outcomes years after Katrina demolished New Orleans both socially and structurally. For that reason, as a way to demonstrate the need for continued exploration into the many factors that affect displacement and return after a natural disaster, the following section will paint a picture of the city as it stands today.

5.3 New Orleans Today

While life gradually returns to New Orleans, struggles in both 'home' and host societies rage on. There are still many evacuees who remain in a situation of continued displacement, where they either do not have the financial capacity to return or are constrained by their immobility. Other Katrina evacuees are able to overcome the durable obstacles to return, although once they have returned, are not always able to re-establish their place in New Orleans. The nature of Hurricane Katrina means that there is no up-to-date, comprehensive list of those who still consider themselves to be displaced (Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, 2010). According to FEMA statistics from 2007, the number of FEMA Katrina individual assistance applicants from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama (including those who evacuated from outside of the hurricane-impacted areas) reporting their current mailing address to be in the Houston-Baytown-Sugar Land area of Texas was 68,187 (FEMA, 2007). This area of Texas was thus ranked 6th most populated with Katrina evacuees receiving FEMA individual assistance, demonstrating the large number of evacuees who have remained in this site of displacement[1].



Map 1:

Percent of June 2005 addresses that were actively receiving mail in June 2009[2]

Source: Greater New Orleans Community Data Center (2009).

[1] See Appendix 2 for Reported Mailing Addresses of Katrina IA Applicant from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama (Rankings 1-20).
[2] See Appendix 3 for Households Actively Receiving Mail By Neighborhood in New Orleans.

Today, the population of New Orleans continues to grow[3]. The map above illustrates the percent of pre-Katrina addresses (as of June, 2005) that were actively receiving mail in June, 2009. This map visually enhances my argument that more evacuees are overcoming the durable obstacles that limit their capacity to return. As of January 2010, 79% of pre-Katrina households in the New Orleans area were reportedly receiving mail (Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, 2010), implying that that a large proportion of pre-Katrina residents have returned to the city. Higher income areas, such as the French Quarter and the New Orleans Central Business District, have a higher return rate. Evacuees from these regions of the city are more financial stable and typically have higher mobility levels, which aids their capacity to negotiate their way back to the city. Contrastingly, the map above also portrays that lower income areas have a lower return rate. This can be attributed to their higher levels of immobility and financial instability, which represent durable obstacles to their capacity to return to the city. These conclusions suggest the need for a continued focus on aiding those who express a desire to return to New Orleans, although lack the capacity to do so.

Statistics also show that the city is repopulating with a mix of returning and new residents. The Latino population, for example, has grown from 3.1% pre-Katrina to 4.5% (Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, 2010) suggesting a heightened cultural diversity of post-Katrina New Orleans. The city also continues to see substantial rebuilding efforts. Rebuilding efforts in the New Orleans metro area have helped shield the city from the national recession (Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, 2010). The metro area unemployment rate was only 6.8%, compared to 10% nationwide (Greater New Orleans Community Data Center).

The pictures below show some of the rebuilding efforts in the Lower Ninth Ward. Non-profit organizations, such as ACORN and the Make It Right Foundation, help evacuees to re-establish themselves once they have returned to the city. As I have argued, however, aid organizations often offer merely a short-term solution to the problems caused by Katrina and offer aid that is disproportionally allocated to the evacuees who desperately need it. These two houses line the Mississippi River in the Lower Ninth, amid a bittersweet reality. While their presence represents a continued hope for the thousands of evacuees who lost homes as a result of

[3] See Appendix 1 for Annual Estimate of Resident Population for counties in the New Orleans area of Louisiana. April 1st, 2000 to July 1st, 2008

Figure 8 & 9: Make it Right houses line the Mississippi River, making the possibility of a sustainable return more of a reality for many evacuees who might have otherwise struggled to stay in the city. Source: Stephanie Morrice 2009.

