IDENTITY RESTRUCTURATION AFTER COMMUNITY DISASTER:
AN INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS TO EXPLORE THE
LIVED EXPERIENCES OF WORKING ADULTS RETURNING TO THEIR
COMMUNITY FOLLOWING A FORCED EVACUATION DUE TO WILDFIRES

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ABSTRACT

The epidemic of internal displacement has aggressively spread worldwide. In 2015, wildfires caused the displacement of over 23,000 persons in southern California. Unfortunately, current academic research narrowly focuses on the repercussions of displacement, such as mental health issues. This phenomenological study explores the experiences of eight IDPs, who were displaced during disastrous wildfires and investigates how they describe the transformation of their social identity after resettlement. Guided by Social Identity Theory (SIT), the study incorporates Amiot et al.’s (2015) CDMSII model, which addresses four phases of transition in identity development including triggers of identity, antecedents of identity integration, stages of change, and consequences. Semi-structured interviews adopted from IPA were coded thematically to elicit what promotes or inhibits the identity reconstruction process. Five emerging themes during resettlement included: status asymmetries, social consonance, sense of continuity, social dissonance, and sense of liminality. Emergency responders, and community members who play crucial roles in helping IDPs adjust during the resettlement period benefit from this study. The research advocates that social identity reconstruction may play a pivotal role in reducing prolonged displacement and health effects. At a governmental level, evidence from narratives should be used as a tool to minimize the gap between public policy and practice. Ultimately, the study intertwines three streams of literature on internal displacement, social identity, and identity reconstruction. This research contextualizes the problem of internal displacement to
deepen current knowledge, promote discussion, and initiate action plans on behalf of IDPs.

Keywords: internal displacement, identity reconstruction, renegotiating identity, forced relocation, and social identity theory.
DEDICATION

To all the dreamers: “You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think” –A. A. Milne
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Life is an arduous journey with many valleys of defeat, but also triumphant peaks. As I set out on the quest of obtaining a doctoral degree, I had no idea what obstacles would lie ahead. In hindsight, this was most advantageous. Fortunately, I had some great believers surrounding me on this journey. To my family: Dad, Mum, Bazz, Tasha, and Megan who continue to encourage me to keep chasing the dreams. To “Grandpa” Coach: a constant role model for living life to the fullest. To the Biggars: Me enseñaste el amor de Dios más que nadie. To the Sammons: Deepest thanks for helping me and making great memories along the way. To my dear friends: Verity who would not let me give up. You provided the fuel to make it through some insane challenges. Thank you for your friendship and the Dunkin Donuts bagels. Mindy, the “walks and talks” were a lifesaver and I will always cherish those moments. To the educators: You truly inspired me to reach for higher heights. From my third-grade teacher Mrs. Donna Kelley to my university professor Dr. Thomas Carmody, I would not have made it without the belief you instilled in me.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... 2
2. DEDICATION ....................................................................................................................... 4
3. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................. 12
   3.1. Problem Statement/Purpose Statement ...................................................................... 13
   3.2. The Practical Level ..................................................................................................... 13
   3.3. The Research Level ...................................................................................................... 15
       3.4. Deficiencies in Evidence ......................................................................................... 16
   3.5. The Theoretical Level ................................................................................................. 18
   3.6. Research Question ....................................................................................................... 19
   3.7. Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................... 20
       3.8. Background: The Development of SIT ................................................................. 20
       3.9. The Second Wave .................................................................................................. 21
       3.10. The Third Wave .................................................................................................... 21
       3.11. Propositions for SIT ............................................................................................. 23
       3.12. Rebuttals against SIT ............................................................................................ 25
       3.13. Research Questions Guided by SIT ...................................................................... 26
       3.14. SIT and Narrative Research, .................................................................................. 27
       3.15. The Model: Social Identity Theory for IDPs ......................................................... 28
   3.16. Research Overview .................................................................................................... 31
3.17 Potential Significance

3.18 Study Assumptions

3.19 Limitations/Delimitations

3.20 Key Terms and Definitions

3.21 Chapter Summary

4. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Identity, Social Identity Reconstruction, & Internal Displacement

4.2 The Origin of Identity Studies

4.3 The Growth in Identity Knowledge

4.4 Identity Reconstruction

4.5 Internal Displacement

4.6 Internal Displacement Due to Wildfires

4.7 Identity Reconstruction and Internal Displacement

4.8 Advocacy Argument

4.9 Summation

4.10 The Thesis Analysis

4.11 Implications on the Work on Practice

4.12 Chapter Conclusion

5. CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY & METHODS

5.1 Overview of Methodology

5.2 Research Design

5.3 Population

5.4 Sample Design
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.5. Recruitment and Access</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6. Participant Profile</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7. Data Collection</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8. Data Analysis</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9. Data Storage</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10. Role of the Researcher</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11. Self</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12. Self in Relation to Others</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.13. From Self to System</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11. Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12. Chapter Summary</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS &amp; ANALYSIS</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1. Participants</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2. Eunice</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3. Eunice’s Experience</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4. Mila</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5. Mila’s Experience</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6. Wendy</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7. Wendy’s Experience</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8. Cara</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9. Cara’s Experience</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10. Nicole</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.11. Nicole’s Experience</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.2. Appendix B: Participant Selection Criteria ........................................... 155
9.3. Appendix C: Informed Consent Form ....................................................... 157
9.4. Appendix D: Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews ................................. 159
9.5. Appendix E: Chronological Timeline of Your Experience in the Wildfires 162
9.6. Appendix F: Member Check Email .............................................................. 163
9.7. Appendix G: Protocol for Discussion on Findings ........................................ 164
9.8. Appendix H: NIH Certification ......................................................................... 165
9.9. Appendix I: First Round of Coding ............................................................... 166
9.10. Appendix J: Excerpts from Reflexive Journal ............................................... 168
LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1: Introduction

Figure 1.1. CDMSII Model

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Table 2.1. The Changing Tide in Research on Identity Reconstruction
Table 2.2. Key Research Addressing IDPs and the Causes of Displacement

Chapter 3: Methodology & Methods

Figure 3.1. Preliminary Schedule for Doctoral Research Process
Chart 3.2. Contact Summary Sheet
Table 3.3. Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Chapter 4: Findings & Analysis

Table 4.1. Superordinate and Subordinate Themes
Table 4.2. Subordinate Theme 1- Uncertainty
Table 4.3. Subordinate Theme 2- Loss of Power
Table 4.4. Subordinate Theme 3- Communal Support
Table 4.5. Subordinate Theme 4- Communal Bonding
Table 4.6. Subordinate Theme 5- Social Cognizance
Table 4.7. Subordinate Theme 6- Work Stability
Table 4.8. Subordinate Theme 7- Sense of Intimate Tension
Table 4.9. Subordinate Theme 8- Sense of Interpersonal Conflict
Table 4.10. Superordinate Theme- Sense of Liminality
Identity Restructuration After Community Disaster: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis to Explore the Lived Experiences of Working Adults Returning to Their Community Following a Forced Evacuation Due to Wildfires

The purpose of this doctoral thesis is to introduce the problem of practice and identify why this research is pertinent practically, academically, and theoretically. The investigator will highlight the research question and elicit the theoretical framework used to explore the problem of practice. Additionally, the research overview will provide a blueprint for the investigation, which will subsequently address the potential significance, key assumptions, and limitations for the study. Towards the end, a list of terms and concepts provides clarity and is crucial for understanding the investigation. To begin, it is vital to grasp the big picture and depict the circumstances surrounding the growing epidemic of displacement.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In less than twenty-four hours, natural disasters have the ability to destroy homes, dismantle livelihoods, and redefine an individual’s perspective of home. For many individuals caught in the middle of these catastrophes, displacement is inevitable. Today, there are approximately 19.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world who are forced to rebuild their lives and reconstruct a new identity due to weather or geophysical related disasters (The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center [IDMC], 2014). Since 2013, The New York Times has published six articles including opinion pieces, reports, or editorials that have addressed the growing epidemic of displacement worldwide (Banco, 2013; Cohen, 2015; Cumming-Bruce, 2014; Jolie, 2015). Additionally, the plight of displacement has been chronicled in popular culture magazines
(Reeves, 2011), news companies worldwide (Goldberg, 2014; Tolentino, 2014), humanitarian organizations (George, 2015), and film. Even though this issue has been covered on a grand scale and it affects a significant population in terms of size, little research has been developed about the experience of IDPs (Yoder, 2008), specifically in the context of displacement due to wildfires.

**Problem Statement/Purpose Statement**

Knowledge surrounding displacement due to wildfires is scarce, however this section proposes that by viewing the problem through practical, academic, and theoretical lenses the field may advance significantly. The crucial step of contextualizing a global issue at a local level is important in order to promote better long-term solutions. To begin, it is necessary to look at the problem of displacement at a practical level.

**The Practical Level**

The repercussions of displacement may affect a person on individual and social levels. Esnard and Sapat (2014) suggest, “displaced persons can face widespread marginalization, prejudices, and stigmatization” (p. 15). This also pertains to internally displaced persons, or IDPs, who experience natural disasters. For this study, internally displaced persons (IDPs) will be defined as:

> [P]ersons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border. (Esnard & Sapat, 2014; Lewis &
For the context of this research, the individuals have been forced to relocate from their small community due to wildfires while deciding to remain within the borders of California. There have been a couple of incidences recently that are indicative of the problem of practice.

In southern California, there were two catastrophic wildfires in 2015. First, on February 6th, 2015 wildfires engulfed one area called Swall Meadows and a neighboring town called Paradise, located at the base of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The fire covered over 11 square miles and the media would refer to the wildfires as “the red wall” (“California town ravaged,” 2015). Thus, nearly two hundred and fifty people were evacuated from their homes and thirty-nine homes were destroyed (“California town ravaged,” 2015). Over five hundred firefighters battled high winds and worked to contain the fire (Rindel, 2015). Parker (2015) also noted the thirty-five fire trucks and one helicopter that would join the efforts. For the residents of Inyo County whose homes were consumed in the fire, long-term displacement was inevitable. Many individuals faced the reality of rebuilding their lives in Swall Meadows again or relocating elsewhere.

Later, in September of 2015, The Valley fire near Middleton, CA charred entire communities. The Northern California wildfires killed one individual, destroyed five hundred homes, and displaced 23,000 people (“California wildfires displace,” 2015). The photos of the aftermath revealed scenes that are reminiscent of war zones. Amidst the crisis, emergency response crews and surrounding neighborhoods often banded together
to meet the immediate needs of displaced persons. Although the second example is not the focus of this study, it is indicative of the size of the problem of practice within California. Rebuilding a life, and reconstructing a new identity, is often painstakingly difficult. The process of identity reconstruction during and after displacement is an area of research that has been untouched, and this research suggests that these two areas should be integrated in order to help resolve the problem of practice. To delve into this research area further, it is important to understand why and how this is a topic worthy of being explored.

**The Research Level**

There are two critical problems surrounding current research on internal displacement. One stems from policy and practice, and the other shortcoming is the lack of IDP participation in resolution agreements. First, there are severe gaps between policy and the implementation of new legislation to help displaced persons integrate effectively into new communities (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012). This is ironic because legislation to help IDPs has been steadily increasing since 1998 when the Guiding Principles for Internal Displacement were first presented to the UN Commission on Human Rights. Principles 1 and 3 address the specific responsibilities that governments face when responding to internal displacement. For example, Principle 1 states:

> Internally displaced persons shall enjoy, in full equality, the same rights and freedoms under international and domestic law as do other persons in their country. They shall not be discriminated against in the enjoyment of any rights and freedoms on the ground that they are internally displaced. (OCHA, 1998, p. 2)
Additionally, Guiding Principle 3 explains that “…National authorities have the primary
duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally
displaced persons within their jurisdiction” (OCHA, 1998, p. 2). Although these policies
are a starting point, policy without practice is pointless.

Fortunately, many organizations such as the African Union, the Organization of
American States (OAS), and the Council of Europe have integrated these principles as a
framework to assist in the development of domestic laws and policies. Perhaps, most
intriguingly, in Columbia and the Democratic Republic of Congo administrators have
tried to institute preventative procedures, which warn leaders and civilians about possible
upcoming displacement crises (Ferris, Mooney, & Stark, 2011). Although these efforts
are commendable, Laker (2013) warns that IDP regime may even become a profitable
humanitarian economy for those in power if accountability is not provided alongside
legal guidance. Perhaps in response, Miles (2015) proposes that the government must
make four types of investments: diplomatic, political, economic, and social investments.
As the discussion continues it is evident that the amount of policies surrounding the issue
has risen, but a gap between policy and the implementation of policy exists. Overall, the
growth rate of displacement continues to make the significance of the policies
questionable.

Deficiencies in Evidence. At a fundamental level, there are discrepancies in
defining displacement and internal displacement, and distinguishing it from relocation
and/or migration. For instance, the term IDP is often confused with labels placed on
individuals such as refugees and asylum seekers, which are legal statuses (Ferris,
Mooney, & Stark, 2011). Mbakem and Collins (2014) describe alternative names for
displaced person including: “political refugee, asylum seeker, internally displaced person, (and) war-affected population” (p. 102). The lack of agreement with regards to defining the parameters of displacement has been detrimental to the field and inhibited researchers from focusing on resolutions rather than lingo.

Additionally, despite the recent exponential growth of displacement worldwide, some individuals have contemplated that the problem is too big to address (Mooney, 2005). Perhaps, as a response to this criticism, researchers (Aiken & Leigh, 2015; Biggar, 2015; Elmhirst, 2012; Ferris & Winthrop, 2010; Gordon, Maida, Farberow, & Fidell, 1994; Jenkins, Hsu, Sauer, Hsieh, & Kirsch, 2009; Johnston, 2014; Kabra & Mahalwal, 2014; Kirsch et al., 2008; Lankster, 2014; LeVan & Olubowale, 2015; Pane, McCaffrey, Kalra, & Zhou, 2008, Powell, 2012) have started to categorize specific areas of displacement. Although exploring different contexts has been beneficial to the dissemination of knowledge on the topic, it has arguably hindered the ability to create a more systematic and holistic approach to address the global issue.

Finally, from a holistic perspective, issues such as mental health and monetary distribution have often taken precedence over long-term support for IDPs (Abdelmoneium, 2010; Daoud, Shankardass, O’Campo, Anderson, & Agbaria, 2012; Fazel et al., 2012; Larrance, Anastario, & Lawry, 2007; Mullany et al., 2007; Siriwardhana, et al., 2013). It is evident from these studies that displacement is detrimental to an individual’s health and that IDPs experience a “…‘beggars cannot choose’ prison style economy” (Boas & Bjorkhaug, 2014, p.187). The pattern of focusing on the health of IDPs continues in the context of displacement due to wildfires, too.
One of the earliest investigations on displacement due to wildfires and identity was Gordon et al.’s (1994) study, which focused on psychological effects and fire preparedness rather than understanding how individuals respond to the process of displacement. Afterwards, Kirsch et al. (2008) and Jenkins et al. (2009) investigated the lives of displaced persons, but their studies were on a large scale and continued to narrowly focus on the mental health issues that individuals face. Recently, the pattern has continued as another study (Reid, Jerrett, Tager, Peterson, Mann, & Balmes, 2016) affirmed that individuals are often susceptible to respiratory problems when they live in an area that has had wildfires. Also, researchers (Vicedo-Cabrera, Esplugues, Iniguez, Estarlich, & Ballester, 2016) focused on how wildfires affect the health of children in Spain. Although the current studies are significant, there is a need for investigators to gain the perspectives of IDPs as they develop a greater understanding of the long-term repercussions of displacement. Research must undergo a paradigm shift and take an in-depth approach to explore how IDPs can rebuild their lives after surviving periods of natural disasters, forced relocation, or warfare. Therefore, the current research on displacement focuses on how the social identity of an individual changes during displacement and the resettlement process.

The Theoretical Level

On a theoretical level, it is necessary to broaden the existing research by incorporating an *emic* perspective on displacement, and obtaining the perspective of the displaced (Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999). While quantitative studies provide powerful numbers, qualitative studies allow participants to become empowered. The Guiding Principles (OCHA, 1998) affirm that in the context of decision-making IDPs
should partake in resolutions and have a right to participation, which propels integration and resettlement. According to Ferris, Mooney, and Stark (2011), participation “refers to deeper engagement that may imply a degree of control over decision-making and/or the contribution of labor, skills or material inputs” (p. 113). Although the perspective of IDPs is often pivotal for creating impactful changes, little research has used an approach or theoretical framework that has incorporated the voices of the displaced. Overall, it appears that practitioners have been somewhat lackadaisical at ensuring that policies are implemented to make a positive impact on the lives of the displaced. Additionally, researchers in the field have succumbed to the pressures of producing results quantifiably. Perhaps, most significantly, the predominant focus rests on mental health and physical welfare of individuals rather than holistically addressing the resettlement process. The field needs an interpretive approach to understand how working adults who are displaced by wildfires make sense of their experiences while reconstructing their identity.

**Research Question**

In order to accomplish the objective, the primary question framing this doctoral thesis is:

*How do working adults displaced by the Swall Meadows wildfires describe the reconstruction of their social identity following their resettlement process?*

This question is specific to understanding the implications of why or how identity reconstruction is an important part of the resettlement process and may offer insight as to how humanitarian relief agencies and government officials may more efficiently respond to the needs of displaced persons. The research question stems from curiosity; however,
this issue will be explored through the lens of Social Identity Theory (SIT), a theoretical framework that is discussed in the following section.

**Theoretical Framework**

Although internal displacement is a relatively new area of research, this study will adopt Amiot et al.’s (2015) theoretical framework as a lens to explore the ways in which working adults make meaning of their displacement experiences. The primary theoretical framework has emerged from an evolution of Social Identity Theory (SIT) over the last thirty years. Initially, the section on Social Identity Theory (SIT) will discuss the backbones and development of the theory, highlight three evolutionary waves that have occurred, identity underlying assumptions, and acknowledge rebuttals for and against SIT. Then, evidence will be provided to demonstrate how SIT is the best method to investigate the primary research question. Towards the end of the section, the author will articulate why SIT complements narrative research and propose that a specific SIT model, CDSMII, is most relevant for inquiring about the problem of practice.

**Background: The Development of SIT.** Social Identity Theory (SIT), rooted in socio-psychology, has experienced a type of metamorphosis through three waves, which will be explored in this section. To begin, it is necessary to define the theory, highlight key terms, and acknowledge foundational researchers in the theory. Social identity is “that part of the individuals’ self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of social groups (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership” (Tajfel, 1982, p. 24). According to Tajfel (1982) the purpose of social identity is to justify actions, provide insight with regards to social causality, and create positive differentiation between in-groups and outgroups. From this
constructivist perspective, theorists have investigated intergroup beliefs, values, and actions (Brown, 2000). Furthermore, SIT relies on the subjective perspective of an individual to determine positive or negative aspects of social identity, and for that reason it lies within the interpretivist paradigm (Turner, 1975). However, this section will demonstrate that researchers have ventured to new places with SIT by investigating different social identities and intertwining new theories that are present in the second and third waves.

**The Second Wave.** During the late 1980s and 1990s a plethora of research in conjunction with SIT focused on the reasons, repercussions, and management of negative social identities (Blanz, Mummendey, Mielke, & Klink, 1998; Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999). According to Mummendey et al. (1999) negative social identity is “the result of an intergroup comparison with a negative outcome for one’s own group” (p. 231). This change stemmed from SIT researchers (Bornewasser & Bober, 1987) who took a socio-structuralist approach, and provided opportunities for others to explore ideas of social mobility under the umbrella of salience, social creativity (Hinkle & Brown, 1990), and remooring (Ethier & Deaux, 1994). Ultimately, the mereological propositions produced in this second wave led to researchers to taking a critical stance with SIT as it related to marginalized populations.

**The Third Wave.** More recently, there have been two significant changes that have occurred in the third wave of research on SIT. The third wave of literature on SIT has emerged through the formation of theoretical pluralism, or utilizing multiple theories to develop a framework (Stewart et al., 2015). For example, Herman and Chiu (2014) studied job performance in organizations by adopting a framework based on SIT and
Transformational Leadership. Additionally, researchers (Cruwys, Haslam, Dingle, Haslam, & Jetten, 2014) investigated depression and identity by intertwining SIT and Self-Categorization Theory for the framework. Ortiz and Behm-Morawitz (2015) explored Latinos’ perceptions of groups on television by incorporating SIT and Cultivation Theory. Each of these studies reflected the growth and affirmation of SIT in varying academic fields.

The popularity of dual theoretical frameworks also represented a shift in SIT, and paralleled with a movement from research on a single social identity to multiple social identities (Amiot et al., 2015; Dovidio, Gaertner, Pearson & Rick, 2005; Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009). According to Amiot et al. (2015) individuals have a range of social identities, which integrate and work together to develop a self-concept over time. These identities may be constructed organizationally or culturally (Amiot et al., 2015). Building on the underlying assumptions of SIT, research (Amiot et al., 2015) suggests that the input process of identity integration should produce positive outcomes in intergroup relations and psychological well-being. The evolutionary aspect of moving from a single social identity to multiple social identities meant that SIT could be applied to exploring bicultural individuals, or *intraindividual conflict* (Amiot et al., 2015, p. 171). In other words, SIT research now considers how an individual’s original cultural identity and a new identity integrate or compartmentalize social identities. This is crucial for understanding the context of displacement where individuals may feel conflicted between their old lives and their new ones.

Overall, the theory has been utilized to create an understanding of how identity shapes or influences behavior, whether that is reflected in job performance (Tse & Chiu,
2014), resistance to brand switching (Lam, Ahearne, Hu, & Schillewaert, 2010), or political action (Stewart et al., 2015). More recently, SIT has been the framework for understanding acculturation processes (Padilla and Perez, 2013), terrorism (Weiss et al., 2012), the formation of collective action (Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2016), collective action for victims during uprisings (Stuart et al., 2015), and understanding threats to social identity (Holmes, Whitman, Campbell, & Johnson, 2016; Kahn, Lee, Renauer, Henning, & Stewart, 2016; Sanderson et al., 2016). The following section will highlight key proponents and opponents in the field, and identify a model developed from SIT that aligns with the primary research question.

**Propositions for SIT.** Numerous researchers have implemented SIT in a variety of contexts. However, there have been a few prominent accolades that the theory has rightly acquired. This section will demonstrate key SIT researchers through three propositions and analyze how they have contributed to the growing field of knowledge on social identity. First, a dominant proposition in SIT is that social support networks and groups influence or promote identity development. For example, Hamilton and Solmon (2014) investigated African American women’s physical activity through SIT and found that individuals who reported higher levels of social support from friends had stronger exercise identities and reported increased levels of physical activity. Additionally, Ortiz and Behm-Morawitz (2015) propose that the best way to assist first and second generation immigrants is to implement programs, which focus on developing hybrid identities that integrate into the new society. SIT furthers the knowledge of in-group and outgroup perceptions, but most importantly it creates an understanding of why social
groups and networks are relevant for the process of identity development and/or integration.

