Introduction

Most research in the field of migration focuses on why people move to, or from, a particular location. In contrast, this thesis argues that the question of why people migrate should be secondary to the questions of how people negotiate, experience and understand their migrations. These questions are addressed in relation to the return migrations of young adults to Tasmania (the southernmost state in Australia) from interstate and overseas. The thesis focuses on the issue of migration more generally through the lens of return migrations. Such a focus on return migration is particularly useful because it enables an examination of both people’s experiences of migration throughout the migration process and the changes in people’s perceptions of place as a result of their migrations.

Contextualizing the research

In an influential book, *Sociology Beyond Societies*, John Urry (2000) argues that the concept of the social as society will not be especially relevant in the future. Sociology, says Urry, has presumed the existence of bounded societies, usually nation states, within which the discipline operates. According to Urry, given the nature of the social world and its global inter-connections, a post-societal sociology is necessary. What is needed is an understanding of the social as mobility. Urry is referring to more than vertical mobility within societies (e.g. class mobility), he means also horizontal mobility: mobility of people, objects, images and ideas within and between societies.

The mobility of people, and the associated mobility of objects, images and ideas, is of ever increasing importance in today’s societies. One need go no further than the copious research on globalization processes to find support for this point (e.g. Allen & Thompson 1996, Cohen 1997, Castels & Davidson 2000, Dicken 1998 and Holton 1998). However, while much has been written regarding the impact of mobilities on
economic and political systems around the world, including the transfer of information, objects and people, less has been said about the influence of such mobilities on the lives of those involved. This is the focus of this thesis – the impact of mobility upon individuals. I address this through a focus on migration, defined as the physical movement of people from one place to another. While mobility is both physical (mobility of people and objects) and social (mobility of images and ideas), I take heed of Zelinsky’s (1971:224) comment that “given the dearth of techniques and data for handling purely social movement, we are forced to rely almost entirely on territorial movements as a clumsy surrogate for total mobility”.

My focus here is upon the physical mobility of people, but the ideas addressed are situated within the broader issue of mobility. Indeed, I criticize traditional migration research that considers migrants as purely rational beings moving between locations, and instead argue for a view of migrants as emotionally constituted people moving between places. Because of my focus on migrants as emotional people, I argue that in researching migration, it is important to ask not only why people migrate, but also how people deal with migration. That is, how do people negotiate, experience and understand their migrations? These are the major research questions that inform the theoretical and empirical analysis in this thesis. I asked questions relating to these issues of thirty young adults who had left and then returned to Tasmania from interstate and overseas. Tasmania provides an interesting case study because of the historically high number of young people moving into and out of the state, resulting in a significant and sustained net loss of young people. This has also lead to a long-standing concern in Tasmanian society about this loss due to its impact on the local economy.

I find that these young migrants' experiences are often turbulent and ambiguous and that their negotiations, experiences and understandings of migration are tied to their negotiations, experiences and understandings of the places they moved between. I go on to explore the utility of the concept of 'place' for providing a further depth of understanding of their mobilities.
Structure of the thesis

Chapter One provides an introduction to the context of the research, focusing on the construction of the out-migration of young people from Tasmania as a serious problem in the context of the demographic context of the state. While the out-migration of young adults is an issue facing many rural and regional areas in Australia, Tasmania has a distinct demographic composition and the focus on the capital city of Hobart in this research means that this case study should not be seen to represent the situation in rural and regional Australia in general. It is therefore necessary to place this research in the specific demographic and political context of Tasmania. In this chapter, I argue that the state’s government and media have been too concerned with (largely out-dated) ideas about the role that young people play in the economy, and that the focus should not be on why so many young people leave the state, but why more young people do not move in to take their place. To provide satisfactory answers to this question, I contend that it is necessary to consider what young Tasmanians themselves think about the issue. Chapter Two provides an overview of current debates in migration research and asks how these studies in migration can help us understand people’s negotiations, experiences and understandings of their migrations. Chapter Three outlines the methodology and methods used in the research. I opt for an interpretive approach that draws upon the concept of habitus (Bourdieu 1979), phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, and work on ‘flow’ to develop a methodology that recognizes the tension between structure and agency. I also outline the specific methods used in the research, including semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Chapter Four provides an overview of the research findings and outlines six major themes found by analyzing the interviews and focus groups using an approach based upon grounded theory and relates these themes to the major research questions.

While the first four chapters set the scene for the research, the remainder of the thesis has a theoretical focus, discussing the utility of the concepts of mobility and place for
analyzing the research findings. Chapter Five provides an introduction to the concept of ‘place’\(^1\), explaining that people’s stories about migrating are also stories about the places they have moved between. I argue that the concept of place is useful for extending an understanding of people’s negotiations, experiences and understandings of their migrations. I demonstrate how a better understanding of people’s emotional attachment to places can enable a deeper examination of people’s identity constructions and argue that people’s ideas about ‘place’ can influence their actions and therefore their practical circumstances and by extension the politics and economy of the places they are moving between. I conclude the chapter with a discussion on the importance of a particularly significant kind of place – home. Chapter Six deals with the issue of identity construction, and examines the importance of both mobility and place for the identities of these thirty young Tasmanians, with reference to three major schools of thought concerning identity: Giddens’ (1991) and Bauman’s (1997, 2001) historical approaches, recent accounts of identity in sociology, and geographical notions of identity informed by the concept of place. Chapter Seven addresses the impact of ideas about place upon people’s actions, and hence their practical circumstances and the politics and economies of the places they are moving between. Referring back to the issues addressed in Chapter One, I argue that the relative strength of bounded and networked constructions of Tasmania have very real consequences for both the practical considerations of young returned Tasmanians and the political economy of the state. Finally, the conclusion summarises the major findings of the research and proposes a model for future migration research that reasserts the importance of place and mobility.