Hurricane Katrina, it is also a harsh reminder of the problems that continue to face and challenge evacuees in an arduous post-disaster environment. This reality suggests the need for further research opportunities, which will continue to explore the durable obstacles and limits to a sustainable return that I have begun to tap into.

5.4 Future Research Directions

This thesis has explored, through an examination of the narratives of the Katrina displaced, the way that processes related to mobility and belonging feed into notions of transgression, which influence the return migration decisions of the Katrina displaced in a complicated post-disaster landscape. The tensions between modern ideas of belonging and rights present the Katrina displaced with a dilemma where they lack the power to control their fate. Their narratives of choosing to return to New Orleans, or stay in their site of displacement, represent their attempt to negotiate this dilemma. While these narratives have shown the common themes and factors that interact and influence the return migration decisions of Katrina evacuees, there is not one distinct model of return migration after a natural disaster. As I have suggested, there are many more stories like the ones I have interpreted and each one is different. Each evacuee is affected differently by the storm and each evacuee negotiates the post disaster landscape in a distinct fashion.

My analysis of the narratives of the Katrina displaced provides sufficient insight into the migration experiences of evacuees, in order to demonstrate a generalized set of qualitative experiences. However, it is pertinent to note that my research was limited by the constraints of a thesis project. Continued qualitative exploration of these issues with individual evacuees would deepen our understanding of how individuals and households negotiate the various factors affecting displacement and return. So too would operationalizing some of these factors within broader quantitative surveys, which would assist in our understanding of how negotiating strategies and outcomes vary across a displaced population. It is less clear, for example, how senses of belonging interact with socio-demographic factors most commonly associated with mobility and immobility. Whether, for example, race and wealth mediate the affective elements of return migration decisions.

This thesis has also begun to explore whether natural disasters affect ideas of return and ‘home’ differently from other kinds of displacement. I see value in further studies that will build on my work and consider how this kind of movement can affect wider understandings of home-making. While I have explored these themes in the context of a developed world, there remains an opportunity for research to consider these issues through the lens of a less developed world. What are the different dimensions to disasters in different areas of the world? Are there policies in place in other countries that might aid evacuees overcome the durable obstacles to return that

the Katrina displaced struggle to negotiate? Furthermore, I have shown that New Orleans is continuing to slowly re-build itself. How will the city continue to re-establish itself in the years to come? And how are the displaced returnees included or excluded in that project? The narratives of the Katrina displaced expressed almost a desperate concern for New Orleans in the coming years, as survivors speculated about the future of their city. As evacuees continue to struggle to overcome the durable obstacles to return and indeed the issues surrounding a sustainable return, there will remain a need for further research.

Post-disaster return migration raises the conceptual issues related to belonging, immobility and exclusion that I outlined in Chapter 2. The context of Hurricane Katrina provided a unique opportunity to build on recent literature exploring the connection between belonging, place and migration, post-disaster conceptions of 'home', and evacuee marginalization. Recent events in Haiti and Chile remind us that this is an era where natural disasters continue to threaten the livelihoods of societies across the world. As long as people continue to inhabit vulnerable areas, disasters will continue to cause disruption to people's lives and their attachments to place and 'home'. Only with successful collaboration between policy makers and researchers, can these disruptions be understood and, ultimately, minimized.

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Appendix 1:

Annual Estimates of Resident Population for Counties of Louisiana: April 1st, 2000 to July 1st, 2008

Geographic Area	Population Estimates									April 1, 2000	
	July 1, 2008	July 1, 2007	July 1, 2006	July 1, 2005	July 1, 2004	July 1, 2003	July 1, 2002	July 1, 2001	July 1, 2000	Estimates Base	Census
Louisiana	**4,410,796**	**4,373,310**	**4,243,634**	**4,495,627**	**4,487,830**	**4,473,558**	**4,465,215**	**4,460,395**	**4,468,879**	**4,468,968**	**4,468,976**
Franklin Parish	20,006	20,061	20,064	20,155	20,485	20,623	20,731	20,958	21,246	21,263	21,263
Jefferson Parish	436,181	440,339	422,222	450,848	452,116	451,144	451,213	451,981	454,693	455,466	455,466
Orleans Parish	311,853	288,113	210,768	455,046	461,600	467,515	472,556	477,835	483,635	484,674	484,674
Plaquemines Parish	21,276	21,597	21,610	28,565	28,615	27,652	27,123	26,853	26,737	26,757	26,757
St. Bernard Parish	37,722	33,439	13,924	64,890	65,376	65,684	66,255	66,540	66,988	67,229	67,229
St. Tammany Parish	228,456	226,263	223,863	217,367	211,488	205,833	200,833	195,693	192,172	191,270	191,268