The second proposition is that social identity may be intricately connected to the self in order to promote a more content and complete individual. For instance, Mummendey et al. (1999) infer that positive social identity entails more than intergroup and outgroup relations, rather social identity is closely aligned with life satisfaction. Cheng and Guo (2014) reiterate this notion by highlighting that task involvement and emotional connection contribute to positive social identity. Weise, Arciszewski, Verlhiac, Pyszczynski, and Greenberg (2015) suggest that group membership is a source or meaning and self-esteem. The importance of this comprehensive approach to social identity is summed up by Szabo and Ward (2015) who state, “a coherent identity can successfully guide the behavior of... (individuals) in their everyday life and buffer the harmful effects of negative life events” (p. 13). Ultimately, this framework is beneficial in the context of displacement because it emphasizes the importance of a healthy social identity, which provides a remedy for individuals to overcome tragedy.

Lastly, proponents of SIT suggest that social identity may change and develop over time through the passing of meritorious individuals (Bond & Hewstone, 1988), permeability of groups (Liu, 2012; Mummendey et al., 1999; Stewart et al., 2015), or changes occurring due to social mobility (Lam et al., 2010). Since social identity is a socio-constructed reality, in-groups and outgroups are continuously evaluated and subject to interpretation by the individual. The idea of movement through social creativity (Brown, 2000; Hinkle & Brown, 1990), is particularly relevant to studies on migration and displacement as individuals are exposed to new social groups and cultures. However,
Rebuttals against SIT. Although SIT is highly regarded as a research framework to study organizational and cultural identity, it has received constructive criticism from Bond and Hewstone (1988), Brown (2000), and Huddy (2002). The first rebuttal from Bond and Hewstone (1988) suggests that SIT needs to be applied in various worldwide contexts. For example, research (Bond & Hewstone, 1988) notes that SIT has been tested in Westernized cultures, however, it does not take into account the different dynamics of intergroup relations in non-Westernized cultures. Fortunately, in more recent studies SIT has become more diversified in exploring the process of acculturation (Padilla & Perez, 2003), Latino’s perceptions and social identity (Cheng & Guo, 2015), and social identity in the Middle East (Stewart et al., 2015). With an exponential increase in the areas of cultural identity and SIT, it is only a matter of time before a richer knowledge of development in non-Westernized culture and SIT occurs.

The second and third rebuttals on SIT came from Brown (2000). First, Brown (2000) cautions that research must provide clarification between temporal and long-term comparisons. For instance, it is important to acknowledge that social identity and comparisons could change over a lifetime. Perhaps, this concept is most evident in a study (Lam et al., 2010) that investigated resistance to brand switching when a new product is released. Interestingly, the results suggest that social identity is influenced by affective constructs (i.e. satisfaction) and cognitive constructs (i.e. commitment). As a result of this study, it is evident that social identities morph over time and that identities
affect an individual’s behavior. Further research must look at different factors, which contribute to the temporary or long-term comparisons of in-group and outgroup relations.

A second rebuttal against SIT developed as a repercussion from Turner’s (1975) assumption that groups favor themselves over others in all situations. Mummendey et al., (1999) counter the assumption by suggesting that a negative social identity can exist, which is “the result of an intergroup comparison with a negative outcome for one’s own group” (p. 231). Additionally, Brown (2000) uses Relative Deprivation Theory to support Mummendey et. al’s (1999) positions and describes how minorities or low-status in-groups may perceive themselves as less than, which may promote remedial action. Rather than perceiving the conflict of in-group favoritism as a threat to SIT, it would be more sensible to identify the revelation as a new branch of research that should be explored. So, even though SIT has ignited some debatable points, the theoretical discussions with propositions and rebuttals are an indicator that the theory is relevant (Huddy, 2002). If this is true, then SIT is alive and well.

**Research Question Guided by SIT.** The following section will look more specifically at how SIT shapes the research question for this study and how the theory aligns with the methodology. The primary open-ended research question provides a starting point for participants to explore many facets of their lived experiences. As discussed later, Amiot et al. ’s (2015) CDMSII model adapted from SIT corresponds with the investigation because it provides opportunities for individuals to make sense of their journey through phases including: anticipating resettlement, building an identity, maintaining their former identity, and acquiring a new sense of self. Although multiple theories discuss identity development, the CDMSII Model is distinct because it can elicit
the process of displacement and resettlement with a more exploratory approach. Ultimately, the qualitative nature of the research question alludes to the long-term process of, and demonstrates the importance of, adopting a narrative research approach for the investigation that will be illuminated upon in the following section.

**SIT and Narrative Research.** The research question aligns with SIT, but also directs the researcher to a relevant methodology. SIT research has three distinct foundational elements that complement the values of narrative research. First, predominant SIT researchers (Brown, 2000; Mummendey et al., 1999; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Turner, 1975) affirm that the theory stems from an interpretivist paradigm in which reality or knowledge is subjective. Dovidio et al. (2005) explain that individuals construct identities that are influenced by their reality, based on personal experiences or aspirations and their encounters with members of groups to which he or she belongs. Interestingly, Stevens (2012) argues that through the process of describing narrative accounts individuals can build a new reality, which means a new social identity, too. Therefore, SIT and narrative research are directed by the ultimate goal of exploring and creating a greater understanding of people’s subjective experiences and their reality.

Additionally, by reflecting alongside participants, the SIT framework and narrative research work together in a way that can initiate change as marginalized individuals have opportunities to share their perspectives. This aspect of SIT is prevalent in Padilla and Perez’s (2003) research, which highlights the role of social structures and cultural ideologies in social identity formation. Consequently, the research (Padilla & Perez, 2003) alludes to the fact that SIT may take a radical structuralist approach. Likewise, Weise et al. (2015) suggest that understanding social identity may lead to
action through critical insight for terror management. This is a result of narrative research and SIT being overarching strands of a study. While most qualitative research identifies moments in time or temporal experiences, narrative research seeks to understand how the smaller experiences influence or connect with a bigger “myth” or storyline. In other words, SIT is used to analyze the development of social identity and self-concept during, and over, a period of time (Amiot et al., 2015). Amiot et al. (2015) reiterate this notion by suggesting that life narratives provide the necessary coherence for understanding identity integration and allowing participants to collaborate in the data collection process.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, SIT provides accountability for the researcher and allows participants to strengthen the validity of the study throughout the research process. The reciprocity between the researcher and the participants is vital because identity, integration, and the process of acculturation are multi-faceted and complex. For instance, research (Brown, 2000) suggests that identity rests within two orthogonal orientations during acculturation (p. 765). Although this is debatable, it is evident from research (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Stets & Burke, 2000) that salience exists within identity maintenance and evolution. In other words, identity development or integration is ongoing. By focusing on SIT through a narrative approach the researcher has the freedom to venture into different fragments of a story in order to better understand a participant’s subjective reality.

**The Model: Social Identity Theory for IDPs.** Over the years, SIT has continued to launch forward and make a mark by presenting models that build its validity and practicality. This section will highlight one specific model relevant for SIT and displacement. Amiot et al.’s (2015) CDMSII Model, developed from SIT, addresses four
phases of transition in identity development including triggers of identity, antecedents of identity integration, stages of change, and consequences. The following model configured by Amiot et. al (2015) represents the stages of how an individual’s social identity may change during displacement:

Figure 1.1.

*Figure 1.1. CDMSII Model. The four-stage model suggests that social identities develop within individuals and eventually become a part of self.*

According to the model, the first stage recognizes triggers of change that could occur during life transitions or immigration. In the context of displacement, it could be argued that very few individuals partake in this anticipatory phase because there is little warning about the upcoming change, and there is a lack of knowledge about the geographical area and/or culture to which they will relocate. Perhaps, one reason for conducting IPA research is that the participants will share more knowledge about inhibitors and facilitators as they relate to antecedents of identity integration. Although the triggers of identity change and the antecedents of identity integration are important, the stages of identity change promise to be the most constructive area to grasp knowledge in the context of displacement. During the stages of change individuals participate in four stages: anticipatory categorization, categorization, compartmentalization, and integration. These four stages integrate intergroup and interpersonal consequences of displacement,
which may include discrimination and in-group bias or psychological well-being. These two components suggest that the individual identity and the social identity are being changed simultaneously.

Unlike other models developed from SIT, the CDMSII Model accounts for *intraindividual conflict*, which refers to the tension that exists when a past social identity structure collides with a new identity (Amiot et al., 2015). Research suggests that IDPs often suffer from mental health and depression, and it will be interesting to elicit this process in individuals who have been internally displaced and to determine whether their *intraindividual conflict* is heightened or minimized. In comparison to immigrants who may choose voluntarily to form a new social identity, identity construction through acculturation is forced in the context of IDPs and resettlement. Padilla and Perez (2003) succinctly summarize the circumstances surrounding *intraindividual conflict* when stating, “internal migration affects many aspects of the self, requiring significant redefinition and reconstruction of both personal and social identities…(Individuals) continuously reorganize the delicate structure of their various social identities in new cultural contexts” (p. 50). In this way, the research will further the knowledge of CDMSII by situating it in a different context of IDPs, who experience similar yet different circumstances in comparison to immigrants. To gain further insight as to how the information will be gathered, a brief overview of the research will be discussed.

**Research Overview**

In order to fulfill the purpose of discovering the lived experiences of working adults displaced by wildfires, the researcher took part in a thorough investigation. Narrative accounts were collected using a semi-structured interview protocol based on
the experiences of eight working adults recently re-settled following catastrophic wildfires the year prior. The researcher used a three-phase interview process (Seidman, 2014) and follow IPA analysis protocol, which integrated analytical insights developed from the participant’s stories and the researcher’s meaning-making as a wildfire evacuee. The following phases outline the approach:

**Phase I “Preliminary Interview”** – This initial data collection included verifying that participants met eligibility criteria, completing the informed consent process, having individuals construct a chronological timeline of their experiences in Swall Meadows, and building a rapport with participants.

**Phase II “Displacement Experience”** – A second phase implemented 45-60 minute interviews with participants. The objective was to gain insight to critical events, interactions with people, or experiences that shaped the transformation of their social identity. More in-depth questions looked at past, present, and future factors that promoted or hindered individuals from resettling in their community after the wildfires. Individuals were also asked what advice they would give to other people that may experience displacement.

**Phase III “Debriefing Process”** - A third phase included 10 to 15-minute phone interviews with participants. During these sessions, the researcher reviewed narrative anecdotes, emerging themes, and discussed the results with participants making any necessary amendments (Etchegary, 2011).

These three phases highlighted the purposive sample technique, the active listening approach necessary to complete an interview utilizing IPA, and addressed the validation process of the research that increases the trustworthiness of the results. A more in-depth
view of each of these elements is available in Chapter 3. However, this brief overview leads to the inevitable purpose and conclusion of this research process, which was to expand the current knowledge of displacement due to wildfires. The potential significance and specific areas of impact are discussed in the next section.

**Potential Significance**

The significance of the research problem is visible at local, state, and global levels. The local audience for this research includes public safety officials, humanitarian responders, and community members who currently interact with IDPs or seek to help individuals during the resettlement process. As James (2013) explains, displaced persons have difficulty dealing with "perceptions from the host society…, stress of a new culture…, and negotiating identity” (p. 40-42). There is often a stigmatization that IDPs take up resources from citizens (Rincon, 2013). Additionally, the anxiety is magnified when loss of social networks, resources, and integration occurs simultaneously (Biggar, 2015). Local stakeholders benefit from this study by being better equipped to assist individuals in the identity reconstruction process and assessing the social support groups that are available in the immediate environment. At the community level, the information could be used to develop long-term funding to initiate and enhance therapeutic communities (TC) (Irving, 2011; Stevens, 2012) that could provide counseling and restore individuals during and after displacement. Lastly, in the context of international policy, the study provides evidence to narrow the gap between public policy and the implementation of public policy, which often hinders the advancement of resolutions and relief for marginalized groups (Ferris & Winthrop, 2010).
There are two additional reasons why the study is vital. First, the research adds value to the academic community. It is possible that the study helps determine better methods for assisting displaced persons in the context of emergency response. The study also demonstrates the importance of qualitative research that takes into consideration the perspective of the participants (Agee, 2009). Furthermore, the study could be a platform to shape government policy and launch more effective ways of responding to the worldwide crisis of displacement. As Lewis and Maguire (2015) explain:

Through a combination of greater ratification of human rights conventions and more thorough implementation of soft-law instruments, it is possible for the rights of persons displaced by natural disaster to be protected and for long-term and sustainable solutions to displacement to be located. (p. 27)

The heightened awareness of legislation, and the need to confront the problem of practice is evident. In order to adequately construct solutions, it is crucial to have an important foundation, which is built on underlying assumptions.

**Study Assumptions**

The assumptions for this study are found in the theoretical framework and corresponding seminal articles, which discuss social identity. To begin, Social Identity Theory has four key underlying assumptions, which have built cohesion for researchers. The first assumption is that social identity is constructed through group membership. Second, it is agreed upon that people desire to have a positive social identity. Third, people create a positive identity by engaging in social comparisons with in-groups and out-groups. Lastly, when the positive identity is endangered, the individual may seek alternative social groups (Brown, 2000). These assumptions highlight social identity at
individual and societal levels and Trepte (2006) succinctly summarized the principles and identified four categories as: social categorization, social comparison, social identity, and self-esteem.

In addition to these four foundational elements, researchers (Blanz et al., 1998; Brown, 2000; Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Stewart et al., 2015; Turner, 1975) have contributed the following secondary assumptions in conjunction with the development of SIT:

1) Social identity exists at an individual level within a system (Turner, 1975).
2) Differentiation leads to social competition (Turner, 1975).
3) An individual will be a part of a group so long as the membership contributes to a positive social identity (Turner, 1975).
4) Social creativity is a strategy used to manage social comparisons from negative social identity (Blanz et al., 1998; Brown 2000; Hinkle & Brown, 1990).
5) Contextual changes influence identity maintenance (Ethier & Deaux, 1994).
6) There is a higher level of salience in the social identity of minority or low-status in groups (Brown, 2000).
7) When social identity aligns with moral conviction, collective action may occur (Stewart et al., 2015).

By learning the deeper framework of SIT and attending to the underlying assumptions in the study, there is a greater understanding of how social identity functions and influences behavior. While these assumptions provide the necessary foundation for the research, the study had parameters that are defined by the limitations.
Limitations/Delimitations

There are two crucial limitations to highlight in this study, which are pertinent to this IPA study. Khatib and Rezaei (2013) note that subjectivity and generalizability limit narrative research. Subjectivity affects the data collection process while generalizability influences the significance of the findings. For instance, Fragkiadaki et al.’s (2013) IPA research on the experiences of Greek family therapy trainees suggests that the subjectivity is integrated in the retrospective accounts of experiences, which distorts information and integrates personal biases. Similarly, Harrigan, Dieter, Leinwohl, and Marrin (2015) suggest that participants may be selective when choosing whether or not to disclose information in the interviews. In other words, they filter parts of their accounts. Likewise, the working adults participating in the research are susceptible to limiting their experiences based on memory or vulnerability. This limitation highlights the importance of establishing a rapport with the participants during the preliminary interviews to ensure that he or she will be a suitable individual.

Another limitation of IPA research is the generalizability of the results. Since the approach includes purposive and homogenous sampling, it is evident that the findings are limited to very specific populations (Fragkiadaki et al., 2013). For example, the results of this study in the context of wildfires may not yield the same results as studying a population displaced by armed conflict. However, the outcome of the research may propel future research that will yield significantly more data (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The in-depth studies guide and lead larger research projects, which may produce qualitative and quantitative knowledge that is complementary.
In addition to the limitations in the methodology, there are intentional decisions that the researcher made along the way in order to make the project feasible and manageable. Although wildfires have occurred all along the west coast of the United States, the study focuses on one small community located thirty minutes from the investigator’s residence. This specific delimitation allowed the researcher easier access to participants and meant the interviews would take place in person. Additionally, while IPA research may include a sample size of three to twenty-five individuals, the investigator chose to limit the size to eight individuals in order to ensure that the data analysis process would be manageable (Smith, Larkin, & Flowers, 2009). If the researcher is too overwhelmed by data and depletes his or her energy, the analysis will not be fruitful. Another way the researcher simplified the enormous problem of practice was to adopt key definitions and terms from authors to provide clarity to the study. These terms are discussed to ensure that future research will benefit from this endeavor.

**Key Terms and Definitions**

This study contains key terms and definitions that exist in a unique, underdeveloped academic field. Therefore, the researcher has provided the following concepts for clarification purposes:

**Disaster**: An event resulting from a combination of the exposure to a hazard, differential vulnerability of places and people, and insufficient capacity or measures to reduce, or cope with, potential negative consequences (Esnard & Sapat, 2014).
**Internally displaced persons** (IDPs): Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (Lewis & Maguire, 2015; Mooney, 2005; OCHA, 1998).

**Intraindividual conflict**: The tension that exists when a past social identity structure collides with a new identity (Amiot et al., 2015).

**Resettlement**: Relocation and integration of people...into another geographical area and environment (Esnard & Sapat, 2014).

**Social identity**: A part of a person’s self-concept that is constructed from his or her perception of belonging to a particular social group (Tajfel, 1982).

**Stages of change**: The third phase that takes place in identity development. The phase has four components including: anticipatory categorization, categorization, compartmentalization, and integration (Amiot et al., 2015).

One barrier that prevents research from moving forward is ambiguity or disagreement on key concepts or terms. This section provides the necessary definitions, which will be useful in understanding the entire study.
Chapter Summary

This chapter has addressed the problem of practice, current research, and theoretical reasons why a new approach is needed to address the resettlement process when wildfires occur. Inevitably, Social Identity Theory is becoming more complex as global and divergent groups provide multiple variables that form an individual’s social identity. In other words, as a result of globalization, individuals have more avenues for connecting with past social identities that may interfere or collide with new identities. Keeping this in mind, one of the prevailing conflicts in social identity is whether or not an individual builds multiple social identities simultaneously or if a weaker identity is lost during an integration phase. Amiot et al. (2015) refer to this dilemma as reconciled or conflicted multiple identities. For this reason, future research needs to explore factors that influence the preservation of social identities during periods of displacement. Arguably, this research investigates the problem of practice and provides a stepping-stone for unfolding these dynamics of SIT in the context of displacement. Prior to exploring how specific aspects of internal displacement and identity reconstruction merge, it is important to have a historical overview of how and why these two areas of research have intersected. The literature review in the following chapter presents this road map.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review will be organized into three sections. The first section is about three strands of knowledge including the origins of identity research, identity reconstruction, and internal displacement. These topics are intertwined to formulate a critique about the literature as it relates to the importance of exploring the social identity reconstruction experienced by displaced persons. This information is used in the advocacy argument section to support conclusions, which can be made in light of the known research. Lastly, a summation of the literature, which will include a thesis statement, will conclude the research and highlight implications of the research as it relates to practice.

Knowledge on Identity, Social Identity Reconstruction, and Internal Displacement

Although research about displacement is certainly advancing, the literature of identity reconstruction and internal displacement is relatively scarce. Sometimes displacement will be discussed in situations where people are providing education in emergency settings. However, displacement within this context is too broad, includes relocation due to natural disasters, and does not adequately explore the context of displacement due to wildfires. Additionally, much of the research on displacement focuses on emergency situations where personnel implement “support systems” for a relatively short period of time. The studies do not lend themselves to understanding the process of displacement. Consequently, in order to gain a fresh perspective on the problem of practice the literature review will start by exploring identity studies and how they are relevant when unfolding the problem of practice.
The Origin of Identity Studies

In 2015, transgender Caitlyn Jenner became the controversial recipient of the Arthur Ashe Courage Award, an honor usually given to an individual who has made a contribution to the world beyond sports. While Jenner chose to transform her previous identity through surgical procedures, many would argue that courage is the ability to overcome and reconstruct a positive identity after experiencing an atrocity. Regardless of individual perspectives on gender issues and equality, the debate highlighted the notion of purposeful choice or victim of circumstance in the context of courage and identity reconstruction. And, although the ESPY awards revamped the issue of identity reconstruction at a social media level, the event reflected the brewing knowledge that had been stirring in the field of academia for quite some time.

Influenced by philosophers Freud and Bernard Shaw, Erikson (1956) explored the ego identity, which was the on-going self-awareness that influenced an individual’s behavior. Interestingly, Erikson (1956) stated, “The term identity expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others” (p. 57). Unlike his predecessors, Erikson focused on the internal and external components of an identity. Today, researchers (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010) continue to define identity similarly and propose that “...identities are the various meanings attached to an individual by the self and by others” (p. 137). Although disputable, Deaux (1993) would go as far as to say that the social and personal identity are fundamentally interrelated. When the concept of identity expanded beyond the individual and his or her environment, the field of research
grew exponentially and the focus shifted towards exploring identity within specific social structures and contexts.

Over the next thirty years the advancement of studies on identity paralleled global movements. For example, as the Feminist movements gained momentum, researchers (Hogg & Turner, 1987; Money & Ehrhardt, 1972) studied gender identity. Then, as technology allowed more communication worldwide, studies focused on cultural and ethnic identities (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney & Chavira, 1992). Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) highlight three separate studies during this period that investigated self-esteem and social identity and found that both are influenced by gender and race. Phinney and Alipuria (1990) also contributed to the field of research by studying minority students and finding that they encountered more issues with regards to their ethnic identity in comparison to their peers. Later, Dee (2015) suggested that achievement differences in minority students may be decreased through affirmation intervention. However, most importantly, Phinney and Alipuria (1990) proposed that dynamics between crisis and commitment form identity. Gupta and Ferguson (1992) would contextualize this knowledge and foresee the identity crisis that immigrants face. They (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992) stated that “disjuncture of place and culture is especially clear” in the context of relocation, which could be extended to the context of displacement, too (p. 7). These studies provided a platform for understanding triggers of identity reconstruction, which would be prevalent over a decade later. Overall, the socio-constructivist research on gender, cultural, and ethnic identities heightened the awareness that identity was interconnected within individuals and groups at social levels.
The Growth in Identity Knowledge

Identity research produced a wealth of knowledge, which would lead to three important ground-breaking ideas. First, it became evident that individuals have multiple identities and that these identities could change over time (Becerra, 2013; Gee, 2000; James, 2013; Stevens, 2012). Researchers (Deaux, 1993; Puntoni, Sweldens, & Tavassoli, 2011) refer to the concept of transformative identity as salience. Somers (1994) emphasized that “if persons are socially constituted over time, space, and through relationality, then others are constitutive rather than external to identity” (p. 629). In other words, an individual’s identity cannot be constructed in isolation, and others impact and shape different identities in various environments. Kuppens, Yzerbyt, Dandache, Fischer, & Van Der Schalk (2013) would build on these two concepts by investigating the salience of social identity. The study (Kuppens et al., 2013) investigated how social identity salience affects group-based emotions with respect to group-based appraisals. Not surprisingly, there was a correlation between all three attributes.

Second, a collective identity may develop when a group of individuals connect with each other and take action (Chowdhury, 2006). While some research (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) suggests that collective identity is an American term equivalent to the European concept of social identity, it is evident that collective identity research is frequently connected with social action and behavior. For example, Chowdhury’s (2006) study on the sex workers’ movement in Bangladesh is representative of how identity work transitioned from sole an interpretivist paradigm to integrating ideas adopted from a radical humanist paradigm. The ethnographic study proposed that collective identity goes
against the majority and was one of the first studies to utilize Social Identity Theory in a non-Western context.