\(^1\) Following Massey (1995) and Murdoch (1997), places are understood to be nodes in networks of social, material and animal relations. This thesis utilizes a number of terms in specific ways. Appendix 1 provides an overview of these terms.
Chapter 1. A state of decline?
Demography and discourse

1.1 Introduction

This study examines the movements of 18-38 year old people to and from the state of Tasmania in Australia (see Figure 1.1). This particular group was chosen for study for a number of reasons. First, the out-migration of these young adults has been the cause of considerable discussion and debate in the state for many years and the various discourses surrounding these movements, including discourses of 'brain drain', ageing populations and economic decline are replicated throughout Australia, and throughout the world. Second, Tasmania provides an excellent case study area, being an island state with its own government. Third, at the time of writing Tasmania is experiencing population growth, economic growth and a net migration gain after years of net migration loss and absolute population decline. Finally, the focus in Tasmania has been on the impacts of the out-migrations of young adults upon the state's economy, which has led to a neglect of the impacts of these migrations upon the young people involved. This study aims to reverse this focus.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the importance of considering both demographic data, and dominant discourses about the implications of the migration of young adults, in order to provide a satisfactory introduction to the context of the research. Next, I provide a broad overview of Tasmania's economy and demographics, as well as discussing the Tasmanian government's and the Tasmanian media's constructions of the out-migration of young people from the state as an important issue. I then outline the demographic situation with regards to the actual extent of migration to and from the state and discuss the assumed relationships between these demographic facts and the social issues of population decline, an ageing population and 'brain drain'. Finally, I outline recent changes in both the
demographics and economy of the state, and provide some suggestions on alternative ways to approach the ‘issue’ of the out-migration of young people from the state.

Figure 1.1: Map of Tasmania

(ABS 2006a)
1.2 Demography and discourse

1.2.1 Demography
Tasmania is comprised of one major island (64,519 km$^2$ [Australian Government 2005]) and some much smaller surrounding islands. The state has a relatively small population of approximately 485,300 people (ABS 2005a:3101.0), compared to the national population of approximately 20,328,600 (ABS 2005a:3101.0). Not only is Tasmania one of the smallest states or territories in Australia in terms of population (the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory are smaller), it has also traditionally been one of the poorest. The Tasmanian economy has performed poorly for the majority of the twentieth century and the unemployment rate has been consistently higher than the national average. However, at the same time the state is renowned across Australia for its pristine environment, its arts community and its high quality foods and wines.

Tasmania’s population has grown steadily over the last hundred years, with the exception of early in the twentieth century and between 1996 and 2000 when the state experience population decline (Jackson 2005a). The state has experienced a net migration loss in 64 of the last 100 years (and 23 of the last 30 years) (ibid). However, most of the time natural increase of the population has covered these losses (ibid). The population structure in Tasmania is also ageing rapidly, due largely to the net out-migrations of young adults, and is projected to overtake South Australia as the oldest State in Australia in the next few years (Jackson 2002a:3).

The out-migration of young adults from Tasmania has been connected to the struggling economy in the state and the related issues of population decline, brain drain and an ageing population. Not surprisingly then, the issue of young people leaving the state has gained considerable attention not only amongst policy makers, but also in the media.
1.2.2 Discourse
In the media and in public policy in Tasmania (and likewise elsewhere in the world), demographic facts and discourses relating to such facts are often conflated. In the sections below I outline how the out-migration of young people has been constructed as an ‘issue’ to be addressed, how population decline has been seen as a threat to the state’s economy, how the out-migration of young adults has been understood as a ‘brain drain’ and how the ageing of the population has been constructed as a ‘problem’. This conflation of demographic facts and interpretations of these facts has significant consequences for young migrants, but also for the economic and political management of the state and thus for all people living in Tasmania.

What do I mean when I talk about discourse? Following Fairclough, I understand discourse to be “language as social practice determined by social structures” (1995:17), including social conditions of production and social conditions of interpretation (ibid:25). In other words, discourse refers to the social utilization of language. Fairclough (1995:90) explains that struggles can arise between “ideologically diverse discourse types”, where one particular discourse type can become dominant in a particular “social domain”, making “certain ideological assumptions [seem] commonsensical”. Following from the ideas of Bourdieu, Fairclough (ibid:91) explains that if one discourse type becomes dominant and alternative discourses are “suppressed or contained”, then it will come to be seen as legitimate and will be taken-for-granted, rather than being seen as one of a number of possible discourses. This situation means that such a naturalized discourse can appear to be neutral in power struggles (ibid:92). This is important because “discourse has effects upon social structures, as well as being determined by them, and so contributes to social continuity and social change” (ibid:17).