Note: The April 1, 2000 estimates base reflects changes to the Census 2000 population resulting from legal boundary updates, other geographic program changes, and Count Question Resolution actions. All geographic boundaries for the 2008 population estimates series are defined as of January 1, 2008.

Source: Population Division, US Census Bureau. Release date: March 19th, 2009

Appendix 2:

Reported Mailing Addresses of Katrina IA Applicant from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama DR#s 1603-05 as of 07-31-2007 (Rankings 1-20)

Ranking	***CBSA***	***Metropolitan Statistical Area Name***	***State***	***Number of Applicants***	***60 Day Change***
1	35380	New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA	LA	401,145	4,192
2	12940	Baton Rouge, LA	LA	157,739	-516
3	25060	Gulfport-Biloxi, MS	MS	97,322	190
4	33660	Mobile, AL	AL	83,900	-32
5	27140	Jackson, MS	MS	81,167	-80
6	26420	Houston-Baytown-Sugar Land, TX	TX	68,187	-981
7	37700	Pascagoula, MS	MS	59,065	7
8	25620	Hattiesburg, MS	MS	49,554	-9
9	26380	Houma-Bayou Cane-Thibodaux, LA	LA	47,742	-73
10	19100	Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	TX	32,140	-307
11	12060	Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	GA	26,026	-295
12	29180	Lafayette, LA	LA	14,991	-122
13	32820	Memphis, TN-MS-AR	TN	7,409	-76
14	43340	Shreveport-Bossier City, LA	LA	6,690	-75
15	41700	San Antonio, TX	TX	6,542	-99
16	12420	Austin-Round Rock, TX	TX	6,028	-64
17	31100	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	CA	5,491	-31
18	10780	Alexandria, LA	LA	4,841	-46
19	13820	Birmingham-Hoover, AL	AL	4,780	-46
20	16980	Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI	IL	4,780	-17

Note: Ranking is based on the number of FEMA individual assistance applicants living in a U.S. Census Bureau Metropolitan Area. Metropolitan Area is defined as a core geographic area containing a population nucleus, together with adjacent communities having a high degree of economic and social integration with that core. Each Metropolitan Area must have at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more inhabitants. CBSA is the U.S. Census code for Metropolitan Statistical Area. State is the first state in a multi-state Metropolitan Statistical Area.
Source: FEMA (2007)