Finally, researchers (Beech, 2011; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Wiechert, 2014) started to investigate the fluctuation of identities during transitional periods. One prevailing idea was that individuals often reconstruct their identity following a period of transition or crisis (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). More specifically, researchers (Beech, 2011; Wiechert, 2014) use the term *liminality*, which refers to periods of in-betweenness or change in identity. This is particularly relevant to displaced persons because “identity construction within relocation involves literal starting and ending positions, yet bodies end up inhabiting a figurative ‘third space’ or ‘hybrid identity’ to which the displaced move because they cannot fully inhabit the ending position” (Powell, 2012, p. 300). Esnard and Sapat (2014) argue that identities conflict even when an individual remains in a similar geographical area because an individual’s “position” changes in relation to the surrounding social hierarchy. Tecle (2012) affirms this notion and suggests that youth who have resettled in the Horn of Africa lose their social identity when they are displaced. Since displaced persons must navigate through transitional periods, this study focuses on how identity reconstruction occurs for individuals who must resettle. For this reason, the next section will explore current studies in identity reconstruction.

**Identity Reconstruction**

The emergence of identity reconstruction has occurred in many contexts including: migration (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Ertorer, 2014), addiction recovery programs (Irving, 2011), criminality (Rocque, Posick, & Paternoster, 2016; Stevens, 2012), language learning (Khatib & Rezaei, 2013), work role transition (Ibarra &
Barbulesco, 2010), brain injury (Wiechert, 2014), illness (Barker, 2016; Bevilacqua, 2005), and disasters (Farida, 2014). Previous research referred to identity reconstruction as *identity work* (Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008), *identity negotiation* (Bevilacqua, 2005; Mathieson & Stam, 1995), or *empowered identity* (Chen, 2012). Mathieson and Stam (1995) coded the term “disrupted feelings of fit” to describe instances where people re-negotiate their identity (p. 293). For the purpose of this study, identity will be defined as “... the various meanings attached to an individual by the self and by others” (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010, p. 137). Furthermore, identity reconstruction builds on this concept and includes how the various meanings are challenged or changed in social circles during and following displacement.

Although identity reconstruction is an ongoing process, individuals often experience significant changes during periods of radical transition when there is a conflict between self-understanding and social ideals (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008). According to Mbakem and Collins (2014), identity construction can be categorized as a survival strategy in response to displacement. Research (Mbakem & Collins, 2014) suggests that language and culture predominantly shape the reconstruction phase. So, although identity dynamics are often considered internal and psychological, individuals can also experience social and physical changes that affect identity (Mathieson & Stam, 1995). Mathieson and Stam’s (1995) narrative research addresses the external changes of cancer patients by using the term *body talk.* In the context of displacement, external changes could include physical wounds or outward changes based on the economic disparity that occurs amidst relocation or resettlement.
An interesting development in this field is that social groups contribute significantly to an individual’s ability to reconstruct his or her identity. For example, Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) accurately predicted that individuals who are actively involved in social groups would have higher private collective self-esteem and membership esteem, as well as recognizing identity as having a strong importance in their lives. Likewise, Chen’s (2012) research would build on this notion by establishing that school clubs play an important role in helping indigenous students form an empowered identity, which deepens and protects the individual’s understanding of their own culture.

One type of social group that is known to positively affect social identity is known as a therapeutic community. Irving’s (2011) narrative study on individuals dependent on drugs and alcohol highlighted how effective Therapeutic Communities (TC) can be useful because they emphasize the social aspect of identity reconstruction and often give individuals a sense of purpose. Similarly, one participant in Steven’s (2012) research on the therapeutic community prisons stated:

**the shared ‘us’ or social identity residents enjoyed as members of a superior penal club inherently contrasted with, and encouraged the repudiation and disengagement of, all things that constitute the ‘thems’ of ‘the system’, including their own ‘old’ former offender identity. (p. 541)**

In other words, much like Cooley’s concept of the looking-glass self, it seems that there is a reciprocal relationship between social support groups and positive social identity reconstruction.

More recently the reconstruction of social identities has been at the forefront of research, which has been used as a tool to voice the needs of marginalized populations.
For example, Farida (2014) studied how victims of mudslides in Lumpur Lapido reconstructed their social identities and found that an individual’s social identity is based on motivation to improve and reduce uncertainty. Additionally, Zheng and Lawson (2014) investigated the collective identities of shiduers, individuals from China who have lost their only child and are now stigmatized due to the one-child policy in the country.

The following table 2.1 highlights the key transitional studies that impacted the field of identity development and reconstruction:

### Table 2.1

**The changing tide in research on identity reconstruction**

|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Main Ideas/Key Concepts | ● Scale for social identity includes: Membership esteem, public collective self-esteem, private collective self-esteem, and importance to identity.  
● Measures self-esteem through social lens.  
● 3 separate studies  
● 43 items on a 7 point Likert scale 887 participants  
| Quotes | ● “...social identity refers to how they view the social groups to which they belong” (p. 302). |
| Comments | ● States that social identity (European) = collective identity (American).  
● Developed Collective Self-Esteem Scale: Scale Example pg. 307.  
● Gender and Race influence public and identity on the subscale  
● Predicts that individuals who are actively involved in social groups would be higher in the membership, private, and identity categories. |
| Main Ideas/Key Concepts | ● Identity refers to social categories that have membership and meanings individuals attribute to those groups.  
● Context plays a role in development and enactment of identities.  
● Proposes that social and personal identity are fundamentally interrelated  
● Suggests the purpose of SIT has moved from self-esteem to self-enhancement.  
● Highlights Proshansky’s place identity. Suggests Tajfel’s original work was based on national and ethnic loyalties (Jew/Nazi). |
| Quotes | ● construction: people make active and often idiosyncratic choices p. 4.  
● self-categorization includes human identity, social identity, and personal identity  
● “Social identities are those roles or membership categories that a person claims as representative” p. 6.  
● Longitudinal factors: how are identities acquired? How are they modified by experience? How does a person react to the loss of an important identity? p. 12. |
| Comments | ● Reaffirms that an individual has multiple identities.  
● Recommends longitudinal studies take place in the future.  
● Ascribed categories of identity = gender, race vs. achieved categories.  
● Argues that identity now has a more personological sense p. 5.  
● Provides an example of hierarchical classification analysis of one subject.  
● Also, concurs with the idea of salience: the characteristics associated with an identity can shift. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Main Ideas/Key Concepts</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Methodology: Ethnographic research (40 days) + 16 interviews w/ focus groups.</td>
<td>Jargon: identity is fluid, fragile, dramaturgical, reconstructed</td>
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<td>A group of &quot;bad girls&quot; challenges the dominant code public life by opening the social identity as &quot;fallen woman&quot; (potita) and claiming the identity of workers instead.</td>
<td>Parallels identity reconstruction with narratives. In order for a narrative to continue, the storyline/employment points must change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four patterns of individual and collective identity claims-making strategies are identified from the identity talk: associational dialecticism (i.e. I am a human being), oppression consciousness (i.e. interaction w/ police), resistance narrative (i.e. martyrs), and essentialist contention (a social service).</td>
<td>Interesting: Democratic Therapeutic Communities designed after WWII to help traumatized war veterans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposes that collective identity goes against dominant order.</td>
<td>Participants noted title&gt; resident NOT prisoner</td>
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<th>Quotes</th>
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<td>&quot;Golem effect&quot; of low expectations leading to poor outcomes, the converse can occur: a 'Pygmalion effect' when high expectations of 'better things' propel a would-be desister to greater self-belief and behaviours which concord with the attainment of 'better things' (Maruna et al., 2009)&quot; (p. 536).</td>
<td>Mentions purposive changes p. 531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The shared ‘us’ or social identity residents enjoyed as members of a superior penal club inherently contrasted with, and encouraged the repudiation and disengagement of, all things that constitute the ‘thems’ of ‘the system’, including their own ‘old’ former offender identity (p. 541).</td>
<td>&quot;I am the person now I was always meant to be’: Identity reconstruction and narrative reframing in therapeutic community prisons. Criminology and Criminal Justice, 1(25), 527-547.</td>
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<th>Main Ideas/Key Concepts</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
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<td>Offender rehabilitation in therapeutic communities involves a process of purposive and agentic reconstruction of identity and narrative reframing.</td>
<td>Four social identities are highlighted in the victim of Indonesian mudslides.</td>
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<td>A radically “different” culture and mode of rehabilitation, socially enables, produces, and reinforces the emergence of someone “different.”</td>
<td>Social identity can raise solidarity among victims.</td>
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<td>Methodology- semi-ethnographic, semi-structured interviews, extensive observations.</td>
<td>Purposes that social identity is based on motivation to improve and reduce uncertainty.</td>
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<td>By telling and reflecting on the whole story, participants could move beyond their current label.</td>
<td>Also, suggests resistance narrativization of self in a non-industrialized frame.</td>
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<td>Special attention given to &quot;external entities&quot; in the identity reconstruction process.</td>
<td>Highlights the importance of distinguishing: 1) Where are you from? 2) Where is your home?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Americo: the identity talk: associational dialecticism (i.e. I am a human being), oppression consciousness (i.e. interaction w/ police), resistance narrative (i.e. martyrs), and essentialist contention (a social service).</td>
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The table shows that within ten years research on identity reconstruction has transformed from a passive approach to understanding social identity to a more active subject that
addresses the needs of “outsiders” such as inmates and sex workers. The overall message conveyed in the studies is clear that a person’s social identity is susceptible to damage and must be considered a priority in reconstruction processes. In order to understand why or how identity reconstruction takes place, it is necessary to evaluate a specific context in which the transformation is likely to take place. If identity reconstruction occurs during crisis and disasters, then researchers should have an obligation to address one of the most unprecedented dilemmas of the century. This next section will introduce the problem of internal displacement, and then this information will be intertwined with research on identity reconstruction to create an advocacy argument.

**Internal Displacement**

According to Goldberg (2014, June 20), there are nearly fifty million displaced persons worldwide, and 33.3 million individuals are internally displaced persons. The existing research on internal displacement is often compartmentalized by causes of displacement including: forced migration or relocation (Aiken & Leigh, 2015; Elmhirst, 2012; Kabra & Mahalwal, 2014; LeVan & Olubowale, 2015; Powell, 2012), urban restructuration (Johnston, 2014), conflict (Ferris & Winthrop, 2010; Lankster, 2014), and natural disasters such as hurricanes (Biggar, 2015; Pane et al., 2008) and wildfires (Gordon et al., 1994; Jenkins et al., 2009; Kirsch et al., 2008). The following table 2.2 highlights key studies that represent the vastness and growing fascination in this field of research:
Table 2.2

**Key research addressing IDPs and the causes of displacement**

|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Main Ideas/Key Concepts** | ● Affirms that host communities experience increased tension with IDPs because of competing resources.  
● Protracted displacement accentuates regional instability.  
● Irregular secondary migrations influence conflict and security issues in relatively stable countries.  
● Critical perspective: Suggests the key for resolutions rests in policy makers ranging from innovative local levels to international systemic change. |
| **Quotes** | ● "...new thinking on the causes and consequences of protracted displacement and policy responses is urgently needed."  
● "The reception and conditions available to refugees and the internally displaced, the humanitarian response, livelihood opportunities and long-term prospects, and the security interests of regional States and countries of asylum further afield, produce a complex cocktail of causes and consequences which are often interrelated. Framing these as crisis conditions neglects the persistence of the underlying situation and undermines the longer-term needs and aspirations of the refugees and IDPs." |
| **Comments** | ● The novel approach of linking a state/regional level analysis with a people-based level of analysis.  
● Archetype of protracted displacement> Somali refugees in Kenya (rising since 2006).  
● The research suggests three durable solutions: voluntary return, local integration, and resettlement.  
● One of the presiding issues is addressing the original political causes of displacement, which is not addressed in the humanitarian assistance model. |

|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Main Ideas/Key Concepts** | ● Researchers undertook a systematic search and review of individual, family, community, and societal risk and protective factors for mental health in children and adolescents who are forcibly displaced to high-income countries.  
● Exposure to violence has been shown to be a key risk factor, whereas stable settlement and social support in the host country have a positive effect on the child's psychological functioning. |
| **Quotes** | ● "Research designs are needed that enable longitudinal investigation of individual, community, and societal contexts, rather than designs restricted to investigation of the associations between adverse exposures and psychological symptoms." |
| **Comments** | ● The research is indicative of current studies on displacement that emphasize mental health.  
● The authors advocate for new policies for effective integrations, which categorizes the paradigm as radical humanist approach. |

|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Main Ideas/Key Concepts** | ● Displacement of Baoris (Ahmedabad, India) based on politics of urban restructuring, liberalization and Hindu nationalism.  
● Assesses the tactics that community residents have deployed in their bid to maintain claims to territory, labor, and services.  
● Basti=unauthorized settlement  
● 14 months of ethnographic field work with field notes (rich descriptive account...much like Geertz).  
● Unique approach: Vidya> street theater company. The researcher collaborated with the community to develop short documentary films, which were shown on the streets. |
| **Quotes** | ● Evidence of redisplacement:  
● "Families were given a small cash payment of 1,000 rupees (US $20) to offset the costs of displacement.  
● Informed that this was temporary accommodation, it took the AMC four years to shift Baoris to a second housing complex in Vishala” (p. 544).  
● Develops testimonies> narrations> based on social and cultural contexts + photos and interviews p. 540-541  
● “The Supreme Court of India in New Delhi. It won the case, legitimizing the slum clearance on the basis that Baoris were illegally occupying an 80-foot-wide roadway outlined in its town planning scheme” (p. 542).
| Comments | • Arguably: Radical structuralist paradigm  
• Displaced person coerced into signing notarized documents with threat of punishment. (p. 546).  
• Cites the injustice of the government resettling victims into areas where there was no electricity, schools, and it was prone to flooding. |
| Main Ideas/ Key Concepts | • The causes of displacement are more diverse than the categories assigned (i.e., conflicts, human rights abuses, repressions, and natural disasters)  
• Adaptive livelihood reconstruction strategies  
• Self-identification makes them resilient and enables survivability.  
• Displaced persons are creative and ingenious (p. 102).  
• Language and culture predominantly shape reconstruction phase. p. 110. |
| Quotes | • Approximately “21 million refugees and internally displaced persons get to Europe” (p. 101).  
• “Forcibly displaced are obliged to aspire to become identities driven by their resettlement and livelihood objectives” (p. 102).  
• Alternative names for displaced person: “political refugee, asylum seeker, internally displaced person, war-affected population etc. “(p. 102).  
• *prima facie* status: live on the camp premises p. 104  
• Displaced persons “identity themselves...to individual experiences in exile and results from the quest to construct post-displacement livelihoods” (p. 108).  
• We construct identities as a survival strategy (p. 112). |
| Comments | • Interesting: respondents in their country were more eager to tell their story than those in Newcastle. p. 103.  
• Important concept: re-displacement can occur when assimilation/acculturation process does not occur. |
| APA Citation | • Lankster, N. (2014). Treatment effects for trauma in survivors of genocide, war, and conflict, residing in South Africa (Doctoral Dissertation) Retrieved from ProQuest (Order No. 3582750). |
| Main Ideas/ Key Concepts | • Focuses on the treatment of survivors and suggest there are culturally based manifestations of PTSD.  
• Semi-structured interviews  
• Questionnaires- 33 questions and 12 probes w/ 7 categories of questions  
• Sample Size: 6 (5 female/1 male) Participants interacted with the population through work (i.e. counselors, health care worker)  
• Emerging themes related to trauma: Survivors losing their sense of self-identity, having a distrust of others, and feeling as though there is a lack of justice in the world. |
| Quotes | • Genocidal acts may lead to displacement. “Displaced and sometimes have to travel hundreds of miles from their home, at times on foot and/or by hitchhiking, to seek shelter. They often lack adequate food, medical care, and clothing on these treks (Russell et al., 2006).” (p. 50).  
• “It is a common occurrence for these IDPs to band together and form temporary camps (Fearneley & Chiwandamira, 2006; Stern & Sundberg, 2007). However, even in camps IDPs rarely find the safe haven for which they desperately search (Stern & Sundberg, 2007)” (p. 50). |
| Comments | • Key idea: IDPs remain in the country due to financial and mobility limitations.  
• Appendix E: Pg. 161 Provides Example of Interview Questionnaire.  
• Framework: Complex Trauma Theory. |
| Main Ideas/ Key Concepts | • Case study and literature review on Development-forced displacement and resettlement (DFDR)  
• Occurring in Malaysia because of domestic demand for water and energy.  
• Suggests that resettled indigenes suffer from frayed social relationships, high rates of unemployment, and enduring poverty.  
• Marginalization- a process of exclusion and control that involves the denial or erosion of certain people’s rights and entitlements, including their access to land, natural resources, and social support networks (Citing Hall et al., 2011) (p. 72).  
• Proposes that policies (as opposed to people) often create a “permanent emergency.” p. 73 |
| Quotes | • Resettled indigenes “...appear to have suffered from emotional and psychological harm, including anxiety, despondency, personal insecurity and a sense of lost identity and self-worth” (p. 83-84). Also, refers to Rose (2011).  
• In Malaysia, *adat* refers to “various rules and regulations regarding rights to land and natural resources” (p.74). |
Reasons for displacement include: conflict, government forced relocation, and natural disasters.

The table shows that over the past five years branches of research stemming from displacement have become more diversified. Paradigms shaping the field have evolved from positivistic studies dominated by statistics to more radical humanist and criticalist approaches that are concerned with issues of social justice. These changes provide promising new insights into internal displacement, but also present a need to extend parameters for more innovative studies.

Evidently, on a practical level, to explore internal displacement it is necessary to define internally displaced person (IDPs). Mooney (2005) suggests that internally displaced persons are determined by two criteria including: involuntary movement and being within the border of one country. Johnston’s (2014) fourteen-month ethnographic study on the displacement of Baoris is a prime example of this definition because the
residents were coerced into signing notarized documents, and then forced to resettle in an area susceptible to flooding with no electricity and no local schools. In addition to forced relocation, there must be a sense of permanency in an individual's residency prior to displacement (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2008). Although individuals may desire to relocate, IDPs often remain within the borders of their country due to financial and mobility limitations (Lankster, 2014). Regardless of the reason(s) for displacement, it is clear that the life-changing relocation often involves coercion and the victims require humanitarian assistance and protection during and after the crisis (Mooney, 2005).

Academically, much of the literature about IDPs that does exists, has been rooted in humanitarian organizations and international policy members. It is hopeful that with further exposure to the issue, the scholars in the realm of academia will investigate this topic to gain more depth. So far, there are three main emphases in regards to IDPs. The first proposition is that much of the research about internal displacement focuses on health status, with a specific emphasis on psychological aspects. For instance, Daoud et al. (2012) investigated the health of a Palestinian minority group in Israel, who had been displaced due to a war in 1948. The research showed that internal displacement can have a detrimental effect on an individual’s health. Given the violence that many of the IDPs encounter during civil unrest, and the chronic stress with which they live, the findings were not particularly alarming. However, it was unique in that it observed the long-term effects of displacement. Similarly, Fazel et al. (2012) studied protective factors that affect the mental health of children who are forcibly displaced in high-income countries. They found that secure relocation and substantial social support are beneficial to a child’s
psychological well-being (Fazel et al., 2012). These studies affirm that displaced persons are susceptible to mental health problems, but that social relationships and an individual’s environment may prevent or reduce negative side effects.

In addition to looking at the overall health of IDPs, some researchers (Kim, Torbay, & Lawry, 2007; Porter & Haslam, 2005; Siriwardhana et al., 2013) have focused on specific aspects of well-being, such as mental health. Siriwardhana et al. (2013) evaluated the correlation between common mental disorders that are associated with extended periods of being internally displaced. The studies provided by Daoud et al. (2012) and Siriwardhana et al. (2013) do not provide an exhaustive overview on displacement, but they are indicative of the type of research that is currently being developed. Much like the studies previously mentioned in this section, the extensiveness of education for IDPs is predominantly tied to the effects of health education.

Abdelmoneium (2010) focused on how health education for displaced children was promoted by non-governmental organizations in Khartoum, Sudan. While these issues surrounding health are relevant, the established research neglects the importance of understanding the process of how individuals could prevent or minimize the negative repercussions related to displacement. Valliappan’s (2011) research on displacement in Columbia demonstrates that rebuilding an individual’s identity integrating into a culture is more like an ‘onion’ than a mathematical equation. These are some of the hidden “layers” of displacement that need to be uncovered. In order to unravel these layers, the emergence of novel qualitative research is necessary.

A second proposition connected with displacement is that IDPs are often required to resettle multiple times. Mbakem and Collins’ (2014) study on identity and resettlement
of Somali-Kiwi women in New Zealand suggests that re-displacement can occur when assimilation or acculturation does not take place in a timely manner. Other research (James, 2013) notes that resettlement may happen more than one time if individuals seek better job opportunities or greater cultural connections in the surrounding community. Lankster’s (2014) study on internal displacement in South Africa states that IDPs often unite temporarily in camps, but they are forced to relocate due to safety or security reasons. Unfortunately, relocation is specifically problematic for school-aged children because it can take up to a year before they enroll in school again (Duale, 2013). This directly reflects literature surrounding gender-based violence and human rights and leads to the next proposition.

The third proposition is that much of the research on displacement focuses on the violation of human rights and gender-based violence. One of the greatest factors that dominates conversations on IDPs is that there is currently no legal regime to enforce the protection of the human rights of IDPs (Birganie, 2010). Although this affects all IDPs, the rights of women and children are often compromised the most. For instance, the identity of female IDPs change as they become separated from their male household leaders, more vulnerable to sexual extortion, and discriminated against when attempting to return to schools (Parsitau, 2011). Qayum, Mohmand and Arooj (2012) found that health facilities of internal displacement camps in Jalozai, Pakistan reported twelve instances of gender-based violence per month. The research (Qayum, Mohmand, & Arooj, 2012) suggests that illuminating areas and securing washrooms would make a vast improvement on the prevention of gender-based violence. The research on human rights and gender-based violence is important; however, the data gathered emphasizes the
importance of changing policy, rather than adapting practice. These two issues cannot be mutually exclusive.

The final proposition is that the limited knowledge, which has accrued in displacement and the resettlement process is reminiscent of potpourri; it impacts the environment, but does not fulfill the need for long-term solutions. For example, one study that is indicative of this practice is Stickley and Stickley’s (2010) research that observed the impact of the rehabilitation of IDPs in Uganda. Part of the “rehabilitation” included training community groups, organizing group play for children, and participating in tasks “such as farming, football, dance and drama” (Stickley & Stickley, 2010, p. 337). More specifically, these activities also included a goat-rearing project for the families most in need. The research (Stickley & Stickley, 2010) argued that:

Where people experience the trauma of displacement, subsequent resettlement can be facilitated best by focusing upon occupation, including daily routines and other ‘ordinary’ activities, such as going to school, farming and managing the home. It is the ordinariness of occupational therapy that is most effective in such difficult situations. (p. 338)

Although the knowledge is advantageous, it is not without limitations. For instance, rehabilitation infers that the IDP may return to a “normal” state, as if it is somehow possible to return to the prior condition. Often, for those who have experienced trauma, the ultimate goal is to move ahead one step at a time and create a new identity and life.