The discourses that surround the issue of the migration of young people from (and to) Tasmania have the potential to influence policy relating to ageing populations (and the related issue of health), economic development, education, and migration more generally (including international migration). Jacobs et al. (2003:317) note that for
any policies to be “durable”, policy makers must base their policies on “a convincing rationale or narrative ... that accords with popular sentiment”. This means that “competing definitions of what constitutes ‘a problem’ and its solutions [are crucial] in defining the policy agenda” (ibid:317). In short, dominant discourses (Fairclough 1995) surrounding an issue (such as the migration of young people) will determine the direction of policy. In this case, policy that reaches into the realms not only of population movements, but also into health, education and economic development. However, at the same time, there are other, less dominant, discourses surrounding these issues, which also have the potential to influence government policy (Jacobs et al. 1999:13), and some of these are outlined below.

The strength of particular discourses, however, is not arbitrary, as Kemeny (2002:186) notes:

Underneath the ebb and flow of the discourse supporting this or that specific social policy programme are to be found deeper and more stable definitions of reality that are, for all their apparently eternal truthfulness, just as much constructions of reality as the linguistic policy superstructures they support.

According to Kemeny (2002:186), there are three levels of discourse, which he terms ‘discourse’, ‘narratives’ and ‘the metanarrative’:

1. Discourse refers to “the study of the extent to which utterances and texts reflect an internally consistent rhetoric”.
2. Narratives are “the myths, saga, imagery and archetypes that are used to carry a discourse and give it positive emotive charge”.
3. The metanarrative is “the way social reality is constructed and defined such that certain social problems rather than others become identified, which in turn defines the concepts needed to understand them”.


Kemeny's typology is a useful tool for understanding the complexities of discourse and providing a clear framework through which normalized discourses can be examined. Such scrutiny of normalized and dominant discourses is important if people are to gain an awareness of the socio-structural conditions that have led to the domination of one discourse over others. Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992:2) even go so far as to claim that "if a critique of these conditions occurs widely, it may alter not only how individuals construe their own identities, but also how they talk to one another and indirectly the social order itself".

I do not claim to provide such revolutionary changes in this thesis. However, I do follow Tierney (2000:545) in arguing that researchers need to ensure that the individuals we study are not treated as the objects of our discourses, but rather as "agents of complex, partial and contradictory identities that help transform the world they and we inhabit". In this chapter, I expose some of the dominant discourses at work surrounding the issue of the migration of young people to and from Tasmania and provide a space for the recognition of alternative discourses.
1.3 Migration to and from Tasmania

The out-migration of young people has been identified by politicians and the media as a problem for Tasmania. This section outlines both the demography and discourse relating to the out-migration of young adults from Tasmania.

1.3.1 Demography

A distinctive feature of Tasmania's post-war demography has been the sustained net migration losses to other parts of Australia. There were net gains from other states in the early post-war years but from 1954 continuous losses except for a small gain in the 1986-91 period.

(Hugo 2000:15)

Tasmania has, traditionally, recorded heavy net losses of population to other states for most of this century (Farmer 1980:213). It has also recorded low rates of inward migration from the other states and from other countries (Farmer 1980:211). This has meant that despite high rates of natural increase, the Tasmanian population growth rate "has often ranked lowest among the states" (Farmer 1980:211). As well as experiencing low or negative population growth, largely as a result of negative net interstate migration, Tasmania also has among the highest population turnover in

2 "As there is no reliable survey between the five-yearly population censuses of the number of people leaving or entering the State each year, the ABS estimates of interstate migration flows use Medicare records. However, this is an incomplete measure and the potential for error is significant. For this reason, quarterly ABS population estimates should be used as a guide, but not as an accurate measurement" (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:9). Further, while net interstate migration can be relatively small, it is the difference between two large amounts (interstate arrivals and interstate departures). "The large number of interstate movements both into and out of the State explains, combined with the relative inaccuracy of the measurement, why net interstate migration estimates tended to be quite volatile during the 1990s" (ibid:10).

3 "Tasmania only received a share of Australia's international migration in proportion to its share of the national population in the early post-war years. Since then ... it has received less than one percent of the national intake in all but three of the last thirty years" (Hugo 2000:13).
Australia (Jackson 2005b), indicating that migration is even more significant for the Tasmanian population than the net migration figures may at first suggest.

Figure 1.2 shows that for much of the 1990s, the state experienced negative net interstate migration. However, in the early 1990s and again since 2003⁴, the state has experienced positive net interstate migration. The Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance (2002:35) explains these fluctuations with reference to employment growth, explaining that:

The increase in net interstate in-migration in 1990 was associated with relatively strong employment growth in Tasmania. Over the following decade employment growth was below that of the mainland and there was net interstate out-migration.