Appendix 3:
Households Actively Receiving Mail By Neighborhood in New Orleans

Neighborhood	June 2005	June 2008	% Recovery June 2008	June 2009	% Recovery June 2009
Algiers Point	1,322	1,351	102%	1,417	107%
Audubon	7,576	7,344	97%	7,292	96%
B.W. Cooper	1,269	357	28%	345	27%
Bayou St. John	2,292	1,921	84%	1,976	86%
Behrman	3,878	3,697	95%	3,832	99%
Black Pearl	1,115	1,107	99%	1,082	97%
Broadmoor	3,139	2,551	81%	2,324	74%
Bywater	2,570	2,091	81%	2,165	84%
Central Business District	1,316	1,585	120%	1,939	147%
Central City	8,175	6,405	78%	6,233	76%
City Park	1,670	1,534	92%	1,585	95%
Desire Area	1,419	456	32%	532	37%
Desire Development	136	109	80%	128	94%
Dillard	2,608	1,728	66%	1,767	68%
Dixon	631	453	72%	529	84%
East Carrollton	2,286	2,275	100%	2,276	100%
East Riverside	1,539	1,601	104%	1,472	96%
Fairgrounds	3,091	2,843	92%	2,919	94%
Filmore	2,831	1,345	48%	1,480	52%
Fischer Project	300	294	98%	291	97%
Florida Area	1,351	457	34%	523	39%
Florida Development	460	1	0%	2	0%
French Quarter	4,106	3,917	95%	3,936	96%
Freret	1,014	671	66%	789	78%
Garden District	1,216	1,192	98%	1,192	98%
Gentilly Terrace	4,417	3,380	77%	3,589	81%
Gentilly Woods	1,512	764	51%	906	60%
Gert Town	1,513	1,411	93%	1,547	102%
Hollygrove	2,751	1,772	64%	1,889	69%
Holy Cross	2,240	774	35%	1,061	47%
Iberville Development	830	815	98%	801	97%
Irish Channel	1,973	2,002	101%	1,913	97%
Lake Catherine	733	420	57%	420	57%
Lake Terrace & Oaks	688	653	95%	657	95%
Lakeshore/Lake Vista	1,608	1,424	89%	1,482	92%
Lakeview	4,711	1,912	41%	2,358	50%
Lakewood	786	590	75%	593	75%
Leonidas	3,726	3,521	94%	3,485	94%
Little Woods	16,504	8,907	54%	11,385	69%
Lower Garden District	4,406	4,073	92%	4,295	97%
Lower Ninth Ward	5,363	601	11%	1,017	19%
Marigny	2,133	2,079	97%	2,119	99%

Marlyville/Fountainebleau	3,010	2,706	90%	2,752	91%
McDonogh	1,270	1,323	104%	1,281	101%
Mid-City	6,634	4,652	70%	4,998	75%
Milan	3,452	2,720	79%	2,718	79%
Milneburg	2,273	1,008	44%	1,342	59%
Navarre	1,528	972	64%	1,153	75%
New Aurora/English Turn	2,127	2,198	103%	2,123	100%
Old Aurora	6,241	6,215	100%	6,187	99%
Pines Village	1,864	862	46%	1,161	62%
Plum Orchard	2,488	1,210	49%	1,407	57%
Pontchartrain Park	1,024	389	38%	507	50%
Read Blvd East	3,099	2,162	70%	2,307	74%
Read Blvd West	2,107	1,104	52%	1,275	61%
Seventh Ward	6,470	4,665	72%	4,939	76%
St. Anthony	2,450	1,088	44%	1,395	57%
St. Bernard Area	1,936	446	23%	420	22%
St. Claude	4,490	2,957	66%	3,276	73%
St. Roch	4,735	2,804	59%	3,105	66%
St. Thomas Development	386	627	162%	862	223%
Tall Timbers/Brechtel	5,504	4,679	85%	4,710	86%
Touro	1,829	1,803	99%	1,752	96%
Tremé/Lafitte	3,556	2,520	71%	2,291	64%
Tulane/Gravier	1,830	1,215	66%	1,237	68%
U.S. Naval Support Area	1,404	1,106	79%	1,041	74%
Uptown	3,329	3,274	98%	3,202	96%
Viavant/Venetian Isles	616	383	62%	328	53%
Village de l'est	3,948	2,322	59%	2,642	67%
West End	2,711	1,218	45%	1,511	56%
West Lake Forest	3,822	1,276	33%	1,399	37%
West Riverside	2,838	2,864	101%	2,720	96%
Whitney	1,006	1,007	100%	995	99%

Source: Greater New Orleans Community Data Center (2009)
Note: The USPS database underlying this data set is maintained for the purpose of delivering mail and determining letter carrier workload, not tracking repopulation post-disaster. On a regular basis, the USPS audits the addresses on every route, changing the status of addresses to reflect whether the households are actively receiving mail, or are vacant/unoccupied. As such, caution should be used analyzing changes over time.