A study that more intently focuses on recovery and discovery of identity involves art therapy. Czamanski-Cohen’s (2010) research incorporated a narrative analysis through a collaborative inquiry approach and recognizes that art therapy is a viable option
to improve mental health of IDPs. This study (Czamanski-Cohen, 2010) is pertinent because it acknowledges that when displacement occurs “the social fabric of their community is ruptured” and it addresses the symptoms that IDPs experience (p. 407). Finally, one of the few studies on displacement that incorporates social identity is Parsitau’s (2011) investigation on four faith-based organizations, which analyzed the relationship between faith and rebuilding lives after displacement. Parsitau (2011) explains that:

…vulnerable women used faith, texts and scriptures to reinvent and redefine what it means to be an internally displaced Christian woman living in a camp within a country that failed to protect its own people; they have ultimately used these tools, resources and metaphors for empowerment to reclaim their place in society. (p. 509)

This study indicates that there are resources to aid the reconstruction process; however, these tools are maximized when intertwined into social circles that work alongside the individual. These three efforts provide practical insight for the scholar-practitioner seeking to help IDPs embrace their status and move forward. However, although their efforts are commendable, the “potpourri” knowledge surrounding their experiences barely permeates the surface.

To summarize, the four propositions discussed in this section are reflective of the current literature on internal displacement. It is evident that the awareness of this population is growing, but there is still much work to be done. The establishment of resolutions that take into consideration the social identity of IDPs may effectively prevent unnecessary resettlement from occurring. In order to promote and establish successful
resettlement plans more knowledge about identity reconstruction and displacement must be explored. Since internal displacement is such a broad topic, this study investigates displacement due to wildfires, which is the specific context that is discussed in the following section.

**Internal Displacement Due to Wildfires.** The internal displacement captured by the media is often projected as a third-world problem. However, individuals who have experienced natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina would invariably argue that it impacts thousands of lives in America each year. The vast subject of forced relocation may be narrowed by exploring displacement due to natural disasters and more specifically wildfires. This section will identify recent episodes of internal displacement in southern California and three prominent studies that have highlighted this issue.

Gordon et al. (1994) conducted one of the first studies on displacement due to wildfires, and specifically analyzed the effects of the 1993 Altadena fires where 121 homes were destroyed. Interestingly, Gordon et al.’s (1994) research indicates that there may be a correlation between psychological distress and community spirit during the resettlement period. However, there is limited knowledge on the specific social structures that influence these two variables. Later, two additional studies have focused on internal displacement due to wildfires. According to Kirsch et al. (2008) nearly 500,000 individuals were displaced from southern California wildfires in 2007. The following year, Jenkins et al. (2009) studied the unmet health care needs of the displaced individuals in southern California from October to November of 2007, and out of 161 displaced households one-sixth of the population that had health needs did not receive adequate health care (Jenkins et al., 2009). Unfortunately, these scenes are becoming all
too recurring and these ongoing and unrelenting disasters threaten many communities. Since California has faced severe droughts over the past three years, the territory continues to remain highly susceptible to brush fires. It is apparent that displacement is destructive and there is an urgency to construct efficient and effective solutions that help displaced persons reestablish their lives. The next section on identity reconstruction and displacement leads up to the advocacy argument that expresses why and how this intervention can occur.

**Identity Reconstruction & Internal Displacement**

Although identity reconstruction and internal displacement appear to be two separate entities, this section argues that they intersect powerfully. Szabo and Ward’s (2015) research on identity development during cultural transitions affirms that identity reconstruction occurs when there is a disequilibrium. Correspondingly, individuals who are displaced experience different degrees of disequilibrium, which must be addressed when reconstructing their social identities. Powell (2012) explains this phenomenon well when stating that, “As displaced bodies move, the identities they inhabit also move” (p. 300). However, current research does not illuminate our understanding of why and how the movement occurs.

In the context of IDPs, the need to reconstruct a new social identity must be met proactively because a “resolution of identity crisis does not necessarily go away over time” (Fazel et al., 2012, p. 278.). It has become painfully obvious that time does not heal everything. James (2013) strongly attests that identity construction is a necessary evolution that must happen in order for displaced person to establish a bond with their new environment. Szabo & Ward (2015) provided some helpful guidelines and suggested
that identity achievement is reached through exploration and commitment. This is most applicable in displacement, which causes loss of identity due to the lack of closure with the individual’s previous community and identity within that environment (Biggar, 2015). Additionally, research demonstrates that IDPs face unique challenges in this area because alongside losing their self-identity, displaced individuals experience having a distrust of others and feeling a sense of a lack of justice (Lankster, 2014). Although organizations and governmental agencies often try to provide immediate relief during displacement, their efforts focus predominantly on the temporary condition of individuals rather than building a deeper understanding of how they process the crisis and rebuild their lives.

Research on internal displacement and identity confirms that the struggle that individuals face during displacement continues when resettling, too. In Bogota, Columbia where there are approximately 300,000 IDPs, proper documentation hinders individuals from obtaining proper identification to vote, work, gain an education, and drive (Rincon, 2013). In Biggar’s (2014) phenomenological research on the displacement of survivors of Hurricane Katrina five themes emerged including: no choice but to rebuild in a new community, loss of independence, striving for normalcy, resilience experienced through external factors, and ambiguous loss. As well as these negative side-affects, displacement and the conflict of dealing with the past and establishing a present identity leaves individuals vulnerable to depression (Roberts, Ocaka, Browne, Oyok, & Sondorp, 2008). As Cohen (2015) explains, “the strain of burying the past, losing one identity and embracing another, can be overwhelming” (para. 2). Most recently, Aiken and Leigh (2015) affirm this notion and add that displaced individuals suffer from a sense of loss of self-worth and identity, dismantled social relationships, increased unemployment rates,
and long-lasting economic struggles. To summarize the literature, it could be said that displacement affects an individual’s psychological, physiological, and social well-being, and therefore alters an individual’s social identity.

**Advocacy Argument**

While there are many implications and possible focal points for future research, there are three in particular that will be highlighted in this section. The first proposition suggests that identity reconstruction is an important process that cannot be neglected during the resettlement period. The two additional propositions highlight how and why identity reconstruction should be a priority in the context of displacement. It is evident from surveying the literature that research on identity has undergone evolutionary changes from individual to social dimensions; however new literature must address how social identity reconstruction takes place during and after a crisis, and more specifically for individuals who are displaced.

Proposition one is that investigating identity reconstruction during and after displacement is significant and researchers must acknowledge that these two areas integrate through a process, not an event. The majority of the current literature focuses on the repercussions associated with displacement and do not provide holistic solutions for identity reconstruction. In order to assist displaced persons and positively impact their future, complacency is no longer an option. For individuals who have been exposed to traumatic experiences, the ability to navigate the reconstruction of their identity may prevent major mental health issues and chronic illnesses. While the research promotes a better understanding of the detrimental effects of displacement, a shift must take place in order to proactively support IDPs during transitional periods.
Proposition two proposes that reconstructing an individual’s social identity is equally if not more important than simply addressing their personal immediate needs. At an organizational level, the social support for displaced persons is often the most neglected even though it may prove to be the most beneficial. In McKinnon’s (2008) research on *The Lost Boys of Sudan*, arguably the most successful resettlement program in U.S. history, “refugee camps and settlements become spaces of identity building and construction” (p. 399). Yet, the process of social identity reconstruction is overlooked when dealing with internal displacement. This is an important topic to explore because social identity reconstruction during resettlement is applicable in many contexts, regardless of how or why displacement occurred. Practitioners could use developing knowledge to help victims of natural disasters (i.e. hurricanes and wildfires), conflict, and forced migration who face similar conditions of isolation.

Finally, the third proposition is that as the crisis of displacement grows globally governmental policy and regulations must become more efficient at addressing the social needs of the individual so that identity reconstruction happens in a timely fashion. This is crucial because displacement affects communities as well as the individual. More specifically, Kabra and Mahalwal’s (2014) research on displacement suggests that host communities are affected significantly in terms of livelihood changes. If this shift occurs on a global level, then economic repercussions will ricochet like a pebble in a lake. From the literature review, it is evident that the exponential and perpetual growth of displacement indicates that the current legislation does not adequately address the issue at the individual, organizational, or global level. Likewise, the aid that is available to displaced persons and host communities predominantly focuses on the short-term
conditions rather than promoting long-term solutions. Since displacement is now an epidemic that is infiltrating first-world and third-world countries, research should propel a movement to amend the gap between policy and practice.

In summary, the eclectic approach to research, introduces three overarching themes that will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this field. To begin, the section on the evolution of identity studies demonstrates how a shift has occurred from a focus on the individual level to the societal level. Additionally, the research proposes that current social identity studies reflect a need to understand the identity of marginalized individuals. Finally, these ideas collide and the author advocates that internally displaced persons (IDPs) have to reconstruct their social identity during the resettlement process, and that understanding the process may prevent mental illnesses or prolonged displacement.

**Summation**

The three prevailing ideas in this research are intertwined to create the following thesis statement: Evaluating how internally displaced persons restructure their social identity is significant because it provides a holistic approach for individuals amidst the resettlement process, it may reduce the negative repercussions associated with displacement, and it will lead to more efficient and effective governmental responses to communities experiencing disasters. Although this statement guides the research, it does not direct practitioners in how they can interpret the information and use it on a practical level. For this reason, an analysis must provide further insight.

**The Thesis Analysis.** This particular study highlights the need to address how displaced persons reconstruct their social identities during and after displacement.
Research suggests that displacement occurs during a disaster and that social identity reconstruction must occur in order for an individual to settle into his or her new environment. By exploring identity reconstruction of displaced persons at a societal level, community leaders, emergency responders, and governmental agencies will be better equipped to address the process and long-term needs of these individuals. In addition, leaders involved in the displacement crisis can create policies and increase funds to alleviate the trauma that many displaced persons experience.

**Implications on the Work on Practice.** On a practical level, there are two other advantageous outcomes that propel the research forward. To begin, the study provides a foundation for supporting the development of new educational or community programs to help IDPs. Education is often the primary means to stop perpetual displacement and this study will help determine other ways to promote successful resettlement. To some extent, the findings will establish stronger evidence to enforce work that has already begun. For instance, positive outcomes of education for IDPs are seen in programs such as the Africa Educational Trust (AET), which schooled women and children IDPs in 16 camps in order to break the cycle of perpetual displacement (Duale, 2013). These ideas reinforce the underlying assumptions found in the literature review and suggest that if displaced persons have assistance in reconstructing their social identity, it is possible that negative effects such as mental health problems and depression could be reduced. Likewise, when displaced persons receive adequate help to rebuild their lives, the long-term benefits may include the minimization of “re-displacement,” or having to move again. These fundamental values rely heavily on educating persons in ways to rebuild their identity and this is the key to solving the problem of practice.
Furthermore, sometimes stakeholders who invest in humanitarian aid can become pessimistic and withdraw funding if they feel their contributions are not being used effectively. For two years in a row the president of China has contributed ten million dollars to assist and rehabilitate IDPs in Pakistan (“China provides $10 mn to Pakistan for rehabilitation of IDPs.” 2015). It is an agreement known as the China Pakistan Economic Corridor that supports military operations and humanitarian relief. Similarly, in the last two years, the United Nations and partner agencies appealed for $4.4 billion, the largest in history, for urgent humanitarian aid to help Syrians who were displaced (Banco, 2013, June 18). With the dire needs, research must be developed that will provide affirmation that the finances of contributors are being used efficiently. If research can establish strong evidence for providing support for displaced persons to reconstruct their social identity, then stakeholders will be more likely to maintain or increase their funds. This will reinforce the idea that long-term solutions are not just beneficial for the victims of displacement, it is advantageous for governments who have become somewhat burdened by the cause, too.

Conclusion

For over forty years there has been a growing fascination with identity at individual and societal levels. Recently, researchers have prioritized identity reconstruction as a necessary process that people in crisis experience. This movement has paralleled an uprising of using identity studies to give voice to marginalized persons. However, social identity reconstruction has barely been recognized in the academic field, yet alone in the context of displacement. The prevalence of displacement worldwide suggests that it is not an event, but a process through which individuals must navigate.
This research could be an exemplar to provide greater social support and networks for displaced persons. As governments and humanitarian agencies recognize the increasing number of displaced persons, training on how to assist the social identity reconstruction process could be given to local leaders or administrators. In this way, the research could be a pivotal turning point by demonstrating how the trauma of displacement can be alleviated. Also, by understanding the factors that contribute to social identity reconstruction, the research will be a tool to prevent perpetual displacement. In the following chapter, the author will introduce the methodology utilized for the study, and analyze why Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is the most suitable vehicle to use while exploring social identity reconstruction of IDPs.
Chapter 3: Methodology & Methods

The problem of practice suggests that internal displacement is often prolonged and recurring, which perpetuates the issue and leads to the exponential growth of displacement worldwide. To resolve this problem, the researcher explored how internally displaced persons (IDPs) experience the reconstruction of their social identity during displacement and the resettlement period, in the context of forced migration due to wildfires. The main research question was: How do working adults displaced by the Swall Meadows wildfires describe the reconstruction of their social identity following their resettlement process?

This study captured various perspectives of IDPs that enlighten our current understanding of social identity factors that promote or hinder the acculturation process during resettlement. Social identity refers to “...the individual’s knowledge that he (or she) belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him (or her) of this group membership” (Turner, 1975, p. 7). By acculturation, the researcher means how the individuals adjust to their new social status and environment while rebuilding their lives following wildfires. By participants contributing their lived experiences, public safety officials and humanitarian responders are able to prioritize the needs of individuals who are forced to leave their homes.

Overview of Methodology

It was evident that quantitative data would not suffice in obtaining the rich data needed to answer the research question(s) because the inquiry required participants to share their subjective reality that aligned within an interpretivist paradigm. The primary research question was open-ended and exploratory, which is indicative of qualitative
studies (Creswell, 2009). As Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain, “qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about a phenomenon such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods” (p. 11). Additionally, through qualitative research, the data constructs or develops theory rather than tests theory. Since the experience of IDPs displaced by wildfires was an unscathed area, the study required a methodology that gave the investigator the freedom to navigate different avenues with the participants. Although this freedom could be criticized as a lack of rigor, it was not the case. Due to the subjectivity involved in qualitative studies, “...the researcher must also be able to convey a clear connection between data and theory. Unlike numbers, qualitative data are not easily reduced” (Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 236). The research question suggested that numerous perspectives were evaluated to determine the essence or commonality between lived experiences, and this particular attribute reduced the various qualitative approaches to a phenomenological methodology.

In this study, IPA was the methodology used to explore the problem of practice. In this project the researcher inquired about a specific group of people (IDPs) who had experienced a phenomenon (displacement due to wildfires). There was a purposive sample of eight participants who provided in-depth textual data, which captured evidence for an analysis of social identity restructuring in displacement. Smith (2004) succinctly summarized the main characteristics of IPA by stating that IPA research is *idiographic*, *inductive*, and *interrogative*. Each attribute contributes to the rigor of the research approach.
Unlike other qualitative methods, in IPA the participant was viewed as the expert (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008), and therefore the investigator’s role resembled that of a collaborator or an active listener. This IPA study involved double hermeneutics (Hill & Leeming, 2014; Harrigan et al., 2015) because the researcher interpreted how the participants made sense of, or interpreted, their lived experiences. Since IPA involves investigating intimate details, scholars (Flowers, Davis, Larkin, Church, & Marriot, 2011) describe the role of the researcher in IPA, which is “...to establish rapport and actively manage the interaction to elicit first person detailed accounts of specific events” (p. 1380). There were mutually supportive relationships between the participants and the researcher in the study. This was reminiscent of Etchegary’s strategy in which the investigator (2011) made telephone calls and sent informational packages to build rapport. However, this study utilized one-to-one interviews to build trust. The close relationship allowed the researcher to obtain an emic, or insider’s perspective of the lived experiences of others, which reflected a distinguishing characteristic of IPA research.

Finally, Broadbent (2013) explains that IPA provides the opportunity for individuals to share their stories, and ultimately their voices. By looking holistically at individual stories from each participant, the data was used to establish patterns from themes that emerge when comparing and contrasting multiple stories. This intentional investigation, which explored the commonalities that IDPs face expanded current knowledge of displacement in the context of wildfires and the researcher used the following analytical questions to guide the second round of data analysis: 1) How do displaced persons anticipate a sense of belonging or identification prior to resettlement? 2) What differences or discontinuities do participants experience at the beginning of
resettlement? 3) How do displaced persons maintain separate or distinct identities during the acculturation process? 4) What factors contributed to a feeling of belongingness when integrating into the new culture during the resettlement process? These questions provided ample opportunity to engage with the descriptive elements, which participants used to share their lived experiences.

**Research Design**

Even though IPA is “concerned with (the) ‘comprehensive unit,’ where experience has larger significance in the person’s life,” the investigation process considered the minute details important when utilizing the IPA approach (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, Location 65). Each element in this qualitative study, adopting an IPA research design, worked congruently to address the research question. The main components outlined in this section include: the population sample and design, the data collection and analysis plan, the trustworthiness of the study, the role of the researcher, and procedures to maintain ethical soundness.

The following Figure 3.2 succinctly summarizes how the analysis fitted into the overall framework of the study and identifies the preliminary schedule for the data collection and analysis process:
Figure 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-phase: Checking Data Collection Materials</th>
<th>Phrase 1: Participant Selection Confirmation &amp; Informed Consent</th>
<th>Phase 2 Data Collection &amp; Data Analysis</th>
<th>Phase 3 Discussion &amp; Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2016</td>
<td>Initial meeting with participants (15-20 minutes). Confirm suitability for the study.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of April 2016</td>
<td>Interview participants (45-60 minute interviews). Transcribe the interviews and email copies to participants individually.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2016</td>
<td>Code the recorded interviews manually and with NVIVO. Constant comparative analysis to identify patterns and cluster themes. Confer with colleague and adviser to increase validity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>Write up analysis with master themes and findings. Confer with participants to reflect on analysis and narrative anecdotes. Modify any details as requested (10-15 minutes).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2016</td>
<td>Discuss prevalent themes and the interpretation of the results.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pilot studies will be conducted with two people who were previously displaced. They will be given a prompt to complete the timeline, and then the researcher will interview each pilot-study participant using the interview protocol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pilot Study: Amend chronological timeline prompt and interview questions as necessary.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Create a contact summary sheet with information regarding participants. |
| Build a rapport with participants. |

*Figure 3.1. Preliminary schedule(s) for the doctoral research process.

The schedule demonstrates the pre-phase element, which was when the researcher conducted telephone or Skype interviews with two formerly displaced individuals. The purpose of this phase included: 1) to practice interviewing techniques and 2) refine the research tools to ensure that they adequately addressed the research question. Then, during phase one, the researcher actively recruited participants via community gatekeepers, the fire department, and fliers posted in the local library. Each participant engaged in a preliminary interview to confirm his or her eligibility (See Appendix B). Then, the investigator asked approved individuals to provide an informed consent form (See Appendix C), complete a chronological timeline (See Appendix E), and there was an opportunity to build a rapport with the researcher. Next, during phase two, each participant met with the investigator for approximately 45 to 60 minutes for an in-depth
semi-structured interview. The interviews were conducted and transcribed. Initial analysis began as the researcher moved sequentially case-by-case to code scripts thematically. After completing each transcript and inserting the coding into NVivo, the researcher completed a second cycle of analysis by using a constant cross-comparative approach. At this point, patterns and cluster themes produced themes through the evaluation of convergence and divergence. During this second round of coding, the researcher also used current theoretical lenses to explore the themes. In phase three, the master themes were mapped out with subordinate/superordinate themes, definitions for thematic coding, and narrative anecdotes that provided exemplars of each theme. Upon completion of the final analysis, the researcher elicited implications for practice and future research. In the following section the researcher describes the population and sample design, which made the study possible.

**Population.** In 2015, over 23,000 people were displaced due to disastrous wildfires in California (“California wildfires displace,” 2015). In the Round Fire, a wildfire affecting the communities of Swall Meadows and Paradise, 40 homes were destroyed and the community of over 200 people had to relocate (California town ravaged,” 2015). The researcher had decided to complete an IPA study on a specific population because their circumstances were representative of the problem of practice. The participants of this study were working adults who were internally displaced during the Swall Meadow Fires in California. This sample size was commensurate with current studies, which have applied IPA (Hill & Leeming, 2014; Loaring, Larkin, Shaw, & Flowers, 2015; Perrin & Blagden, 2014). In order to select the participants, the investigator used a sample design that resonated with IPA, too.
Sample Design. For the sampling approach, the investigator adopted strategies in IPA research that incorporate purposive (Broadbent, 2013; Vangeli & West, 2012), snowballing (Banda & Adetomokun, 2015; Hill & Leeming, 2014), homogenous (Perrin & Blagden, 2014), or networking (Harrigan et al., 2015) sampling. For this study, a purposive sampling approach was used. Each participant lived in Swall Meadows for at least six months prior to the wildfires forcing individuals to relocate or rebuild their lives after the destruction of their homes. Additionally, the individuals were over eighteen years old and English was his or her first language. Also, each participant had been employed over the past year. Although the participants had experienced significant loss, each person had made a decision to live in or around the area where the fires took place.

Recruitment and access. Aligning with the purposive sample structure, participants were contacted in one of following three ways: 1) Connected through the local fire department 2) Referrals from a leader of a community support group that raised funds to help during the recovery process 3) Fliers posted in the local library (See Appendix A). The purposive sample size aligns with the IPA methodology. Prior to obtaining any data the researcher received IRB approval and appropriate informed consent forms were distributed and collected from each participant (See Appendix A). At this stage, the researcher used pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality for the remainder of the study.

Participant Profile. The following Chart 3.1 represents a contact summary sheet with participant information that was collected during the preliminary interview:
Chart 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years of Residency</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Remained in the local community?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview-01</td>
<td>Eunice</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Post-baccalaureate</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview-02</td>
<td>Mila</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Post-baccalaureate</td>
<td>28 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview-03</td>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview-04</td>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview-05</td>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview-06</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Post-baccalaureate</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview-07</td>
<td>Rudy</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview-08</td>
<td>Zachary</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Post-baccalaureate</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 3.2. Contact Summary Sheet

The chart indicates a homogenous sample. Furthermore, it highlights the two important limitations to be considered when utilizing this purposeful sample size. Although the sample size was suitable for IPA, there is a lack of external validity, or generalizability that comes when restricting the data to the narrative accounts of eight individuals.

Similarly, the research was investigating internal displacement in the context of wildfires in southern California. Further research would need to be conducted to increase external validity and extend the findings into different areas, such as conflict or forced migration.

Despite the restrictions of not being able to generalize the findings, these participants held valuable information that may advance knowledge to solve the problem of practice.