While interstate departures can be correlated with the relative percentage of the population employed in Tasmania compared with Australia as a whole (ibid:42), interstate arrivals can be correlated with relative housing affordability. The Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance found that “relative housing affordability was the only variable that appeared to be strongly correlated with interstate arrivals” (ibid:37, my italics)⁵. They found that “as Tasmania’s housing became relatively cheaper since 1995, interstate arrivals of all groups, except young adults and children, increased” (ibid:40).

---

⁴ In the year ending June 2003, the state experienced a net gain of 1,900 from interstate (ABS 2005b:3311.6.55.001).
⁵ Other variables tested for included employment, participation rates, unemployment rates, private investment, average weekly earnings and job vacancies (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:36).
Figure 1.2: Net migration (annual) June 1971-June 2005, Tasmania (source: ABS 3101.0)

Figure 1.2 shows that the state experienced positive net interstate migration in 2003, 2004 and the year ending March 2005 (Jackson 2006). However, the increased number of interstate arrivals have been mostly people in older age groups, while there has been a high proportion of 15-29 year olds amongst the state's departures (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:v, see figures 1.3 and 1.4). In fact, "the median age of arrivals has been consistently above the median age of departures since at least the early 1980s" (ibid:14). Hence these interstate movements have had a significant impact on the age structure of the Tasmanian population.
Furthermore, these interstate migration gains and losses are not evenly spatially distributed across the state. Between 1991 and 2001 the major cities of Hobart (see Plate 1.1) and Launceston gained significant numbers of people from other parts of the state, but also lost significant numbers of people interstate (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:17). The other (more rural) areas of the Northern and Southern Divisions of the state lost people to the two large cities, but actually experienced net gains of people from interstate (ibid:17). Both the urban and rural areas of the North-West Division experienced a net loss of people to both other parts of Tasmania and interstate (ibid:17). What this indicates is that there is a pattern of migration within Tasmania to the Greater Hobart and Greater Launceston areas, and that most interstate losses have come from the Launceston and Hobart areas (ibid:17).

1.3.2 Discourse
Concern over the out-migrations of young adults from Tasmania is nothing new. In 1926 a report into the economic situation in Tasmania, referring to the out-migration of the working-age population, asserted “the state is losing its more valuable manhood, and if the drift be not soon arrested, the result to the state may be readily appreciated” (Lockyer 1926:11).
Seventy years later, another report into the economic situation in Tasmania (Nixon 1997:20) included similar comments:

High youth unemployment is also likely to lead to young Tasmanians being forced to leave the state to find employment ... Tasmania's young people are the key to a prosperous future for the state. As such, Tasmanians are justified in their concerns about the need to address this issue.

In 2001, a report was released as the result of extensive community consultation in Tasmania about the future that Tasmanians wanted for their state. One of the issues raised was the large proportion of young people leaving the state. It was stated in the report (Tasmania Together Community Leaders Group 2001:13) that:

Tasmanians told us ... we want ... meaningful education, employment, training and opportunities for young people that encourage them to stay in the state.

This concern amongst policy makers and within the community has been reflected in the Tasmanian media, especially since the 1990s. Media articles referring to the problematic nature of the out-migration of young adults have been common in Tasmanian newspapers. In a search of the major daily newspaper in southern Tasmania, *The Mercury*, 125 articles were found which related to this issue between July 1992 and July 2004. Some examples of article headlines from *The Mercury* appear below:

- Tassie Brain Drain (Fyfe 1992:3)
- More People Leaving State (The Mercury 1994:5)
The out-migration of young Tasmanians has been an issue for policy makers since the beginning of the twentieth century. This concern has been forcefully reflected in the Tasmanian media since the early 1990s. The apparent relationship between young people leaving the state and the poor economic performance of the state is an assumed relationship with roots that stretch back at least to the Lockyer report of 1926. So, what impact might those migrations actually have within the state? The following sections provide an overview of three issues that have been tied to the out-migration of young adults from Tasmania in public policy and discourse: population decline, an ageing population and brain drain.
1.4 Population growth and decline

As a result of an assumed relationship between population growth and economic growth, population decline, caused largely by net migration losses, has been seen as a threat to the state's economy. This section outlines the demographic facts and the discourses surrounding population decline in Tasmania.

1.4.1 Demography

Tasmania's population has grown steadily for much of the last century with the exception of early in the century, and again between 1996 and 2000, when the state actually experienced a declining population (Jackson 2005a, see Figure 1.4).

*Figure 1.4: Cumulative and annual population growth 1901-2004, Tasmania (source: ABS 3102.0, 3101.01)*

However, it is important to recognize that for much of the last century, significant net migration losses from the state were concealed (or offset) by natural increase (Jackson 2005a). Furthermore, the levels of population growth in Tasmania have been lower than the levels of growth in the nation as a whole (Nixon 1997:36). Hugo
(2000:2) notes “only in the 1947-54 period and briefly in 1975 did Tasmania have a more rapid rate of growth (2.65 percent) than Australia as a whole (2.47 percent)”. As a result, “the state’s share of the national population fell from 3.4 percent in 1954 to 2.8 percent in 1986 and 2.6 percent at the 1996 census” (ibid:3).