Data collection. Amidst current IPA studies, there is a plethora of strategies used to collect data. After all, an individual “...cannot do qualitative research by following a
cookbook” (Smith, 2004, p. 40). In this study, the data collection process reflected emerging and traditional strategies implemented in a pilot study and included: preliminary interviews, chronological timelines, in-depth one-to-one semi-structured interviews, and reflective meetings to increase validity. These tools were refined through the pilot study, which took place via two separate telephone conversations with two former IDPs prior to the data collection sessions. The following documentation were used for analysis purposes, which took place after the data collection:

- **Participant Selection Criteria Form (See Appendix B):** The researcher met with each potential participant for 15-20 minutes, built a rapport with individuals, discussed their background, and ensured that they fulfill the requirements necessary to participate in the study.

- **Chronological timelines (See Appendix E):** Each participant was asked to complete a timeline with six points, in order to establish key events that occurred before, during, and after the wildfires. The purpose of the timelines was to promote richer insight into narratives (Guenette & Marshall, 2009; Hagedorn, 1994), help create a more complete narrative from the outset (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), and ultimately provide more significant data (Harrison, 2002).

- **Transcriptions from audio recordings of semi-structured interviews.** The investigator participated in 8 in-depth one-to-one semi-structured interviews, which lasted between forty-five and sixty minutes. The purpose of the interviews was to engage as an active listener and allow participants to explore their lived experiences by utilizing open-ended questions. To prompt the participants, each of the following questions adopted from Smith, Larkin, and Flowers (2009) were
used if they had not been adequately addressed when the participants discussed their timelines:

Table 3.3

*Semi-structured interview questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✦ Before the wildfires, how did you envision your life in the Swall Meadows community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ How did you think your life might be similar to, or different from, life before the wildfires?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Looking back, what were some of the differences you first noticed immediately after being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evacuated during the wildfires?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ What were some adjustments, or changes, you made immediately?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ If you were to compare yourself before and after the wildfires, what two animals would</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>represent how you viewed yourself during this experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prompt: Describe why you chose each animal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Tell me about how the problems you have encountered while resettling changed the way you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interact with others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ How did your social relationships remain intact or change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Since relocating, what are some values or traditions you have kept?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ What are some values or traditions you have a changed or gained?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Could you give me an example of when you have felt tension between your past identity and new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identity? How did you resolve the tension?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ How would you describe your sense of belonging after resettling in your new home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ What factor(s) contribute to or hinder you from feeling a sense of belonging?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Perhaps you could tell me about some people (i.e. support groups, social clubs) that have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>influenced your experiences. How do other people see you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ In what ways have you integrated into the new culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ How have these changes influenced your identity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Tell me about how you see yourself in the future? Prompt: What barriers will you still face in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the future?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What advice would you give to someone who is currently facing displacement or may be displaced in the near future?

*For complete protocol see Appendix D.*

- **Observational field notes:** During the interviews, the interviewer jotted-down nonverbal cues, speech patterns, and highlighted any significant details that surface during the interview proceedings. Many of these ideas were written in the margins of the interview protocol used for each participant.

- **Reflexive journal:** The researcher used Pietkiewicz and Smith’s (2014) guidelines to distinguish the following ideas or notes that were in the reflexive journal. They stated that “[The investigator] ...may focus on content (what is actually being discussed), language use (features such as metaphors, symbols, repetitions, pauses), context, and initial interpretative comments. Some comments associated with personal reflexivity may also be generated (e.g., how might personal characteristics of the interviewer, such as gender, age, social status, affect the rapport with the participant)” (p. 12).

The entire data collection process occurred in a setting where the participants were familiar and comfortable. The interviews took place with individuals at their homes (Etchegary, 2011; Flowers et al., 2011; Hill & Leeming, 2014; Oakland, MacDonald, & Flowers, 2013) or at a local site of their choice. The residents and the researcher met in the area where the wildfires occurred, and these settings provided an environment conducive to disclosing confidential information.

**Data Analysis.** While the data collection process in this study was linear and moved sequentially from one participant to the next, the data analysis utilized Smith’s (2009) cyclical IPA analysis approach and reflects the demand for rigor that is required in
qualitative studies. Flowers et al. (2011) alluded to the rigor of the data analysis process and state that IPA involves “...iterative processes of reading, exploring, coding, reflecting, interrogating, integrating and, eventually, thematising” (p. 1380). Therefore, in this study, the researcher addressed the analysis through the following guidelines, which were adapted from Smith’s (2009) recommendation:

Stage 1
- Initially, the analysis began as the texts from the interviews were transcribed verbatim (Banda & Adetomokun, 2015; Dunne & Quayle, 2001; Harrigan et al., 2015). During the first stage, the researcher read the texts multiple times (Dunne & Quayle, 2001; Hill & Leeming, 2014; Perrin & Blagden, 2014). Unlike similar methodologies, such as Discourse Analysis, data analysis in IPA was based on the richness of the text rather than prevalence of phrases or words in texts (Knight, Wykes, & Hayward, 2003). During these readings, the researcher highlighted texts that seemed relevant to the research question(s).

Stage 2
- Case-by-case thematic analyses was accomplished through charting themes in a list from inductive coding of narrative segments, or categories that arose in each story (Creswell, 2013; Reissman, 2005). At this stage, the researcher found “...expressions which (were) high level enough to allow theoretical connections within...cases but which (were) still grounded in the particularity of the specific thing said” (Osborn & Smith, 2015, p. 41). Also, the researcher utilized a computer program to increase the coding reliability. In Flowers et al.’s (2011) study on understanding the impact of HIV diagnosis amongst gay men in Scotland, two researchers independently coded the transcript manually and with a
computer program. NVIVO, which is a qualitative research software, was used to complete coding strips, matrix coding, and develop and identify themes. The coding process helped the researcher demonstrate qualitative data efficiently (Corley & Gioia, 2011).

Stage 3

- Next, the investigator analyzed the data across cases using the *convergence* or *divergence* of multiple stories through a constant cross-comparative approach (Smith, 2004). In Fragkiadaki, Triliva, Balamoutsou, & Prokopiou’s (2013) study on professional identity, they used the constant-comparative method to compare themes from the data on their transcripts. Again, NVIVO was used to organize and verify the data, too. The researcher implemented this strategy to cluster the themes (Biggarstaff & Thompson, 2008; Fragkiadaki et al., 2013, Knight, Wykes, & Hayward, 2003; Vincent, Jenkins, Larkin, & Clohessy, 2013), which were based on recurring themes that aligned with corresponding text(s) from participants. This lead into the organization of *subordinate* and *superordinate* themes.

- After the subordinate and superordinate themes had emerged, the researcher identified *exemplars*, which were “verbatim examples from transcripts that illustrate(d) each identity statement” (Harrigan, et al., 2015, p. 81). At this stage, the researcher contributed an interpretation of the data that was categorized at a level one or two in order to ensure that “good research” was conducted (Smith, 2004).
Stage 4

- After the coding process and the interpretive phenomenological analysis, the investigator conferred with the participants about narrative anecdotes and the interpretation of the data. The researcher took a reflexive approach and conferred with participants by telephone to check and discuss a summary of the findings (Etchegary, 2011).

Each of these four stages were completed during the second and third phases of the entire research process. Throughout the investigation, the researcher ensured that the information from the data collection and analysis was stored safely and ethically. The following section illuminates how this was done effectively.

**Data storage.** Throughout this process, the investigator adopted and maintained pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. With regards to the data and materials, transcriptions were coded and names were masked to protect the identity of participants (McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003). The coded protocol remained in a separate filing cabinet that was locked, too. The audio recordings of the interviews were backed up on computer files, which were secured using a password. In addition, the data would be stored in locked files for five years after the completion of the research (Creswell, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The only individuals who had access to the information was the principal investigator, Dr. Margaret Gorman, and the doctoral student who conducted the study. Ultimately, these ethical procedures ensured that the researcher adhered to best practices and the risks of the study were acknowledged and minimized.
Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, and particularly in IPA, the role of the researcher differed significantly from quantitative research for three primary reasons. First, the participant was viewed as the *expert* (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008), and therefore the investigator’s role resembled that of a collaborator or an active listener. Since IPA involves *double hermeneutics* (Hill & Leeming, 2014; Harrigan et al., 2015), the researcher had to interpret how the participants made sense of, or interpreted, their lived experiences. Both the interpretivist paradigm and the IPA methodology aligned as the investigator worked alongside participants to build a subjective reality, which was based on the lived experiences of individuals. Thirdly, Flowers et al. (2011) described the role of the researcher in IPA, which was “...to establish rapport and actively manage the interaction to elicit first person detailed accounts of specific events” (p. 1380). Various approaches were part of creating a supportive relationship with participants.

To successfully fulfill the role, the researcher acknowledged self, self in relation to others, and self in relation to systems so that preconceived notions do not jeopardize the study (Jones, 2001). It was important to be transparent with any biases that influence this study. The positionality statement has been included in order to disclose background information and biases that shed light on the author’s experience with the problem of practice.

**Self.** Demographically, the researcher is a Scottish female who is white and educated. Ingrained in her mentality from an early age, was the idea that education is a necessary tool that individuals need to succeed in attaining a desirable job. However, if one deconstructed two entities of time in her life, including *ontogeny* and *microgenesis*, it
would be apparent that significant life experiences have developed other perspectives that could influence the research (Carlton Parsons, 2008). Ontogeny refers to the course or process of the development of an organism, while microgenesis refers to brief experiences that often result in a change of perception or thought. Consequently, this positionality statement includes significant aspects that occurred throughout the researcher’s life and specific events that shaped her worldview.

As a child, the researcher was a first-generation immigrant to the United States. Her English father and Scottish mother brought an older brother and the investigator from Scotland to America. However, it was not long before the family moved again to a predominantly Maori community in New Zealand, where she first attended school. Although the researcher was a Pakeha, a white person, she developed a deep appreciation and understanding of the culture and found acceptance in a community where many people would not. Thus, in research it can be difficult for the investigator to view the other because during her lifetime she had always been a chameleon that was able to integrate into foreign communities over time.

The researcher’s cultural awareness also grew significantly during her teenage years when her family hosted international students from all over the world. This sparked the evolution of a career that would lead to teaching English as a second language in public schools, private institutions, universities, and eventually a correctional facility. Within these settings, teaching has been a tool for fighting against the social injustices many immigrants face. As a result of these experiences, an ideological position has formed where the researcher tends to value the cultures of others at the expense of scrutinizing her own (Briscoe, 2005).
Lastly, it is necessary to identify two events that significantly affected the author’s life. First, in 2008, the investigator was in Kenya when disputed elections resulted in the displacement and even death of many citizens (Adeagbo & Iyi, 2011). During this time, media blackouts, loitering, and an enforced house arrest were in effect for multiple weeks. The researcher left the country on the recommendation of the United Nations’ peacekeeping representative. Later that year, natural fires in California caused another forced evacuation that uprooted the researcher from her home for nearly two weeks. It was a year that now gives the investigator ample compassion for others who are displaced from the comforts of their own home. Unbeknown to the researcher at the time, the experience birthed a critical perspective as she saw the displaced persons as the oppressed and violence as an oppressor. As a result, the researcher is conducting an exploration that will accumulate data, which integrates the voice of the people who are affected by displacement through an interview format so that their voices may be heard.

Self in Relation to Others. An overarching theme in research on identity and culture is the belief that these ideals are structured by the perception of self and other (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Similarly, Carlton Parsons (2008) notes that it is important for researchers to take the perspective of people who are rooted in backgrounds that differ from their own, and he refers to this as positionality taking. In order to accomplish this, one must first acknowledge that other or they exist (Fennel & Arnot, 2008; Jupps and Slattery, 2006). Although there are commonalities between the researcher and the participants, the reality is that the other in this research is internally displaced persons. In the context of this research, one can also add to the description that the participants will be over eighteen years of age and be current or former residents of
Swall Meadows. Perhaps, most importantly, it is vital to understand that each individual has his or her own story. The participants in the research differ in age, race, and nationality; so, their perception of reality is filtered through a different lens that must be understood without biases.

One particular bias that the researcher is susceptible to is linked to a deficiency, which could subconsciously filter the voice of the participants. For instance, one of the investigator’s biases may arise from seeing an apparent environmental deficiency that IDPs face (Jupps and Slattery, 2006). The researcher’s bias is that stakeholders often neglect long-term solutions for displacement because the need for survival and security take priority. In order to minimize the researcher’s interference, data collection will include triangulation, a method used to increase the validity of qualitative research (Jick, 1979). By pursuing information via timelines, questionnaires, and interviews, the researcher has less opportunity to intervene in the interpretation of the data. Additionally, the researcher will take reflexive approach with the narrative data, and collaborate with participants to ensure their voices are heard.

**From Self to System.** Geertz (1973) asserts that interaction between individuals and groups is at the core of cultural formation, and that culture is shared through storytelling. Both the heritage and global perspective of a researcher influence a study. Fennel and Arnot (2008) note effective research “requires a repositioning which involves an overturning of the master narratives, a disordering of existing hegemonic knowledge” (p. 532). In this case, the two narratives are produced by the researcher’s knowledge of Eurocentric values, and the participants’ narratives, which may have conflicting values. However, these conflicting realms of experience can be addressed by carefully
considering historical and intellectual forces (Carlton Parsons, 2008). This will be a significant area to identify and critically examine as the research continues. In some cases, internal displacement occurs because an oppressed group revolts against the oppressors. In this scenario, displacement may be a sacrifice that individuals are willing to make voluntarily. However, occasionally, displacement is due to individuals being caught unexpectedly in crossfire, in which they have no choice but to leave their livelihood and possessions behind. If there are conflicting stories between participants, the circumstances surrounding displacement could be an important variable to consider for future studies.

Finally, it is important to note that although researchers may unknowingly hinder studies “…no matter the identity and positioning of the researcher and participants,” preventative steps can be taken to minimize the effects of a researcher’s biases (Briscoe, 2005, p. 28). The identity and position of the researcher may impact decisions about the techniques or theoretical framework, which is utilized. However, attending to the biases provokes a credibility that supports, rather than damages, the study.

**Trustworthiness and ethical considerations**

Although there were multiple ethical aspects to consider when researching displaced persons, this section focuses on how the researcher protected the participants throughout the research process. To begin, the investigator gained approval from the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board to implement the proposed project and through this procedure the researcher addressed the protection of human subjects partaking in the study. As stated earlier, prior to conducting the research, the participants completed a consent form (See Appendix A), which contained the purpose of the study,
details with regards to the necessary time commitment, and guidelines about the publication of the results (Creswell, 2013). During the interview, the researcher adopted good interview procedures by following the approved protocol and utilizing a collaborative interview approach (Creswell, 2013). The collaborative strategy ensured that participants received ample opportunity to verify the interpretation of the results. Also, throughout the process, individuals had contact information and access to a local psychologist who could more effectively address their needs if necessary (Gottlieb & Lasser, 2001). In Broadbent’s (2013) IPA study on personal bereavement participants were offered appropriate resources that provided support for their unique circumstances. This ethical consideration was important because problems that the participants experience may not always be visible. Additionally, the participants had input on all data collection procedures and could remove any data upon request.

In addition to ethical considerations, Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlighted four ways (i.e. credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability) to address areas of concern with regards to research that incorporates subjective experiences. In order to maintain credibility, the analyzer ensured that an adequate timeline was followed and participants were able to fully participate in each phase of the data collection process within a reasonable time frame (6-8 weeks). Prior to conducting interviews, and during the process, the researcher embraced and acknowledged the biases that could shape the study, which was an advantageous aspect of narrative research (Sweeney, 2013). Furthermore, to limit internal validity a reflection journal was maintained to improve confirmability throughout interview stages. These steps are representative of IPA researchers (Oakland, MacDonald, & Flowers, 2013; Perrin and Bladgen, 2014) who
addressed the importance of keeping a reflexive journal to maintain accountability against researcher bias during the process of collecting data and conducting the analysis.

After the transcription had been completed, the data was coded methodically. Researchers (Miles & Huberman, 1994) caution, “trying to do the coding all at one time tempts the researcher to get sloppy, resentful, tired, and partial” (p. 65). As recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994), the researcher worked with a colleague to check coding of themes that emerged from the narratives to increase reliability. The colleague was given transcripts with descriptions for each code, and analyzed the texts for confirmation or discrepancies. Harrigan et al. (2015) noted that intercoder reliability increases the validity of a study and Perrin and Blagden (2014) also suggested increasing inter-rater reliability by providing credibility checks, or checking the interpretations of the data with colleagues (p. 907).

Finally, the participants evaluated the data to confirm the investigator’s propositions, which are published in the findings. When providing evidence for results, Harrigan et al. (2015) stated that “Exemplars are important because they help establish the trustworthiness of the analysis” (p. 8, citing Fitch, 1994). Likewise, Broadbent (2013) used in vivo quotes to ensure that the authentic voice of the participant was represented accurately in the analysis (p. 265). These exemplars were a significant part of the narrative accounts that were produced in the results section of the study. Overall, by acknowledging biases, maintaining a reflection journal, coding the analysis methodologically, and collaborating with participants, the researcher increased the trustworthiness, and ultimately, the significance of the study.
Chapter Summary

This research demonstrated the need to venture into uncharted territory to explore IDP’s lived experiences of displacement and how individuals reconstruct their social identity after wildfires occur. It is clear that Social Identity Theory was a valuable roadmap for the journey and Amiot et al.’s (2015) model provided a bridge for understanding the passage between nondisplaced and displaced persons. Alongside the theoretical framework, IPA was the vehicle to transport knowledge as participants shared their perspectives through in-depth semi-structured interviews. The narrative accounts of lived experiences contributed rich qualitative data that supported and redirected existing quantitative tracks, which had already been placed in the areas of identity reconstruction and internal displacement. Ultimately, the research was a platform for understanding the circumstances around displacement and resettlement, which may be beneficial to citizens, researchers, community or emergency responders who are impacted by forced relocation in other contexts.
Chapter 4 Findings & Analysis

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore how eight working adults recently resettled following devastating wildfires the year prior reconstructed their social identity. More specifically, the study sought to understand inhibitors and facilitators as they relate to antecedents of identity change during resettlement. The overarching research question guiding this investigation was: How do working adults displaced by the Swall Meadows wildfires describe the reconstruction of their social identity following their resettlement process? Within IPA, researchers (Parks, 2016; Smith, 2009) state that individual cases must be examined before a cross-case analysis. Therefore, the results of the study will be introduced case by case, and then the researcher will present the major themes through a cross-case analysis.

Since the researcher is using IPA, which prioritizes capturing the lived experiences of participants, many quotes will be used to demonstrate the findings. For each quote, the researcher will scribe a brief interpretation of the excerpt to provide the double hermeneutics required by IPA. The interpretation takes into consideration the in-depth interviews as well as the narrative accounts that the researcher contributed to the reflexive journal. Throughout the process, the participants have had ample opportunity to provide feedback on the collected data. To begin, it is important to identify the individuals in the study and each of their experiences of losing a home to wildfires.

Participants

The study included in-depth interviews of a homogenous sample of eight participants. Each of the individuals had previously lived in Swall Meadows for at least six months prior to the wildfires, and had decided to resettle in the area after the
wildfires. Swall Meadows is a small community of approximately 250 residents located at the base of the Eastern Sierras. All of the individuals interviewed work full-time and speak English as their primary language. Although the sample size is homogenous, there was some deviation in how each person learned about the status of his or her home.

**Eunice.** Eunice describes herself and her role in the community. She states:

I'm a very veteran-ed school teacher of 36 years. I grew up in California, but I've traveled all over the world. I've decided to live in the most beautiful place in the world, so that's why I came here...I have taught probably at least 3 generations of people in the Bishop Community. There are many people who look old to me, who actually I taught. Some of them have kept and retained their knowledge of poetry that they present to me. Many of them have had children and I've had a couple of grandchildren...The community has been good to me. It's a conservative community. At this point, I'm an institution, so they have to accept a very unusual institution in a rather conservative place. They've greeted me always warmly. I seldom have ever been treated meanly. I've been treated only kindly, and with respect for what I have done for them. Then I also have many good friends here. (1.E.1-2)

As a single mother, who adopted a young child later in life, it was evident that Eunice’s role as a teacher played a significant part in the formation of her social identity. Although Eunice’s anecdote suggests that she was at one time an outsider in the community, it is clear that over time she has gained a sense of belonging particularly within the school system and some close-knit friends.

Interestingly, she had previous encounters with wildfires and remarks:
I've had a lot of experience with wildfires in Swall Meadows. The first time I heard...that my house was okay, what was going to be my shack. At that point I owned a few boxes of things, 2 or 3 boxes. Everything could be folded. I hadn't even taken residency. The next time I remember a big fire, my daughter was about 3 and we did leave the house. We had to be evacuated. I spent the day, the night, in Bishop. When I put her to bed, on the floor of the living room of a friend, I said, "Well when we wake up, we might have a house and we might not have a house." That morning we had a house. (1.E.2)

Since Eunice had a keen awareness of the dangers of wildfires in the local area, it also demonstrates a sense of permanency and resilience, which had contributed to her social identity.

**Eunice's experience.** When the fire occurred, Eunice had been at work in the school. There was some conflicting information about the status of her house. She describes the instant when she discovered her home had been destroyed:

Then I drove down the hill, and I had put in a call to that fire person, and I had left a message about the inaccuracy as I was driving up. As I was driving down, she called me. She was from another area, San Bernardino. She was a big fire chief lady, very nice. I was driving down the hill and she called. I had it on speakerphone, I was with my friend Deborah, and then she said, 'Eunice, I talked to your daughter.' That's the worst, the saddest call that I've ever received. She said, 'Your house is gone. Leveled. Gone.' All they could say is damaged or destroyed, like you could have your door kicked in. (1.E.7)

In this instance, Eunice received the information about her home from an emergency
responder. Her daughter had contacted the fire chief, and then proceeded to call Eunice. It was apparent that Eunice immediately had an emotional response with a sense of loss. At the time of the interview, her daughter was attending college.

**Mila.** Mila was a resident of Swall Meadows during the wildfires. She lived in her home with her husband who had helped them embrace a self-sufficient lifestyle. Mila told the researcher about her background in the following statements:

I was born in Pennsylvania, grew up in Southern California and was living in Santa Cruz the biggest part of my life, before moving here. Then moved here in 1980, had my own business, waited tables, taught skiing, basically a bum. Met my husband here, we got married when I was 28, we were both 28, got married in Yosemite, we met climbing. I came here because of the outdoor environment. Then lived here for, probably, five years and then went back to graduate school because I didn't want to live hand to mouth. Got my teacher credentials and was instantly hired when I came back, at Lee Vining. Taught there for eight years and I have been teaching at Mammoth for the last 20. Next year I am going to retire, I tried to retire early after the fire, but they wouldn't give me early retirement or I would have left immediately.

My husband was a woodworker, did construction when I met him and became more and more specialized over the years. He actually started working less and less on outside jobs because he did things like spiral staircases out of wood. He is an incredible craftsman and he is kind of the sole provider in terms of the home life. Before the fire, I was bringing in most of the money and the insurance, but he raised chickens. We had an incredible garden, he put up food, did all kinds of
In the interview the immediate social identity roles that stood out included: a wife, an educator, and a supporter. It was also evident that Mila and her husband had adapted or implemented a lifestyle that was similar to the surrounding mountainous culture, which is environmentally-friendly.

**Mila’s experience.** When Mila discussed her experience with the wildfires, she focused on the intricate details of how drastically the environment had changed. She says:

It was just like, ‘My God, look at the sky’” It was just so beautiful. Got down there and people started calling and the people, like *Susan, had heard from the fire department that our house was gone. Somebody that wasn't even in town had heard. We are starting to talk to people and they are saying, ‘Your house is gone. We are hearing this secondhand information that your house did not make it.’ I am thinking, 'It just must have been a swath, all of these people had to have lost their house. I wonder who is even left.’ (2.M.11)

The description of her experience demonstrated how the “network of community” seemed unorganized. Her summary also highlights the current role of social media and how it is often the distributor of knowledge, accurate or erroneous, during a crisis.

**Wendy.** Wendy described her background by summarizing her travels and the geographical areas in which she has lived.

I grew up in southern California, Orange County, Tustin area. Went to college at UC Davis. Then I moved to England for 4 years…I wanted something different, so I moved here to Mammoth, and…I met my husband. That was in, I moved here in 1989, and met my husband at the first house, we got married in 94. Anyway,
and so we left around 96 for him to finish his teaching credential, and were gone and moved back in 2000, and we had bought the property in Swall...and we moved into the house in 2005. It was a straw bale house. That was our dream, to build an energy efficient, straw bale passive solar house...We were not paying any utilities. We were really pleased, so everything was working perfect, and then the fire came. My husband is a math teacher at Mammoth High, and I was a stay at home mom when Hunter was born. After he joined, started kindergarten, I started working as an aide in the school districts for the STC classrooms and RSP, and I had that job for 10 years. (3.W.2)

In this description, Wendy illuminates on her life as a mother, an environmentalist, and a teacher’s aide at the local school. It is evident that she was extremely proud of her home, which is environmentally friendly and cost-efficient. There was also a clear sense of permanency with regards to Swall Meadows being her home.

*Wendy’s experience.* Like many of the individuals displaced by the Swall Meadows wildfires, Wendy found out about the condition of her home through a friend. She states:

> It was 8 or 9 in the morning...we went to try and drive down again, they wouldn't let us drive down, but we saw a fire truck drive out, and we followed it. They pulled into the *Hampton store, and I jumped out of my car, and I said, ‘Hey, do you know, can you tell us what's going on down there?’ I said, ‘We don't know if we lost our house or not.’ He goes, ‘What was your address?’ We told him, and he punched something into his phone, and he goes (shakes head) ... that's when we found out. (3.W.3)
Wendy’s descriptions stood out because her informant was part of the emergency response team and she used the emergency response system to disclose the status of her house. It seemed surprising that Wendy had to be proactive in a situation where the crucial information should have been readily accessible.

**Cara.** Cara describes her social identity as a mother, professional nurse, and a born-and-raised Californian. She describes her background in the following statement:

I'm a registered nurse. I'm fifty-one years old now. I have two children. My twenty-fifth wedding anniversary is coming up August 3rd. I've been married a long time. I work at a local hospital. I work two to three twelve-hour shifts a week in various departments. I've lived in California pretty much my whole life, a year away for college back east. (4.C.1)

Cara described her life with a sense of permanency in many aspects of her life including occupation, geographical location, and relationships.

**Cara’s experience.** She learned about the wildfires while she was at work, which was very similar to many people in Swall Meadows. She explained how the dispersion of information regarding her house took place:

We went down, as the day progressed a lot of people were congregating down closer to Paradise, and somebody gave us a phone number to check if our house had burned. It was an 800 number. *Chuck called and our house wasn't on the list. We're like going, ‘We're not on the list. We got a house. We're not on the list.’ Then people started coming up to us saying, ‘We are so sorry.’ We're like, ‘What are you sorry about?’ They said, ‘Your house.’ We said, ‘We're not on the list.’ They all sort of went ‘Oh’ and walked away. It was on social media, Facebook,
and stuff that our house had burned and the Cal Fire didn't have our address right. We didn't get total confirmation until that night. I'm a little pissed off at the local fire chief.... I said, ‘I was told that my house isn't on the list but I've been told by people that it's gone.’ She (referring to a responder) said, ‘Oh well we need to clear this up right away.’ She went to Fred who was the fire chief and you could just see his face. He looked at me and he just couldn't even come over and say, ‘I'm sorry.’ That's how we found out. (4.C.4)

In Cara’s statement, the confusion about the status of her home increased the distress she felt when the chief confirmed that her house had been destroyed. It was the second instance in the study where social media had a part in distributing information.

**Nicole.** Nicole described her personal background as the following:

I've lived in the area for 30+ years. Moved up from Orange County, 2nd generation Orange County native. Anyway, moved up here when I was young just had basically taken a semester off of college, and trying to find myself, as they say, and have never left. Spent most of my 30+ years in the restaurant business, restaurant management, so very involved in the whole industry up here, of tourism and all of that. The last service industry job I had was at the ski area, working food and beverage up there, and just burned out on that whole thing, and somebody said, ‘the Water District had an opening. Go and apply.’ They hired me and I was in the accounting department for 7 years, and now I'm the executive assistant for the board of directors and the general manager. Involved with the community from a whole different perspective now. Met my husband up here. We've actually been together for 10 years. Married 4 and 1/2 years ago, and we
actually bought our home in Swall Meadows the year before we got married (5.N.1).

Nicole’s social identity revolved around her occupation, her role as a wife, and as a member of the Swall Meadows community. The longevity of time spent in Swall Meadows demonstrates a sense of permanency.

Nicole’s experience. Through Nicole’s story it became apparent that many members of the community obtained knowledge about the status of their homes by communicating with neighbors and friends. She discussed this matter-of-factly when she learned about her own home:

...we got a call from *Rachel about 11 o'clock that night, and she said, ‘*Dave is standing in front of both of our homes, and there's nothing there.’ That was on Friday evening, and it was, I want to say, Sunday or it was probably Sunday morning before we got an unofficial confirmation that our home was not there. That was because a girlfriend of mine is really good friends with the sheriff, and so she had one of the deputies go by the house and take a picture and text it to her, and she said, ‘Do you really want to see this?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ She sent it to us, and it was nothing there, but we still weren't able to get into the neighborhood I think until Monday evening, and because we had all of these roadblocks. We had confirmation, we didn't rush down there and stand in line to see if our house was still there. (5.N.6)

Nicole remarked that she felt fortunate because she was able leave work and pack some items. Also, she and her husband had an in-law place where they could move to when the fire department ordered the evacuations.
Kate. Kate includes many aspects of her identity including her role as an educator, a sister, and a wife when she described herself. The following excerpt summarizes her social identity:

I'm the principal superintendent here at *St. George School. I've worked at the school for now eighteen years as a special ed teacher and so on. I grew up in Los Angeles, but moved because we were tired of that area and moved to Paso Robles area, where I got my teaching credential after having a career in LA doing something completely different. A job opening happened here in Bishop. My sister lived here at the time and we moved over, and rented for a little while, and then bought the house up in Swall Meadows in 1997...I love the community here, I love that it's isolated and mountainous and that kind of background. That's why we're here. That's why we wanted to live in some place like Swall Meadows.

(6.K.1)

As Kate discussed her background, her commitment to her profession was apparent. She also identifies her sister as being a reason for moving to the Eastern Sierra region. Kate demonstrates that she has a sense of permanency with regards to the community.

Kate’s experience. When Kate and her husband found out about the status of their home during the wildfire, they had a unique situation. She discussed the initial moment when they found out for certain that the house was gone:

...we found this hotline that you could call to find out if your house was damaged or whatever, and when we called there and found that we were on the list of destroyed homes, it was another ‘Can't be, I saw it. It looked good.’ It turns out our house burned from the inside out. It didn't destroy any of the landscaping, and
Kate’s situation was unusual because her garage and much of the surrounding landscape were spared in the wildfires. This became more relevant later when she indicated that some important files and artifacts were kept in the garage.

**Rudy.** Rudy mentions how he came to arrive in the Eastern Sierra region. He is a journalist and newspaper editor, and he talks concisely about his personal background. He states:

I grew up on the east coast. Attended college on the east coast. Moved to the area about fifteen years ago. I was dating a gal, who was a dog musher. She got a dog mushing job with Mammoth dog teams and I tagged along. We ultimately split up and she went to Fairbanks Alaska. I started the paper and I worked for Sierra Wave, the local radio station and started my own paper thirteen years ago. (7.R.1)

In this introduction it is clear that he is not originally from the area, but that the Eastern Sierra region is the place in which he decided to settle. Although he identifies a former relationship, it was interesting that he did not identify himself as a husband or father. Rather, he chose to distinguish himself based on his occupation.

**Rudy’s experience.** In contrast to many other participants, Rudy had more informants who could distribute knowledge about the wildfires as they were occurring. He discussed the day after he had been evacuated. Initially Rudy said:

(He) called a buddy of mine, whose friend had sort of again taken a back forest service road, to figure out what was going on. I gave him my address and I said,
‘Is my house still there?’ He said, ‘No it's not’ I told my wife. Her initial reaction, she definitely had a few tears. (7.R.2)

In this instance, Rudy knew fairly early in the event that his home had been destroyed in the wildfires. Consequently, he was able to look for a new residency much sooner than other individuals. Rudy also had many contacts in the area through his work as a journalist, which also contributed to easily finding a place to stay during the evacuation. In his anecdote, Rudy included his wife’s reaction, which is significant because other individuals only mentioned details of their own emotions or experiences.

**Zachary.** Zachary is a long-term resident of the Swall Meadows area. As he described himself, he noted his profession and how his family had a sense of permanency with regards to their home. He stated:

I'm a teacher, I moved to Mammoth in 1987 when I graduated college I lived here for a while, but I started teaching - 10 years later I started the teacher ed program and started moving in that direction. Got a job back here, worked in Home Street middle school which is in the Bishop area before I got the job up here at Mammoth. When I got my first teaching job... 19 years ago was when we came to the area and bought the property where our house was. That was big for us because we knew we wanted to end up here and we wanted to live there in Swall Meadows. (8.Z.1)

Zachary and his wife had made a joint decision to live in the Eastern Sierra region. The anecdote demonstrates that his profession was a key part of his identity. Also, the longevity of his career indicates there was a sense of belonging at the school and in his residency.
**Zachary’s experience.** Zachary and his wife discovered the status of their home with the help of a local emergency responder who diverged from the formal protocol to provide necessary information. Zachary states:

> When we pulled up to the gas station, there was a firefighter there. We asked him, ‘How did it go in Swall last night?’ He basically gave us some information. I think it was beyond protocol, but he could see that we were residents. He said, ‘It doesn't look good, a lot of houses were lost.’ We asked him about our house and he did look it up and told us that it didn't make it. I think it was really excellent that he did that for us because it was a long time before they disseminated that information of which houses made it and which houses didn't. I probably could have found out in other ways, but he was nice enough to do that for us. (8.Z.4)

In his story, Zachary mentions that he was in contact with some of the neighbors via phone. Fortunately, the neighbors would rescue his dog. He also indicates the relief that he felt knowing the status of his home as soon as possible. Many of the other participants were misinformed or simply uncertain about their property. Knowing the home had been destroyed was devastating; however, it allowed Zachary the opportunity to look for a place to stay immediately.

**Participant Summary**

The background information of each participant and his or her experience provided a foundation for understanding the changes that occurred during and after the devastation of February 6th, 2015. From the data, it became evident that the experience of losing a home to wildfires was a trigger for change in the participants’ lives. While people expressed varying degrees of identity change, there were five threads, or
superordinate themes, which the researcher constructed from convergence in the stories. Additionally, instances of divergence are discussed alongside subordinate themes, which demonstrate the uniqueness of each person’s story. The researcher’s analysis, which was further developed through the reflexive journal (See Appendix J), explores how and why these similarities or differences exist. Most importantly, it is necessary to remember that these themes affected multiple levels of the social identity including: intimate, interpersonal, communal, and global relationships.

**Emergent Themes**

Each of these participants held a unique social identity prior to the wildfires. The sample incorporated individuals from various fields including education, medicine, and journalism. Each individual had familial relationships that were an integral part of their lives, which extended to spouses, partners, or offspring. Additionally, all of the participants experienced the devastation of the wildfires and the loss of a home. However, as the investigator examined their stories and experiences certain similarities and differences emerged, and these are identified as themes. During the first phase of coding the researcher identified 40 emerging themes or nodes using NVivo (See Appendix I). However, using the guidelines of Parks (2016), the valid themes had to be present in at least seven cases to be considered superordinate and each subordinate theme required three examples. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the superordinate and subordinate themes, which appeared during the cross-case analysis:
Table 4.1

*Superordinate and Subordinate Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Asymmetries</th>
<th>Social Consonance</th>
<th>Sense of Continuity</th>
<th>Social Dissonance</th>
<th>Sense of Liminality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Uncertainty</td>
<td>● Communal Bonding</td>
<td>● Work Stability</td>
<td>● Intimate Tension</td>
<td>● Pausation of Traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Loss of Power</td>
<td>● Communal Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Interpersonal Conflict</td>
<td>● Insurance Barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Social Cognizance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the themes represent common threads in the experiences of individuals displaced by wildfires. The five superordinate themes incorporate positive and aspects of the participants’ changing social identity.

**Theme 1: Sense of status asymmetries.** During the initial meetings, the participants recognized a heightened awareness that reflected social asymmetries, or the sense of lacking equality in comparison to other people. Some of the labels with which they identified highlighted important changes in their social status and included *victim*, *refugee*, and *homeless persons*. The experience of displacement triggered a change in people’s perceptions of their social stratification level. Evacuating their homes was a signal that they were exposed and vulnerable. Most importantly, it seemed that these new labels were related to the increase in uncertainty during the wildfires and the sense of losing power after the wildfires.

**Uncertainty.** The participants’ reflection on their experiences demonstrated that they felt a change in their status during the wildfires because they had little and, sometimes, erroneous knowledge of the disaster. Since the fire department, the sheriff’s office, and the forest service had access to information about the disaster, the resident’s
status became unequal and a recurring theme was uncertainty. The following table outlines quotes capturing the first subordinate theme:

Table 4.2

*Subordinate Theme 1- Uncertainty*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uncertainty</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eunice</td>
<td>“I called the police, and I called the responders. Nobody answered, and nobody had any information” (1.E.4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mila</td>
<td>“I went over there and Fred was there and I was trying to use my phone, I had a flip phone at that point, trying to call people to figure out where Bob is...I was making calls and none of the phones went through” (2.M.4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>“We just didn’t know what was going on. Nobody really knew anything” (3.W.2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>“We went down, as the day progressed a lot of people were congregating down closer to Paradise, and somebody gave us a phone number to check if our house has burned. It was an 800 number. Chuck called and our home wasn’t on the list. We’re like going, ‘We’re not on the list. We got a house. We’re not on the list.’ Then people started coming up to us saying, ‘We’re sorry.’ We’re like, ‘What are you sorry about?’ (4.C.4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>“I think the biggest frustration, or not the biggest, but one of the frustrations was the lack of communication, and the time it took for them to give us confirmation or not...There’s all these rumors floating around on Friday and Saturday, but no confirmation of anything solid” (5.N.6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>“I think the biggest thing was I didn’t know what he (referring to her husband) was doing and I couldn’t reach him because the phone lines were burnt and down” (6.K.3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary</td>
<td>“That was a rough night at that point, because I had seen - from the highway I can’t really see my house - but I tried to spy my house driving up to say, &quot;Can you really see it?&quot; Because I kind of thought that I could see... But, really you can’t see 395 from the house” (8.Z.4).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the participants experienced various degrees of uncertainty during the wildfires, and particularly in the aftermath when trying to figure out the status of their homes. As each discussed the uncertainty of the disaster, it was evident that the wildfires served as a realization that their limited knowledge affirmed the lack of power they had over the
situation. For many participants, an identity change occurred as they re-classified themselves soon after the wildfires.

**Loss of power.** One of the subordinate themes was a loss of power. For this study, power was defined as an individual’s ability to exert control over a situation. Although “loss of power” was a recurring theme, Table R highlights key anecdotes:

Table 4.3

*Subordinate Theme 2- Loss of Power*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loss of Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eunice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mila</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wendy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nicole</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zachary</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants used word association such as victims or refugees, which indicated a sense of loss in their social identity status. Additionally, Zachary recognized a change in power when acknowledging that the police had control over where the participants could go in the community. Each of the statements represented a new vulnerability that was not present in the participants’ lives prior to the wildfires. The uncertainty and the loss of
power experienced due to displacement contributed to the development and sense of status asymmetries.

**Theme 2: Sense of social consonance.** Arguably the most consistent theme throughout the interviews was the social consonance that occurred in the aftermath. Social consonance is defined as the agreement or compatibility between opinions or actions. In the context of this study, the unity arose on the community level. Immediately after the wildfires, people united to help displaced persons. Within social consonance, there were three complementary subordinate themes, which included communal support, communal bonding, and social cognizance. The following three subsections will define and expand upon these concepts.

*Communal support.* Communal support refers to the physical assistance provided by the community for the displaced persons after the wildfires, Table 4.3 summarizes the opinions and ideas about the community support in Swall Meadows:
### Table 4.3

**Subordinate Theme 3 - Communal Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communal Support</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eunice</strong></td>
<td>“...the most important thing is the kindness of the community...They were unbelievably kind in every way. They reached out to us. They saved money for us. People kept sending me cards, and sometimes money would be put under my door” (1.E.10).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mila</strong></td>
<td>“Do you know what The Red Cross said to me? They said, ‘We have never seen anything like this. We have a truck and nobody comes to our truck. This community is helping these people.’ That is what The Red Cross said to us. It is unreal” (2.M.28).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wendy</strong></td>
<td>“People have been fantastic. Our community is really, really great. They all ask you, in the first year after the fire, it’s all present in everybody’s mind. The first weeks, the first everything, everybody just wants to help” (3.W.5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cara</strong></td>
<td>“I felt like the Bishop communities and the Mammoth and Crowley with all their support and GoFundMe stuff, that was amazing...to know that people cared and said, ‘This is devastating.’ The hospital gave me $1,000 from donations and you just think, ‘Wow, I am so lucky to have these people’” (4.C.10).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nicole</strong></td>
<td>“I think it was staggering to us the outpouring of...I mean, it brought my husband and I to tears...It was just when we walked into the...What do you call it? (pause) Salvation Army had set-up down in Bishop. They had for weeks and maybe it was a month or two. I mean they had so much stuff that you couldn’t sift through to find clothing that would fit because there was just so many donations” (5.N.15).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kate</strong></td>
<td>“The community again put together a lovely list of people who were willing to rent and who had vacation homes that they would give” (6.K.6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rudy</strong></td>
<td>“I’m always amazed that people; how generous they are in times like that. You went down to the tri county fairgrounds and good God, there were so many clothes and boots and games and this and that” (7.R.4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zachary</strong></td>
<td>“The community was remarkable. I think everybody can really identify with that kind of a tragedy. More than some others. I think people can really imagine that happening to them and the support [voice breaks]. We had all kinds of help, the community was amazing. Even my students, they raised money...these poor kids gave up their lunch money, or whatever they could. They just wanted to help too. Everybody was just great. The community here is amazing” (8.Z.9).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community support was evident through the outpouring of donations following the wildfires. For Kate, the involvement of the community to ensure that the displaced persons had shelter made a significant impact. Interestingly, Mila noted that “outsiders,” such as the Red Cross, identified the emergent theme during the aftermath of the wildfires. Some researchers (Moore et al., 2014) refer to this phenomenon as social cohesion when communities draw near to each other in response to a crisis. It is vital to highlight that participants felt the community support immediately after the wildfires. Interestingly, over time many individuals also had a sense of being forgotten. For example, Wendy says:

As time goes on...people forget that you're not in your homes still. They go, ‘Oh yeah, there was a fire.’ ‘Oh, that's right, you lost your house…’ and they get bummed, and I don't really care, but they feel more awkward that they've forgotten. (3.W.6)

There was not enough uniformity to validate this concept as a subordinate theme, but it highlights the importance of longevity when studying displacement.

Communal bonding. Communal bonding involves the unification of individuals for a common cause. Whereas communal support involves a one-up/one-down relationship in which one individual is meeting the need of another in a monetary or materialistic way, bonding occurs through mutual interaction. The following Table 4.4 indicates excerpts of communal bonding that the participants shared:
Table 4.4

*Subordinate Theme 4- Communal Bonding*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communal Bonding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wendy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We became a lot closer with, of course, the people who lost their houses, because we’re all friends. We’re all community, and we all hung out together. A lot closer in sharing with that” (3.W.6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nicole</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The neighborhood ... I’ve met so many of my neighbors through this experience” (5.N.11).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In fact, the students all voted to dedicate our yearbook that year to the firefighters of Swall Meadows and Paradise. Then they wrote a little dedication. We delivered the yearbook up to the two fire departments, which is cool. Just that community came together and stayed together for a long time” (6.K.14).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mila</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I just want to tell you something. I lost my house and I don’t even know you people and I can’t believe you gave up money, you gave up your time, for me.” Then it was just like they are my people now. They are just like ... Those are my people. They are my tribe” (2.M.28-29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zachary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“when it came time to rebuild the house, we had big work parties, people donated their time and came down and helped out. Right after the fire there were all kinds of volunteers ready to help clean up. That was just great” (8.Z.9).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In each of these exemplars the community came together in a way that was unique to the community. For Zachary, the bonding occurred during the rebuilding phase. He stated:

Then when it came time to rebuild the house, we had big work parties, people donated their time and came down and helped out. Right after the fire there were all kinds of volunteers ready to help clean up. (8.Z.9)

In this instance, bonding happened through a task. Zachary mentioned that many of the individuals who helped had partaken in the original construction of the home.

Contrastingly, Mila discussed a “benefits show” that took place in the community after the wildfires. She recalled the event:

It was like a Grateful Dead show. Your jaw hurts from you smiling so much, that is what this thing was. You just went there...We are sitting there drinking, I am cutting the line, the beer line, going ‘my house burned down, can I cut the line?’
They are going, ‘No, we will buy you beer.’ That is the kind of thing it was. It was kind of like this, "You know, you just need to laugh." We are sitting there and I am going, "Look at these people over here, they are not my tribe, these people." I associate more with this place, physically active, meet Democrats, that place is redneck, they are Trump ... You know, the Trump, they are anti-Obama and they don't believe in wilderness. (2.M. 28-29)

Mila’s experience demonstrates how individuals from different backgrounds came together over a philanthropic event. In ordinary circumstances the various social groups represented at the party would not integrate in a community setting. However, the atmosphere was casual and people bonded over a common cause.