Net interstate migration is the most significant factor affecting changes in Tasmania’s population size, having a greater impact than either net overseas migration or natural growth rate (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:iii). Furthermore, while the population of Tasmania “has been growing for the past few years, the net loss of young people to interstate has continued” (ibid:3). The recent gains in population can be attributed to “an excess of births over deaths, along with small net gains from interstate migration of those in older age groups” (ibid:3). What this means is that if “current trends continue, Tasmania will eventually move to a situation where deaths exceed births, and will rely on net migration gains in order to maintain its population”, or else experience prolonged population decline (ibid:3).

In the late 1990s, Tasmania was the only state to have experienced a decrease in population since the Second World War (Hugo 2000:4) and it is important to note that it appears as though “the reasons for Tasmania’s low and sometimes negative population growth during the 1990s are particular to Tasmania” (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:20). Tasmania’s population decline was not simply a symptom of perceived Australia-wide rural population declines. In fact, between 1991 and 2001, the populations of many of the non-capital city areas of the mainland states actually grew (ibid:20). The Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance also note that “in addition to the population loss from the non-capital city areas of Tasmania, Hobart has the slowest capital city growth rate in Australia from 1991 to 2001” (ibid:20).
1.4.2 Discourse

Population decline is not only an issue facing relatively small areas like Tasmania, as Felmingham et al. (2002:96) have noted:

The most recent United Nations survey of population trends suggests that the twenty first century will not be far advanced before what remains of current population growth slows and much of the developed world shifts from natural population increase (the difference between births and deaths) to natural decline.

It is expected that, in Australia, Tasmania will be the first state to enter natural decline, followed shortly by South Australia, “but not for several years by the other states and territories” (Jackson 2002b:97).

Furthermore, what is particularly interesting about the Tasmanian case is that the immediate cause of population decline “is not the extremely low levels of fertility or birth rates that are evident in many counterpart countries, but rather, net out-migration to other Australian regions that, particularly in Tasmania, is ushering in a premature shift to natural decline” (Felmingham et al. 2002:96, emphasis in original). Of even more concern than the absolute loss of population, is the fact that this ‘loss’ has been disproportionally represented by a loss of 18 to 38 year olds:

In Tasmania’s case the immediate threat comes not from its moderately low birth rate, but from the premature loss of men and women of productive and reproductive age.

(Jackson and Kippen 2001:32, emphasis in original)

The fact that this out-migration is concentrated among the 18 to 38 age groups is “exacerbating the effects of the moderately low and still falling fertility” (Felmingham et al. 2002:96).
There has been significant concern over the impact of population decline upon the Tasmanian economy. One Australian academic, McKenzie (1994), has argued that population decline does not necessarily lead to economic decline, pointing out that there are regions in Australia that have experienced declining populations and maintained strong economies. However, McKenzie does not provide any examples of such regions. The issue may be “that population growth and economic development are completely unrelated, holding that whether or not a population grows as a society advances economically is entirely determined by the nature of social and political organization” (Jacobs 1999:18). As Jackson and Kippen (2001:27) note, the loss of population from Tasmania “poses a massive threat to Tasmania’s future” because the system of capitalism and the welfare state as we know them are based on increasing labour supplies. Furthermore, when the Tasmanian population declines, Felmingham et al. (2002:98) explain that the implications may include a reduction in Commonwealth Government Financial Assistance Grants, because “declining population shares may mean less absolute funding from the Commonwealth”. A declining population also means that the councils may lose income from rates, which would make it more difficult for local governments to provide local services and may lead to a reduction of local government’s current contribution to the Tasmanian economy (ibid:98-100). Also, smaller populations in local government areas may mean that they are not operating at optimal levels, that is, keeping expenditures at a minimum to “achieve current service levels” (ibid:100). Hence, the problem here is not population decline per se, but rather the fact that population growth is rewarded by increased government funding. This problem relates to a past era when the local population determined the size of the local economy. As a result, funding structures were based upon this assumption. However this connection between local population and local economy is no longer necessary and the issue therefore is not the size of the population, but rather the ways in which populations are funded.
1.5 An ageing population

The out-migration of young people has been linked with a concern about the ageing of the population in Tasmania and an assumed link to economic decline. This section outlines the demographic facts and discourses relating to the ageing population in Tasmania.

1.5.1 Demography

The Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance (2003:ix) note that “while population growth is desirable, of equal, or perhaps even greater, importance is the composition of the population”. Tasmania has an hourglass age structure (see Figure 1.5). That is, the proportion of 18-38 year olds is small in comparison with both the proportion of younger and older people in the state. Hugo (2000:27) explains that this age structure is due to the fact that “there was a net influx of people from interstate and overseas in the 1947-54 period”, most of whom were young and have since aged as well as the subsequent continuous net loss of young adults. Migration has a large impact upon regional age structures, and hence upon the dependency ratio of the state. The Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance (2003:52) have reported that for every four interstate departures of working age, only one dependent person departs the state. This hourglass structure can be contrasted against the more rounded age structure for Australia as a whole (see Figure 1.6).
Returning to Place

The Return Migration of Young Adults to Tasmania

By
Hazel Easthope, B.A. (Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Tasmania (October, 2006)
Declaration of Originality

This thesis does not contain any material that has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis. To the best of the candidates knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgment is made in the text of the thesis.