Another instance that accentuated the communal bonding was seen in Kate’s story of how some women in the community came together after the wildfires. She talked about how the group assisted her in coping with the experience. She said:

For instance, there was a lady up in Swall who put together ... She called it the Sisterhood of Swall Meadows, where she had all the ladies come, whether they lost a house or not, and had a little luncheon for them. It was a period where ... She had a guest speaker who was a professional speaker who talked about grief and so on. Just meeting people that I didn't know. I knew names, but didn't know them just because we live in the neighborhood. I think that having that ... Making that community connection, even within Swall Meadows I didn't have before, and being able to just talk to people. (6.K.11)

Kate identifies the difference before and after the wildfires. Now, she knows her neighbors better and has conversations with other people who experienced displacement.
It is possible that the communal support and bonding that occurs during resettlement enhances an individual’s sense of belonging; however, more research needs to be completed to solidify the strength of this correlation.

**Social cognizance.** The final element of social consonance is a particular stream of comparative thought, social cognizance. For this study, social cognizance is defined as a positive broader social awareness of other individual's or group’s circumstances, which contributes to a greater sense of compassion and empathy for others. Table 4.5 highlights anecdotes from participants in the study, which reflected the subordinate theme:

Table 4.6

**Subordinate Theme 5- Social Cognizance**

| Nicole | “...initially when this all went down, we always see the 6 o'clock news, and granted I'm not a TV watcher really much, but the 6 o'clock news, and the devastation, and the suffering, and the victims, and all of this, and you never, ever think that you're going to be one of those people, that is where the tables have turned. There's a little bit of feeling surreal, but then at the same time, there's so many people, like yourself, who have suffered through this. In fact, I was just down in Southern California a couple of weeks ago. There was the fire, the Azusa fire, and so we were leaving that Monday and headed back North, and we could see this huge plume of smoke, and I'm just like, "Oh, my God!" (5.N.12).” |
| Wendy | “Then, in people in a broader sense, on a world view, with refugees and stuff, because we are in some sense refugees, but the ever so fortunate ones who have a support system in place. Our empathy is stronger for those who are displaced, because we've been there, walking out with nothing, but we have a community of support, so I feel so infinitely sad for those who make a trek to someplace where they're not wanted nor welcome. It's broadened our relationship on a world scale because of stuff that's going on, at least for me personally” (3.W.6).” |
| Cara | “You think, oh, I never pictured being one of those, and it definitely gives you a lot more empathy when you see these fires on TV or the tornadoes. I'm in with a big group of people who have lost everything. The more you talk to people, they'll say, 'Oh I had a fire' and it's really interesting their perspective. (4.C.10)” |
| Zachary | “I also think about a lot of people that have it a lot worse than us, too. There's tragedies that happen everywhere, we have to deal with this. We still have it pretty good.” (8.Z.9)” |

In this study, social cognizance was evident as participants compared their experience of displacement on a global or communal level. For instance, Wendy identified how she felt fortunate in contrast to other refugees. She said:
Then, in a broader sense, on a world view, with refugees and stuff, because we are in some sense refugees, but the ever so fortunate ones who have a support system in place. Our empathy is stronger for those who are displaced, because we've been there, walking out with nothing, but we have a community of support, so I feel so infinitely sad for those who make a trek to someplace where they're not wanted nor welcome. It's broadened our relationship on a world scale because of stuff that's going on, at least for me personally. (3.W.6)

In Wendy’s anecdote, she compares her current position to refugees who do not have a landing place. As a result of this new perspective, she has grown in empathy and compassion.

While Wendy’s cognizance came through a global comparative, Nicole experienced social cognizance within the borders of the United States. She explained:

...initially when this all went down, we always see the 6 o'clock news, and granted I'm not a TV watcher really much, but the 6 o'clock news, and the devastation, and the suffering, and the victims, and all of this, and you never, ever think that you're going to be one of those people, that is where the tables have turned. There's a little bit of feeling surreal, but then at the same time, there's so many people, like yourself, who have suffered through this. In fact, I was just down in Southern California a couple of weeks ago. There was the fire, the Azusa fire, and so we were leaving that Monday and headed back North, and we could see this huge plume of smoke, and I'm just like, "Oh, my God! (5.N.12)

In Nicole’s excerpt, there are two glimpses of social cognizance. First, she recounts comparing herself to other people whom she sees on television. Additionally, she reflects
on viewing another wildfire on a trip out of town and demonstrates an increased awareness of other people’s experiences. Similarly, Cara recognizes that her perspective has changed. She remarks:

You think, oh, I never pictured being one of those, and it definitely gives you a lot more empathy when you see these fires on TV or the tornadoes. I'm in with a big group of people who have lost everything. The more you talk to people, they'll say, ‘Oh I had a fire’ and it's really interesting their perspective. (4.C.10)

Cara’s awareness of other people’s circumstances has grown. She has found a broader group of individuals with whom she associates. Additionally, she has taken the opportunity to listen and learn about the stories of other displaced persons.

Unlike the previous examples, Zachary’s remarks are subtler with regards to social cognizance. While describing how the wildfires affected him, he said, “I also think about a lot of people that have it a lot worse than us, too. There’s tragedies that happen everywhere, we have to deal with this. We still have it pretty good” (8.Z.9). Even though Zachary does not mention a specific group, he compares his circumstances to those that he considers are less fortunate. The juxtaposition in which the participants place themselves exhibits a heightened social awareness and an increase in empathy.

One of the characteristics of the participants’ social identity restructuration was that it broadened what they had considered “the other.” Nicole described how her sense of empathy had increased since the wildfires and she was more aware of displacement due to wildfires that had occurred elsewhere. In addition, Wendy had made a comparison between her displacement and the experiences of refugees who had lost their homes, but had no place to go. In these instances, the in-group perception increased and became
more inclusive of global problems.

**Theme 3: Sense of continuity.** Although the participants experienced various changes throughout the resettlement period, it became apparent that employment provided a sense of continuation. In this study, work was defined as employment with a minimum of 30 hours per week with compensation meeting governmental guidelines. Work was part of the individual’s social identity prior to the wildfires, and in many instances gave the participants stability after being displaced. Table 4.7 demonstrates the continuation of work identity:

Table 4.7

**Subordinate theme- Work Stability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eunice</td>
<td>“I went right to work on Monday. I still went to school. When I talked with my students, they kept bringing up things” (1.E.7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mila</td>
<td>“…it was really good for me to go to work. For me, mentally. I could go there for those seven hours; I didn’t think about it until people would just show up at my classroom with bags of stuff” (2.M.18).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>“We went back to work, because it’s almost like we had to work, but there’s just so much time, and so much you do have to do...We just needed to keep ourselves busy” (3.W.4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>“Exercising I’ve kept up. Working and that’s about it. Exercising and working were my big routines” (4.C.13).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>“We took the first week off following the fire, just to figure out life, and make the phone calls. Just to get the ball rolling on a lot of stuff, and otherwise architecture meetings and that kind of stuff, but no psychological time off work, or any of that...If anything, it’s good to go to work” (5.N.14).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>“I took a few days off...I didn’t really take that much time off (work), and I really felt this is my stability I guess. This is where I wanted to be because this was familiar” (6.K.7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudy</td>
<td>“I have a newspaper to do and I just got to go do it. In many ways, maybe my work is a salvation” (7.R.4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary</td>
<td>“I did take one day off of school, that Monday after we learned... But, we knew that we would be working” (8.Z.5).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is surprising that in the disruption of displacement, the social identity role as an employee offered participants consistency. Many of the participants recognized the positive aspects of work, including being in a place that was familiar. Wendy seemed to infer that work was a welcomed distraction from dealing with the insurance and rebuilding process. Arguably, work was also a necessity because the prolonged insurance process meant that individuals had to find ways to finance immediate needs. Ultimately, one part of the participants’ lives was work and it appeared to be advantageous in coping with displacement due to wildfires.

**Theme 4: Sense of social dissonance.** While social consonance and continuity seemed to be positive aspects of an individual’s social identity, the wildfires did have negative repercussions. More specifically, displacement affected many of the participants’ intimate and interpersonal relationships. For this study, the relational conflict produced from displacement is labeled “social dissonance.” Social dissonance is defined as a disruption in relationships or a tension resulting from the combination of individuals with two disharmonious ideas or opinions. In this study clashes happened between the self and the other. While the intimate level is inclusive of immediate family members, the interpersonal level refers to interactions between two people on a communal level.

**Intimate tension.** The following Table 4.8 outlines the evidence of intimate tension provided by each participant:
Table 4.8

Subordinate Theme 4- Sense of Intimate Tension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intimate Tension</th>
<th>Eunice</th>
<th>Mila</th>
<th>Wendy</th>
<th>Cara</th>
<th>Nicole</th>
<th>Kate</th>
<th>Rudy</th>
<th>Zachary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“My daughter has seen the destroyed land once, and she’s never come back here. Every holiday, or any time she’s had off, she’s only gone to the Bay area to visit with my family...I just think a lot of it is, she would have like to come back to her house” (1.E.10).</td>
<td>“Sometimes my marriage was... It has been completely devastating” (2.M.22).</td>
<td>“…they (referring to family members) love to say, “God, you’re just handling so well.” It’s like, “Oh yeah when I’m talking to you, I can handle it really well, but you have your moments when we don’t handle it so well” (3.W.6).</td>
<td>“The family has taken (pause) our family knit is gone. That’s the biggest thing that’s been since the fire” (4.C.8).</td>
<td>“It’s been very disruptive to home life” (5.N.9).</td>
<td>“...Dealing with anything that came along was on my shoulders to do. He (referring to her husband) didn’t share any of that. Then he actually put a lot more burden on me I think by saying, “What’s happening with this? Why isn’t it going fast enough?” Those kind of things. We went through some miserable months I guess, trying to get ourselves back on a positive path” (6.K.15).</td>
<td>“I just have a family and a wife relying on me to make decisions to get us back to another secure place. Even when we were renting, I could tell...The reason I bought the house pretty much onsite was, I could tell the anticipation of the rebuild time and how long we would be in the rental property until she could nest again was too long a period of time” (7.R.10).</td>
<td>“We’ve had difficult times, there have been tensions and patience running thin... Issues. I just went climbing yesterday and I had to have an argument with my wife about getting out and going climbing when I maybe should be doing something else. It’s just little stuff that we wouldn’t be going through” (8.Z.10).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table identifies one subordinate theme within social dissonance called intimate tension. Intimate tension is defined as negative tension between the participant and an immediate family member or spouse. Mila discusses the impact displacement had and states, “Sometimes my marriage was ... It has been completely devastating ... We love each other like crazy, but we are not one of those couples where we go, ‘My God, they get along so well’” (2.M.22). In this instance, Mila recognizes that the tension between herself and her husband has increased since the wildfires. Additionally, Cara suggests that being displaced has caused a disruption in her home. She explains:
The family has taken (pause)... our family knit is gone. That's the biggest thing that's been since the fire (4.C.8). He (Cara referring to her husband) can see it too that the fire has created two different people...That's what's the challenge is. (4.C.9)

The anecdotes from Mila and Cara demonstrate how the intimate relationships between each participant and his or her spouse shifted during the resettlement period. In one instance, where the participant was not married, the individual noted that the wildfires disrupted her relationship with her daughter.

There was one exception to this pattern in the data. Nicole had mentioned that her home life was affected, but also stated the fire “had strengthened” her relationship with her husband because they bonded over a common experience. One of the factors that may have influenced this outcome was that Nicole and her husband shared responsibilities. Nicole stated, “...on the personal property side of things, ... I'm pretty much done with that, and my husband's taking on the house side of things” (5.N.14). The distribution of tasks may have helped the identity restructuration during the resettlement process for this couple.

*Interpersonal conflict.* In addition to the tension felt within intimate relationships, participants also discussed how displacement due to wildfires affected their social interactions with other people. Interpersonal conflict is defined as negative tension between the participant and another individual who is not part of his or her immediate family. Table 4.9 identifies accounts of interpersonal conflict:
Table 4.9

Subordinate Theme- Interpersonal Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal Conflict</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eunice</td>
<td>“Much later, people said to me how I left them out, how they said how hurt they were not to get the phone call, and all this. Then I thought, ‘My goodness, they have no conception of what it was” (1.E.8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mila</td>
<td>“This is the crap that comes out of people’s mouths, you just have to step back and go, ‘Their intention. They do not have bad intentions.’ It just makes me have to be a better person. People have come up to Barbara and Scott and have said, ‘In three years you are going to be happy this happened.’ Can you imagine someone saying that to somebody who lost their house? They are just clueless” (2.M.26).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>“We’re with State Farm and their logo is “Like a good neighbor” and they are not a good neighbor by any stretch. I mean, we are still battling with them, both for our personal property and dwelling coverage. I mean, it’s just ... Insulting isn’t the right word. I’m struggling for the right word, but it’s demeaning how much they work you, and work you, and just make you grovel for every penny” (5.N.7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>“I was a little resentful at work because I was the expert baby nurse and they didn’t want to cut me loose. I could have gotten things out” (4.C.4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>“As time goes on, it’s the fire, and dealing with it is still ever present in our lives, and people forget that you’re not in your homes still. They do, it goes, and they go, “Oh yeah, there was a fire.” “Oh, that’s right, you lost your house.” That’s just something, and they get bummed, and I don’t really care, but they feel more awkward that they’ve forgotten, and that’s where we’re still at. In relationship with people, it’s sort of a limbo that you’re stuck in, while it seems others, they go, “Oh, so what are you doing this summer?” “Oh, yeah, well, we’re still dealing with insurance and building our house. Are you guys doing anything this summer?” That’s where it becomes this thing. It’s like, that’s our new normal, and everybody else still has the old normal” (3.W.6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary</td>
<td>“Every single detail of my life now is different than it was before. I’m a musician, I’m in a band, and we would practice in our garage. That’s one of the things. Our band pretty much has no place to practice and another one of the band members... His house didn’t burn down but he lived in Swall - they ended up selling the house to live in Bishop. I live in Mammoth. We still kind of play together but it’s pretty much broke up the band in a way” (8.Z.6).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings demonstrate that interpersonal conflict occurred between the participants and insurance agents, co-workers, and friends. Kate recalls:

I remember the day we decided (to go with a public adjuster) was when my insurance agent, when we were going to move into the house that was going to be the long-term rental, the nine-month rental, and he wanted us to send pictures of it, and make sure that it wasn't better than the house that burned down. He said,
‘I'm not going to rent you a Taj Mahal.’ We were saying, ‘It's $1,200.’ He's asking for that, that's way less than my mortgage payment was. (6.K.12)

Kate and the insurance agent disagreed about the cost and condition of the rental, in which she would be living while her house was being rebuilt. This narrative is representative of the conflict many participants felt when communicating with their insurance agents.

Participants also experienced interpersonal conflict with neighbors, friends, and people who had not lost their homes from the fires. Eunice described her experience stating, “People said to me how I left them out, how they said how hurt they were not to get the phone call, and all this. Then I thought, ‘My goodness, they have no conception of what it was’” (1.E.8). She acknowledged her own communicative silence after the wildfires and the conflict that occurred when her friends confronted the issue. Another example of interpersonal conflict was seen in Mila’s experience. She remarked:

This is the crap that comes out of people’s mouths, you just have to step back...

People have come up to Barbara and Scott and have said, ‘In three years you are going to be happy this happened.’ Can you imagine someone saying that to somebody who lost their house? They are just clueless. (2.M.26)

The quote describes a couple’s interaction with a displaced person after the wildfires. Although Mila admits the people had good intentions, the statements created conflict between the displaced individuals and the “others” in the neighborhood. Consequently, there seems to be a “hidden etiquette” with regards to how people should respond to the disaster. In the immediacy of the wildfires, there were very tangible ways people could
help by offering living spaces, donations, and meals. However, in the long term, it was apparent that it was difficult to navigate the various emotions that each individual held.

**Theme 5: Sense of liminality.** Liminality is an anthropological term referring to the period of being “in-between,” a time occurring after the wildfires when participants felt they could not fully adjust or resettle (Rutherford & Pickup, 2015). The final superordinate theme that emerged from the study was a sense of liminality. Interestingly, fifteen months after the wildfires, displaced participants still encountered various barriers that prevented them from being able to move forward. Although they had chosen to resettle in the area and some of the houses had been rebuilt, there was an overwhelming feeling that this experience was not yet a past event. For some participants, resettlement meant a pausation of familiar traditions while developing new ones. For others, the vague or ambiguous feeling of time standing still was due to insurance barriers that prevented them from being able to move ahead.

The following Table 4.10 highlights how participants felt like they were in “limbo” during the resettlement period:
Table 4.10

*Superordinate Theme 1 - Sense of Liminality*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eunice</td>
<td>“I am rebuilding, and people come up and they’re all giggly, “Oh, your house looks so nice. How’d you ... You must be so happy?” Sometimes I am, and sometimes I’m not. It’s not all bird song, but it’s a real mixture. It’s reality, and I’m getting there, and my house is quite a bit built. I might be living in it, but it’s a totally different house” (1.E.9).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mila</td>
<td>Chad (her husband) just said, “Are you home?” We always go, &quot;What do you mean? What does that mean? Is that where we live right now because that is not really home” (2.M.34). Like it took me awhile to get enough backpacking gear to go backpacking but, finally in July, I accumulated it. I just gave up on skiing. As much as I love skiing, I thought, &quot;I just can’t deal with it, it is too much stuff!” (2.M.25).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>“What keeps us in the limbo, I think...is that losing your house, it super sucks. It just does. There’s just no other word for it, but bottom line, you can replace that stuff. What keeps you in the limbo, or what’s keeping us in the limbo, from progressing forward, is that we have to do the stupid personal items list to get money from the insurance” (3.W.8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>“It’s the contents adjuster who we are having difficulties with. She is very slow. We’re still in this limbo land because we don’t know what our final end result is going to be. We’re involved in the lawsuit totally going for it. You think, “Oh cool. Sounds like we’re going to win,” but it’s just going to be a long process, and I can’t rely on that money. When it comes, great, but I can’t be spending it now in case it doesn’t happen” (4.C.11).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>“Christmas was a hard one this year. I wasn’t able to do my Christmas thing” (5.N.9). “I just keep looking for that light and knowing that one day I’ll get back on my mountain bike, back on my road bike” (5.N.16).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>“I think that we went flat lined. We didn’t do our usual vacations. We didn’t go away for weekends. We did very little ... I remember hardly decorating at Christmas, not having family for Thanksgiving, those things. We just went dull I think. I a little bit regret that, but I think that I’m still in that mode” (6.K.8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudy</td>
<td>“We did these dog walks that we would take. That’s not the same where we live now” (7.R.7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary</td>
<td>“We could get back into the house, and that will feel good, but it won’t be over...I’m not trying to imagine my life, what it’s going to be like after the date where we move back in because I just know it’s going to continue on. It’s going to be this thing that it’s not just going to be a day that it changes, it’s going to be over the years, it’s going to get better and back to normal” (8.Z.11).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each participant who was displaced during the wildfires identified areas of their lives that had been disrupted. The sense of suspension, or inability to move on, was an emotional and/or physical limbo that existed in many cases.

**Pausation in tradition(s).** In some cases, displacement impacted yearly traditions such as family vacations. Kate describes her experience:

> It almost seems like we've been on pause for a period of time. I remember last summer we had a vacation planned to go to Lake Tahoe. We didn't want to go far, and usually we'd go to Utah and we'd go all summer. We'd go to Washington or whatever. We just didn't even want to be that far away from home. Even though there was no home. (6.K.9)

For Kate, the impact of the wildfires prevented her from wanting to go far away. She wanted to feel secure and be involved in the resettlement process. Similarly, Zachary and his family did not participate in a family ritual. He states, “I kind of feel guilty because... I take my son backpacking in the summer. We didn't go this year” (8.Z.7). In this case, Zachary felt overwhelmed with the many tasks involved in rebuilding his home. In both cases, the participants placed their rituals “on hold” because of physical or emotional limitations.

Likewise, Wendy and Nicole experienced the sense of liminality during the holidays. Wendy explains:

> Having a live Christmas tree was one thing, because we had this beautiful tree we'd had for 20 years, and it was in our house and that was gone, so Christmas came around, and we got, "Well, now what?" We got another live tree, and we've since planted it on the property, but we'll get another (permanent) one. (3.W.7)
In Wendy’s case, the liminality came from not knowing how new traditions would evolve. While her family has found a temporary solution, they have not yet replaced the old Christmas tree. In the same way, Nicole mentioned that “Christmas was a hard one this year… (She) wasn't able to do... (her) Christmas thing” (5.N.9). While the yearly holidays pass, the two participants demonstrate that they are still figuring out how to re-establish familiar traditions.

**Insurance barriers.** Another cause for a sense of liminality came from barriers participants continue to face with insurance companies. Wendy discusses this experience in detail:

‘Okay. We lost that stuff. We can move on,’ but we can't, because we keep getting pulled back into it, every time we have to deal with insurance, which, thank goodness, we have, because you need to have stuff like that, but it's not a great system. It's just not a great system. Then they ask for stuff, it's like, ‘Oh, well, don't you have this?’ ‘No, no. It all burned up. No, everything burned up. I don't have birth certificates. I can find out my social security number, but I don't have the card, and no, I haven't gotten it replaced yet, because that's seriously not tops on my list.’ (3.W.9)

While Wendy would like to move forward in the resettlement process, she feels restrained by the insurance situation that magnified rather than mitigated her problems. Even though she makes peace with losing the artifacts from her home, she experiences frustration because documentation and paperwork prevent the insurance claims from being processed. In the same way, Nicole shares her frustration of being in the middle of the insurance claims. She states:
We're with State Farm and their logo is ‘Like a good neighbor’ and they are not a good neighbor by any stretch. I mean, we are still battling with them, both for our personal property and dwelling coverage. I mean, it's just ... Insulting isn't the right word. I'm struggling for the right word, but it's demeaning how much they work you, and work you, and just make you grovel for every penny...it's just really frustrating. (5.N.7)

Fifteen months after the wildfires Nicole is still combatting for insurance claims. She is not able to feel resettled in a home while continuing to deal with the aftermath of the disaster.

Much like Wendy and Nicole, Cara feels like she is still in the middle of a process. She explains, “It's the contents adjuster who we are having difficulties with. She is very slow. We're still in this limbo land because we don't know what our final end result is going to be” (4.C.11). Cara feels that it is impossible to move forward because part of her future is dependent upon the insurance claims. Each of these cases represent a common theme of liminality, a state in which the participants are unable to transition past the wildfires and completely construct a new identity.

**Chapter Summary**

In this study, there were five superordinate themes including a sense of status asymmetries, social consonance, continuity, social dissonance, and liminality. There were also ten subordinate themes: uncertainty, loss of power, communal support, communal bonding, social cognizance, intimate tension, interpersonal conflict, work stability, pausation of tradition, and insurance barriers. While in many cases displacement enhanced an individual’s sense of belonging in the community, it also altered many
relationships at the intimate level. Together, the themes demonstrate the holistic experiences of persons displaced by wildfires in the Swall Meadows area. The findings represent a homogenous sample from Swall Meadows and are indicative of an in-depth IPA study. A discussion of the results and the implications for the study will be presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 5 Discussion

In this final chapter, the researcher will discuss the implications on theory, research, and practice in light of the findings presented in the previous chapter. Theoretically, the study demonstrated how Amiot et. al’s (2015) model provides guidance for understanding the identity restructuring of individuals displaced by wildfires. With regards to research, the investigation increases qualitative knowledge of IDPs, highlights the type of information that is accessible through in-depth interviews, and offers new avenues to explore. On a practical level, the study emphasizes the need to improve communication when emergency services respond to wildfire disasters. Also, the participants offered significant input on preventative measures that would alleviate unnecessary stress during the resettlement process. Each of these areas of advancement are discussed in this chapter and affirm the importance of this avant-garde research.

Implications for Theory

It is evident in the findings that displacement due to wildfires is a trigger for change in an individual’s social identity. The research also affirmed Amiot et. al’s (2015) model by suggesting that there are facilitators and inhibitors of identity integration. Facilitators included employment, community support, and community bonding. Inhibitors consisted of intimate tension, interpersonal conflict, a sense of liminality, and insurance barriers. The most prominent inhibitor of integration was insurance barriers. Perhaps, most surprisingly, was the longevity of the stages of identity change and that many participants still had not reached “full integration” in the stages of identity change after fifteen months. Another notion that was clear in the data was that displacement from wildfires yields intergroup or interpersonal consequences, which is referred to as social
dissonance in this study. In general, many individuals did construct in-group biases as they bonded with other victims and found these individuals more supportive than other friends or family members who had not experienced displacement. The common factor in this bonding was relatability. While the research affirmed much of Amiot et. al’s (2015) model, it also expanded the underlying assumptions of Tajfel’s theory.

Original assumptions in Social Identity Theory (SIT) proposed a didactic positioning of “the self” and “the other.” However, this study confirmed the complexity of “the other.” Interviews revealed that “the other” is comprised of multiple levels including: intimate, interpersonal, communal, and global relationships. Each of these entities contribute to the construction of an individual’s social identity and may impact “the self” differently. This study affirmed Hogg, Terry, and White’s (1995) speculation that there should be a distinction between individual identity theories and social identity theories. In this study, it was apparent that displacement was a trigger that created social movement or permeability between these levels and relationships.

In some instances, social dissonance appeared in interpersonal communication where messages were compartmentalized into a negative channel regardless of the intention. For instance, in three scenarios mentioned by participants, vocalized and voiceless concerns were considered inappropriate. Interestingly, transcripts from the interviews suggest that an inquisitive approach can yield positive results when conversing through the various stages of grief. More research could investigate the why and how certain social interactions are viewed positively or negatively during displacement. Closely connected to the theoretical implications for this study are the implications that
this study has on current and future research, which are discussed in the following section.

**Implications for Research**

The grand scheme of displacement due to wildfires is increasingly relevant and this study impacts the development of current and future research. Unlike prior research, dominated by quantitative studies on health practices of the displaced, this study demonstrated the value of qualitative research that explores the context in depth. By allowing participants to voice their thoughts and experiences, the field of displacement has been expanded and greater insight has been gained. In this section, the research demonstrates how the study introduces new paths to explore in displacement, and suggests that this research area may benefit by being investigated through different paradigm lenses.

**Displacement and employment.** According to current research (Cohen, 2015; Roberts et al., 2008), many displaced individuals are susceptible to depression. The findings in this study suggest that employment may act as a buffer that prevents depression during and after wildfires. According to the participants’ perspective, one of the recurring patterns was that retired or unemployed individuals appear to experience more negative repercussions from the disasters of wildfires. Kate described her husband’s struggles when discussing routines and norms after the wildfires in the following excerpt:

> I think even my husband went more...He started watching TV constantly, which drove me nuts, but he just ... It's a depression, ‘What do I do with myself? I've nothing to work on, nothing to do. No tools to do it with.’ We started doing a lot of TV watching and watching the Ellen DeGeneres show, and things like that.
The Today Show, which goes for four hours, which I never knew...He went through a much harder period than I did...In fact, we even tried to get some outside support there, which he ended up not going to after we set it up. (6.K.9-10)

In Kate’s anecdote, it seems that displacement triggered a sense of idleness, or loss of purpose, for her husband who was not employed. So, while the study affirms previous notions of the vulnerability of IDPs; it also suggests that certain populations may require further investigation, namely the unemployed. The investigation also provides hope that employment and purpose can accelerate the emotional stability needed to resettle.

**New perspectives on displacement.** As the area develops further, different methodologies could be integrated such as Narrative Inquiry or Grounded Theory. Additionally, this research looked at the study through an Interpretivist lens. Future research could employ a more social justice approach by investigating the lawsuits that certain individuals have taken up to obtain compensation for their circumstances. The following two quotes from Wendy and Cara identified polarizing opinions of lawsuits and their role during the resettlement process:

...we chose not to be part of any of the lawsuits that were, because in the aftermath, I'm going, ‘Oh, that's one more thing I have to keep track of. I just cannot’ (3.W.13).

We're involved in the lawsuit totally going for it. (4.C.11)

In the aftermath, some people have decided to partake in lawsuits that have been pursued in order to compensate for negligence. However, it is apparent from the quotes above that people had different reasons for participating in, or avoiding, this step.
Implications for Practice

Even though nearly fifteen months has passed since the Swall Meadows wildfires, the reconstruction of the participants’ lives is still a continuous process. Furthermore, since this devastating incident, more than 250 homes have been burned in the *Elliot wildfire located less than a couple of hours away from the Swall Meadows community. The prevalence of these incidences places a demand for new disaster management training. Participants indicated that three immediate changes would greatly impact their ability to cope with, and move beyond their current predicaments.

Training. First, the study demonstrates a need for new training for local fire departments, sheriff’s offices, and forest service personnel. In many of the stories, participants voiced frustration about the lack of communication, which occurred during the wildfires. The frustration could be prevented by educating rural communities about “reverse 9-1-1.” In urban communities, such as Glendale, California, residents can receive the most updated information about local wildfires on their cellphones. These updates are available in almost every language, and provide crucial information to evacuees for a relatively low cost (C. Hadsell, personal communication, November 30th, 2016). It is important for evacuees to have alternative access to the most updated information when the wildfires destroy communication outputs, such as telephone lines. Similarly, it is vital to realize that there are direct repercussions from the uncertainty. Individuals often received irrelevant or erroneous information from their neighbors or friends, which increases the stress surrounding displacement. In a disaster, organizational leadership that effectively and efficiently provides updates and feedback are crucial.
Insurance policies. The two additional changes that can be made on a practical level are related to current insurance policies. One of the major contributors to the stress of individuals was the “personal itemized lists” that must be composed for insurance companies, such as State Farm and Farmers Insurance. In the aftermath of a disaster, it is very challenging for individuals to grasp the volume or value of their lost artifacts. If individuals are in areas vulnerable to wildfires, there are two proactive strategies that should be adopted to ensure that insurers can compensate victims more efficiently. First, local realtors should encourage clients to construct a personalized list when they move into their new home. Second, in the event that individuals are at-risk, but have lived in the same area for an extended period of time, they should take photos of each room in their home to make the list process much easier. By taking these steps before a wildfire occurs, the insurance recovery process can happen more smoothly.

Similarly, insurance companies should develop new protocol and train employees in constructive communication strategies that take into consideration the verbiage and tone that is used with people who have lost their homes. Much like a grievance counselor is aware of triggers that may affect their clients, employees who are working with vulnerable individuals must know how to approach the subject cautiously.

Longevity. Finally, although individuals may not choose to contact counselors or a psychologist, it is important to have these contacts available in the long-term. Many of the individuals remarked how many people were so supportive when the disaster occurred; however, they felt that the assistance “weaned off” just when they had finally figured out how people could help. Additionally, there appeared to be a dynamic of convergence and divergence with regards to intimate relationships. In other words, the
event strengthened some relationships while it led to the destruction of others. Perhaps, if professional support was available for a longer adjustment period, relationships could successfully navigate the barriers that lead to divergence.

**Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

Since research on the experiences of displaced individuals is fairly recent, there were limitations to this study. First, the investigator used a homogenous sample size and this means that these experiences are representative of people in Swall Meadows. It is probable that individuals displaced by wildfires in other geographical locations would have different experiences. Therefore, future research could expand this investigation and identify whether displaced persons in other locations, such as the Northwest region of the United States or Canada have had a similar process in resettling after wildfires.

Furthermore, to ensure that the individuals in this study were healthy and able to contribute to this research, participants in this study had been gainfully employed for over six months since the wildfires. However, some of the participants remarked that their retired or unemployed partners were not able to function or re-adjust adequately since the wildfires. This would develop one area of Amiot et. al’s (2015) model, the *intrapersonal consequences*. Arguably, the lack of stability and routine provided by employment may impact the psychological well-being of an individual adversely.

Third, in this study, all of the individuals had chosen to live and resettle in the area for at least fifteen months after the wildfires. An area of future research could be to investigate the experiences of displaced individuals who choose to relocate to a new community after wildfires. Would they experience the same or different challenges if they decided to move elsewhere after the wildfires? How would moving after the
wildfires affect the development of new social relationships? These are two intriguing questions that could be explored in the future.

**Conclusion**

When displaced individuals face an experience in which they must rebuild or find a new home, they must also navigate the construction of a new social identity. The transitional period includes positive and negative changes. On one hand, displaced persons may feel a stronger sense of belonging due to social consonance, which involves communal support and communal bonding. Additionally, they may have a sense of gratitude as they compare their circumstances to those who are less fortunate. Also, his or her unique role as a contributor to the community through work may help individuals deal with the sense of liminality.

Even with positive support mechanisms, displaced persons are susceptible to negative repercussions such as social dissonance and a sense of liminality. Most surprisingly, often intimate relationships with spouses and family members experience the most tension during the resettlement period. Perhaps, the longevity of displacement magnified the stresses of their circumstances as the community support dispersed. Undoubtedly, the study demonstrated the importance of individuals understanding their insurance policies, and the need to reform the organizational systems of insurance companies. As future research investigates these areas more intensely, results will provide clearer roadmaps for the journey of resettlement. Fortunately, this research on displacement due to wildfires has pioneered new tracks in unscathed territory that will make future journeys a little less tumultuous.


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New York, NY: Springer International Publishing.


Stevens, A. (2012). ‘I am the person now I was always meant to be’: Identity reconstruction and narrative reframing in therapeutic community prisons. Criminology and Criminal Justice, 12(5), 527-547.


Did you have to move or rebuild your life after the Swall Meadows wildfires?

You are invited to participate in my dissertation project, which is a study on social identity reconstruction and displacement due to wildfires. The procedure of this study will include creating a chronological timeline of your experience (1 session: 15-20 minutes), participating in a semi-structured interview (2 session: approx. 45-60 minutes), and discussing the results of the study in a debriefing session (3 session: 10-15 minutes).

If you are willing and eligible, please contact me at the email listed below. Thank you in advance for your time and please feel free to pass this information onto anyone who might be interested.

**Participant Selection Criteria:**

- Must be at least 18 years old
- Must live in the U.S.
- Must have experienced relocation or displacement due to wildfires.
- Must speak English fluently.

If you meet the above criteria and are interested in participating, or if you have any questions or concerns please email bowman.l@husky.neu.edu or call (760) 914-2508.

***This study has been approved by Northeastern University’s Review Board.***
APPENDIX B

Participant Selection Criteria Form

**Title of Project:** Identity Restructuration After Community Disaster: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis to Explore the Lived Experiences of Working Adults Returning to Their Community Following a Forced Evacuation Due to Wildfires.

The following questionnaire has been constructed in order to determine your suitability to participate in a doctoral research project. All the information provided in this survey will remain confidential. Thank you in advance for your time.

1. **Personal Information**
   - Name __________________________________________
   - Address _________________________________________
   - City/Town _______________________________________
   - State/Province ___________________________________
   - ZIP/Postal Code _________________________________
   - Country _________________________________________
   - Email Address _________________________________
   - Phone Number _________________________________

2. Do you rent or own the place where you live? (Circle one)
   - Own
   - Rent
   - Neither (please specify) _______________________________

3. Are you 18 years of age or older? (Circle one)
   - Yes
   - No

4. In what language do you speak most fluently? (Circle one)
   - Chinese
   - English
   - French
   - German
   - Japanese
   - Spanish
   - Other (please specify)
5. Did you have to relocate or move during the Swall Meadows wildfires? (Circle one)
   Yes
   No

6. How long had you been living in Swall Meadows prior to the wildfires?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

7. Which of the following best describes your current job level? (Circle one)
   Owner/Executive/C-Level
   Senior Management
   Middle Management
   Intermediate
   Entry Level
   Other (please specify)

8. Approximately how long have you been in your current position?
   Years ______________________________
   Months ____________________________

9. Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
APPENDIX C

Informed Participation Consent Form

Northeastern University,
College of Professional Studies,
Department of Education
Name of Investigators: Laura Bowman Graduate Student,
Dr. Margaret Gorman: Principal Investigator
Title of Project: Identity Restructuration After Community Disaster: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis to Explore the Lived Experiences of Working Adults Returning to Their Community Following a Forced Evacuation Due to Wildfires.

Request for Consent to Participate in a Research Study

12 April, 2016

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am preparing to begin my doctoral research project. The purpose of my project is to explore and record your experiences of displacement. Specifically, the study will focus on how your social identity changed or remained the same following the Swall Meadow wildfires. It is my hope that with you, and this study, the principles of practice can help others who are forced to rebuild their lives after a disaster occurs.

I welcome you to participate in this research process and seek your consent to use documentation of the project, as well as to collect additional data, which I will describe below. The following points contain important information that you must be aware of in order to obtain your informed consent:

• There is no compensation offered for participation.
• I do not foresee participation in the project posing any risks for you.
• Throughout the study complete confidentiality will be maintained and pseudonyms will be used. Additionally, I will not identify anyone by name in any publication of project results.

The investigation has the purpose of exploring and learning from your experience of displacement. All audiotapes of interviews will be kept in a locked filing cabinet during the study and destroyed following analysis and transcription.
• There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, your answers may help community leaders and government officials create better solutions to support people who have had to resettle because of wildfires.
• Your participation in the research project is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to answer any question and may withdraw at any time.
• I will offer you the opportunity to review the transcript of study interviews and to request that any of your contributions be withheld from analysis.

Specifically, I am seeking your consent for the following:
• Documentation: I would like your permission to analyze your chronological timeline, which will be constructed prior to interviews.
• Interviews: I plan to conduct a comprehensive interview with each participant, which I will record and transcribe. I estimate that these interviews will take forty-five and sixty minutes. My goals for the interviews are to collaboratively explore in detail how your social identity changed during displacement and the resettlement period. These interviews will tentatively take place during Spring 2015.
• Reflective Session: I would like to have a telephone conversation with each participant three to four weeks after the interview in order to ensure that interview content accurately reflects the voice of each individual. The session will last approximately 30 minutes.

I may ask you to provide me with the contact information for additional individuals who you think may be willing to offer their insight of the wildfires. I will then seek permission from each individual.

Finally, your review of my interpretations of project data, particularly as it represents your personal perspective, is critical to the validity of my research. I will actively seek your review of findings and conclusions and ask for your verification of my interpretations. I will do my best to limit the time required of you, but your corroboration of my findings will be valuable. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about participating in this research. You may contact me at: bowman.l@husky.neu.edu or (760) 914-2508. You can also contact Dr. Margaret Gorman, the Principal Investigator at margaretgorman@outlook.com or (202) 425-7111. If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Please indicate your consent by signing below.

_________________________________________________  ____________
Signature of person agreeing to take part                  Date

___________________________________________________
Printed name of person above

___________________________________________________  ____________
Signature of person who explained the study to participant above and obtained consent

___________________________________________________
Printed name of person above
APPENDIX D

Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews

**Initial Prompt:** To facilitate this study, I would like to audio tape our conversations today. Please sign the release form. For your information, only researchers on the project will be privy to the tapes, which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate. I have planned this interview to last between forty-five and sixty minutes. During this time, we will discuss several questions that will help you tell your story. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Do you have any questions before we begin? (pause)

To start I will be asking some basic questions about your background.

1. **Interviewee background (Phase 1)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(IQ)</th>
<th>Interview Question(s)</th>
<th>Researcher’s Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| IQ-A1 | • Please tell me about your personal background.  
What is your name?  
What is your date of birth?  
(ethical consideration)  
How long have you lived in California? |                    |
| IQ-B2 | • Please, briefly describe your role in the community.  
(Probe: What is your current employment status?) |                    |

1. **Chronological Timeline Prompt (Phase 2)**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>(IQ)</th>
<th>Interview Question(s)</th>
<th>Researcher’s Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| IQ-A2 | • Using the timeline to guide you, please tell me about your experience of the wildfires that occurred in Swall Meadows:  
i. Describe the six events that you have listed on your timeline?  
ii. What were your living conditions prior to the wildfires?  
iii. How long had you been in Swall Meadows? |                    |
iv. Could you describe the time period when you realized you had to relocate?

v. How did people in the community respond to the crisis?

vi. How did your social life change as a result of the wildfires?

### 2. Lived Experience Questions (Phase 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(IQ)</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Theoretical Concept</th>
<th>Researcher’s Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| IQ-A3 | ● Before the wildfires, how did you envision your life in the Swall Meadows community?  
       ● How did you think your life might be similar to, or different from, life before the wildfires? | Anticipatory Categorization | |
| IQ-B3 | ● Looking back, what were some of the differences you first noticed immediately after being evacuated during the wildfires?  
       ● What were some adjustments, or changes, you made immediately? | Categorization | |
| IQ-C3 | ● If you were to compare yourself before and after the wildfires, what two animals would represent how you viewed yourself during this experience?  
       ○ Prompt: Describe why you chose each animal. | Categorization | |
| IQ-D3 | ● Tell me about how the problems you have encountered while resettling changed the way you interact with others?  
       ● How did your social relationships remain intact or change? | Compartmentalization | |
| IQ-E3 | ● Since relocating, what are some values or traditions you have kept?  
       ● What are some values or traditions you have a changed or gained? | Compartmentalization | |
| IQ-F3 | • Could you give me an example of when you have felt tension between your past identity and new identity? How did you resolve the tension? | Intraindividual Conflict |
| IQ-G3 | • How would you describe your sense of belonging after resettling in your new home? What factor(s) contribute to or hinder you from feeling a sense of belonging? | Integration |
| IQ-H3 | • Perhaps you could tell me about some people (i.e. support groups, social clubs) that have influenced your experiences. How do other people see you? • In what ways have you integrated into the new culture? • How have these changes influenced your identity? | Integration |
| IQ-I3 | • Tell me about how you see yourself in the future? Prompt: What barriers will you still face in the future? | * Expanding SIT |
| IQ-J3 | • What advice would you give to someone who is currently facing displacement or may be displaced in the near future? | * Expanding SIT |

**Additional Prompts** (changes made as a result of the pilot study):

Probes: What do you mean by _________?
Prompt: Could you tell me a bit more about that?

**Concluding remarks:** We have reached the conclusion of this interview. At this time, I would like to thank you for your participation in this research project. I will be contacting you via email within the next three weeks in order to verify the information provided in this interview and ensure that each participant has an opportunity to add or edit information from the interview. Thank you again for your time and I will be in contact shortly.
APPENDIX E

Chronological Timeline of Your Experience in the Wildfires

In the boxes below, please provide background information including: 1) Details about your life prior to the wildfires. 2) Steps that you took to relocate during the wildfires. 3) Three key ways that the wildfires impacted your identity and relationships with others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<table>
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APPENDIX F

Member Check Email Template

Dear PARTICIPANT,

Thank you for your time and your willingness to share your experiences with me on (date). I thoroughly enjoyed the time we spent discussing how the wildfires affected your life. As we discussed, I am sending you this follow-up email so you can review the transcription of your interview for accuracy (please see attached). Please feel free to edit the transcription as necessary, as well as offer additional thoughts, ideas, or reflections you may have had since our interview.

When you are finished, please send me the additional changes. If you have nothing to change or report please send me a quick email to confirm that you received the transcription. You may also contact me by phone at 760-914-2508. Thank you for your valuable time.

Kind regards,

Laura C. Bowman
Doctoral Candidate
College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
APPENDIX G

Protocol for Discussion on Findings

Good morning/afternoon/evening PARTICIPANT. This is Laura Bowman from Northeastern University calling to discuss the findings from the research project in which you participated.

Is this a good time to continue Session 3 of the project? It will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

Now that you have had time to review the findings I would like to ask you a few questions:

1). Tell me about your reaction to the findings and the results.

2). Would you like to add or change any information that you provided during this project?

3). Once this thesis study is completed, which will most likely be in 2-5 months, would you like to receive an electronic copy of the document?

4). Do you have any questions for me?

I would like to thank you deeply for your contribution to this project.
APPENDIX H

NIH Certificate of Completion Verification

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Laura Bowman successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 06/09/2014.

Certification Number: 1484725.
APPENDIX I

NVivo First Cycle of Coding

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APPENDIX J

Excerpts from Reflexive Journal

June 14th, 2016

As I read through the initial case-by-case analysis, I am surprised by how much people make sense of their experiences by using comparatives. In education, teachers are supposed to help children learning by engaging in background knowledge. This knowledge then shapes a frame of reference so that an individual can conceptualize new information. Similarly, it seems that the participants who have experienced displacement due to wildfires make sense of their experiences by comparing it to incidences that “others” have experienced. So far, I have seen this occur on a global level and a local level.

June 20th, 2016

In Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory an individual understands their social identity in the context, or reference to, the “self” and the interaction with “others.” As I begin to look at themes arising in individual cases, I am realizing that there is a distinct separation between the internal (self) and the external (other). Is it possible to change the “internal” self without it interacting with the external “other”? This is a question that is postulating in my mind. And, reversely, could the external other change without impacting the internal self? I would argue that these two entities cannot be distinctly separated, they are intertwined to make the individual identity.

Another concept that seems to be formulating throughout this process is the idea of “social dissonance.” According to Festinger (1957) cognitive dissonance theory suggests that we have an inner drive to hold all our attitudes and beliefs in harmony and avoid disharmony (or dissonance). Similarly, I think many people are trying to be in harmony with people around them interpersonally and intimately; however, displacement seems to disrupt the social composition. When this occurs, many of the participants have experienced “social dissonance” to one level or another. Most intriguingly, the disruption seems to affect intimate relationships more, and can even foster interpersonal bonding. For instance, Mila acknowledged that she did not talk to two of her closest family members for a while because they could not cope with the situation. Contrastingly, she noted that her love for her friends and close friends who help out grew significantly. It must be said that this insight is a little bit presumptuous and must be monitored closely so that it does influence my bias as I continue to analyze other cases.

June 24th, 2016

This morning I met with Wendy to discuss her experiences with the wildfires. Interestingly, after the interview she mentioned that some of the items that survived the fire included her husband’s wedding ring and ceramics. Overall, her demeanor was light-hearted and she seemed to laugh at some of the ironies in her experience. She referred to herself and others who had been displaced due to the wildfires as “refugees.” This was the first time that I had heard a participant make a connection between their experience in the wildfires and this terminology that is usually used in the context of third-world countries. After the interview she also made a remark that the limbo of dealing with insurance and trying to move on from the experience was like being in a fog.