Hazel Easthope

Statement of Authority of Access

This thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

Hazel Easthope
Abstract

Traditionally migration scholarship has been concerned with the question of why people migrate. This has led many migration researchers to search for lists of causal factors understood to influence migration decisions. More recent migration research has come to recognize that to understand why people migrate, it is important to look beyond such lists and attempt to provide a more complex and nuanced account of the migration process. This thesis draws upon these more recent studies and begins with the premise that to begin to answer the question of why people migrate, one must first try to comprehend how people negotiate, experience and understand their migrations.

Through a study of the return migration of young adults to the state of Tasmania in Australia, this thesis discusses the utility of the concepts of ‘mobility’ and ‘place’ for exploring the complexities of people’s negotiations, experiences and understandings of migration. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with thirty young adults (aged between twenty and thirty-eight) who had left Tasmania and subsequently returned. The thesis speaks to discussions surrounding the emigration of young adults and concerns about ‘brain drain’ occurring in many regions in Australia as well as internationally. The choice of Tasmania as a case study for this research is highly appropriate, as concerns surrounding the out-migration of young people from the state have influenced the State’s social, economic and political life since the early 1900s. By examining return migration, the focus is shifted away from discourses that bemoan the negative effects of the emigration of young adults; instead recognising that migration can also bring benefits to both young migrants themselves and to the places they move between.

The research found that people’s experiences of migration were intricately tied to their negotiations and understandings of places. Through a complex analysis of constructions of mobility, place and belonging, the thesis reveals that young Tasmanians retain deep emotional and social connections to Tasmania at all stages of
the migration process. These connections are influenced by constructions of Tasmania as a place that is understood simultaneously as ‘bounded and insular’ and as ‘networked’. The thesis concludes by pointing to the implications of both mobility and place construction for the politics and economies of the places migrants move between, as well as for the practical considerations and identity constructions of the migrants themselves, and reasserts the importance of these concepts for studies of migration.
Acknowledgements

I have been assisted in the preparation of this thesis by a number of people. First and foremost by the thirty young Tasmanians who gave up their time to share their stories with me, without whom this thesis would not be possible. I would particularly like to thank my supervisor, Keith Jacobs, for his encouragement and academic support throughout the duration of the research as well as my associate supervisor Natalie Jackson for her expertise. I would also like to show my appreciation to Housing Tasmania for funding my research scholarship. I am grateful to colleagues at the University of Tasmania: Rowland Atkinson, Michelle Gabriel, Patricia Laddrak, Benjamin Nichols, Felicity Picken, and Elaine Stratford; as well as Lenore Lyons (University of Wollongong), and Petra Bürgelt (Massey University) for providing helpful insights into various aspects of the research. Thanks also to Phillip Patman for his technical expertise and to Della Clark and Lyn Devereaux for their priceless administrative support. I am above all grateful to my family, Per Arvidsson, Chris Easthope, Gary Easthope and Michael Easthope for their support throughout my research and their diligent editing of the final draft.
Table of Contents

Introduction

  Contextualizing the research 1
  Structure of the thesis 3

Chapter 1. A state of decline? Demography and discourse 5

  1.1 Introduction 5
  1.2 Demography and discourse 7
  1.3 Migration to and from Tasmania 11
  1.4 Population growth and decline 17
  1.5 An ageing population 21
  1.6 Brain drain 25
  1.7 Changing times? 31
  1.8 Another way of looking at the issue 33
  1.9 Conclusion 37

Chapter 2. Migration research 40

  2.1 Introduction 40
  2.2 Why people migrate 45
  2.3 Experiencing, understanding and negotiating migration 53
  2.4 Conclusion 59

Chapter 3. Methodology and methods 61

  3.1 Introduction 61
  3.2 Methodology 62
  3.3 Methods 78
  3.4 Conclusion 103

Chapter 4. Discourses of mobility 104

  4.1 Introduction 104
  4.2 Major themes 105
  4.3 Negotiating migration: Practical considerations and personal ties 107
  4.4 Experiencing migration: Experiences of leaving and returning and plans for the future 131
  4.5 Understanding migration: Sense of place and flexible identity 162
  4.6 Conclusion 176
Table of figures, plates and tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure/Plate</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.1</td>
<td>Map of Tasmania</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.2</td>
<td>Net migration (annual) June 1971-June 2005, Tasmania</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.3</td>
<td>Age of Tasmania's interstate migrants 1999-2004</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.4</td>
<td>Cumulative and annual population growth 1901-2004, Tasmania</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.5</td>
<td>Age-sex structure 2004, Tasmania</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.6</td>
<td>Age-sex structure 2004, Australia</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 3.1</td>
<td>The city of Hobart with Mount Wellington in the background</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Ages of informants at the time of interview; when first left Tasmania</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and when last returned to Tasmania</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1</td>
<td>Characteristics of informants</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>Major research themes and inter-relations</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 4.1</td>
<td>Hobart city docks with Mount Wellington in the background</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 5.1</td>
<td>The Tasman Bridge into Hobart with Mount Wellington in the background</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.1</td>
<td>Approaches to understanding the relationship of place, mobility and identity</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.1</td>
<td>Constructions of Tasmania</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Most research in the field of migration focuses on why people move to, or from, a particular location. In contrast, this thesis argues that the question of why people migrate should be secondary to the questions of how people negotiate, experience and understand their migrations. These questions are addressed in relation to the return migrations of young adults to Tasmania (the southernmost state in Australia) from interstate and overseas. The thesis focuses on the issue of migration more generally through the lens of return migrations. Such a focus on return migration is particularly useful because it enables an examination of both people's experiences of migration throughout the migration process and the changes in people's perceptions of place as a result of their migrations.

Contextualizing the research

In an influential book, Sociology Beyond Societies, John Urry (2000) argues that the concept of the social as society will not be especially relevant in the future. Sociology, says Urry, has presumed the existence of bounded societies, usually nation states, within which the discipline operates. According to Urry, given the nature of the social world and its global inter-connections, a post-societal sociology is necessary. What is needed is an understanding of the social as mobility. Urry is referring to more than vertical mobility within societies (e.g. class mobility), he means also horizontal mobility: mobility of people, objects, images and ideas within and between societies.

The mobility of people, and the associated mobility of objects, images and ideas, is of ever increasing importance in today's societies. One need go no further than the copious research on globalization processes to find support for this point (e.g. Allen & Thompson 1996, Cohen 1997, Castels & Davidson 2000, Dicken 1998 and Holton 1998). However, while much has been written regarding the impact of mobilities on
economic and political systems around the world, including the transfer of information, objects and people, less has been said about the influence of such mobilities on the lives of those involved. This is the focus of this thesis – the impact of mobility upon individuals. I address this through a focus on migration, defined as the physical movement of people from one place to another. While mobility is both physical (mobility of people and objects) and social (mobility of images and ideas), I take heed of Zelinsky’s (1971:224) comment that “given the dearth of techniques and data for handling purely social movement, we are forced to rely almost entirely on territorial movements as a clumsy surrogate for total mobility”.

My focus here is upon the physical mobility of people, but the ideas addressed are situated within the broader issue of mobility. Indeed, I criticize traditional migration research that considers migrants as purely rational beings moving between locations, and instead argue for a view of migrants as emotionally constituted people moving between places. Because of my focus on migrants as emotional people, I argue that in researching migration, it is important to ask not only why people migrate, but also how people deal with migration. That is, how do people negotiate, experience and understand their migrations? These are the major research questions that inform the theoretical and empirical analysis in this thesis. I asked questions relating to these issues of thirty young adults who had left and then returned to Tasmania from interstate and overseas. Tasmania provides an interesting case study because of the historically high number of young people moving into and out of the state, resulting in a significant and sustained net loss of young people. This has also lead to a long-standing concern in Tasmanian society about this loss due to its impact on the local economy.

I find that these young migrants’ experiences are often turbulent and ambiguous and that their negotiations, experiences and understandings of migration are tied to their negotiations, experiences and understandings of the places they moved between. I go on to explore the utility of the concept of ‘place’ for providing a further depth of understanding of their mobilities.
Structure of the thesis

Chapter One provides an introduction to the context of the research, focusing on the construction of the out-migration of young people from Tasmania as a serious problem in the context of the demographic context of the state. While the out-migration of young adults is an issue facing many rural and regional areas in Australia, Tasmania has a distinct demographic composition and the focus on the capital city of Hobart in this research means that this case study should not be seen to represent the situation in rural and regional Australia in general. It is therefore necessary to place this research in the specific demographic and political context of Tasmania. In this chapter, I argue that the state's government and media have been too concerned with (largely out-dated) ideas about the role that young people play in the economy, and that the focus should not be on why so many young people leave the state, but why more young people do not move in to take their place. To provide satisfactory answers to this question, I contend that it is necessary to consider what young Tasmanians themselves think about the issue. Chapter Two provides an overview of current debates in migration research and asks how these studies in migration can help us understand people's negotiations, experiences and understandings of their migrations. Chapter Three outlines the methodology and methods used in the research. I opt for an interpretive approach that draws upon the concept of habitus (Bourdieu 1979), phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, and work on 'flow' to develop a methodology that recognizes the tension between structure and agency. I also outline the specific methods used in the research, including semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Chapter Four provides an overview of the research findings and outlines six major themes found by analyzing the interviews and focus groups using an approach based upon grounded theory and relates these themes to the major research questions.

While the first four chapters set the scene for the research, the remainder of the thesis has a theoretical focus, discussing the utility of the concepts of mobility and place for
analyzing the research findings. Chapter Five provides an introduction to the concept of 'place'\(^1\), explaining that people's stories about migrating are also stories about the places they have moved between. I argue that the concept of place is useful for extending an understanding of people's negotiations, experiences and understandings of their migrations. I demonstrate how a better understanding of people's emotional attachment to places can enable a deeper examination of people's identity constructions and argue that people's ideas about 'place' can influence their actions and therefore their practical circumstances and by extension the politics and economy of the places they are moving between. I conclude the chapter with a discussion on the importance of a particularly significant kind of place – home. Chapter Six deals with the issue of identity construction, and examines the importance of both mobility and place for the identities of these thirty young Tasmanians, with reference to three major schools of thought concerning identity: Giddens' (1991) and Bauman's (1997, 2001) historical approaches, recent accounts of identity in sociology, and geographical notions of identity informed by the concept of place. Chapter Seven addresses the impact of ideas about place upon people's actions, and hence their practical circumstances and the politics and economies of the places they are moving between. Referring back to the issues addressed in Chapter One, I argue that the relative strength of bounded and networked constructions of Tasmania have very real consequences for both the practical considerations of young returned Tasmanians and the political economy of the state. Finally, the conclusion summarises the major findings of the research and proposes a model for future migration research that reasserts the importance of place and mobility.

\(^1\) Following Massey (1995) and Murdoch (1997), places are understood to be nodes in networks of social, material and animal relations. This thesis utilizes a number of terms in specific ways. Appendix 1 provides an overview of these terms.
Chapter 1. A state of decline?
Demography and discourse

1.1 Introduction

This study examines the movements of 18-38 year old people to and from the state of Tasmania in Australia (see Figure 1.1). This particular group was chosen for study for a number of reasons. First, the out-migration of these young adults has been the cause of considerable discussion and debate in the state for many years and the various discourses surrounding these movements, including discourses of 'brain drain', ageing populations and economic decline are replicated throughout Australia, and throughout the world. Second, Tasmania provides an excellent case study area, being an island state with its own government. Third, at the time of writing Tasmania is experiencing population growth, economic growth and a net migration gain after years of net migration loss and absolute population decline. Finally, the focus in Tasmania has been on the impacts of the out-migrations of young adults upon the state’s economy, which has led to a neglect of the impacts of these migrations upon the young people involved. This study aims to reverse this focus.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the importance of considering both demographic data, and dominant discourses about the implications of the migration of young adults, in order to provide a satisfactory introduction to the context of the research. Next, I provide a broad overview of Tasmania’s economy and demographics, as well as discussing the Tasmanian government’s and the Tasmanian media’s constructions of the out-migration of young people from the state as an important issue. I then outline the demographic situation with regards to the actual extent of migration to and from the state and discuss the assumed relationships between these demographic facts and the social issues of population decline, an ageing population and ‘brain drain’. Finally, I outline recent changes in both the
demographics and economy of the state, and provide some suggestions on alternative ways to approach the 'issue' of the out-migration of young people from the state.

Figure 1.1: Map of Tasmania
1.2 Demography and discourse

1.2.1 Demography

Tasmania is comprised of one major island (64,519 km² [Australian Government 2005]) and some much smaller surrounding islands. The state has a relatively small population of approximately 485,300 people (ABS 2005a:3101.0), compared to the national population of approximately 20,328,600 (ABS 2005a:3101.0). Not only is Tasmania one of the smallest states or territories in Australia in terms of population (the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory are smaller), it has also traditionally been one of the poorest. The Tasmanian economy has performed poorly for the majority of the twentieth century and the unemployment rate has been consistently higher than the national average. However, at the same time the state is renowned across Australia for its pristine environment, its arts community and its high quality foods and wines.

Tasmania’s population has grown steadily over the last hundred years, with the exception of early in the twentieth century and between 1996 and 2000 when the state experience population decline (Jackson 2005a). The state has experienced a net migration loss in 64 of the last 100 years (and 23 of the last 30 years) (ibid). However, most of the time natural increase of the population has covered these losses (ibid). The population structure in Tasmania is also ageing rapidly, due largely to the net out-migrations of young adults, and is projected to overtake South Australia as the oldest State in Australia in the next few years (Jackson 2002a:3).

The out-migration of young adults from Tasmania has been connected to the struggling economy in the state and the related issues of population decline, brain drain and an ageing population. Not surprisingly then, the issue of young people leaving the state has gained considerable attention not only amongst policy makers, but also in the media.
1.2.2 Discourse
In the media and in public policy in Tasmania (and likewise elsewhere in the world), demographic facts and discourses relating to such facts are often conflated. In the sections below I outline how the out-migration of young people has been constructed as an 'issue' to be addressed, how population decline has been seen as a threat to the state's economy, how the out-migration of young adults has been understood as a 'brain drain' and how the ageing of the population has been constructed as a 'problem'. This conflation of demographic facts and interpretations of these facts has significant consequences for young migrants, but also for the economic and political management of the state and thus for all people living in Tasmania.

What do I mean when I talk about discourse? Following Fairclough, I understand discourse to be "language as social practice determined by social structures" (1995:17), including social conditions of production and social conditions of interpretation (ibid:25). In other words, discourse refers to the social utilization of language. Fairclough (1995:90) explains that struggles can arise between "ideologically diverse discourse types", where one particular discourse type can become dominant in a particular "social domain", making "certain ideological assumptions [seem] commonsensical". Following from the ideas of Bourdieu, Fairclough (ibid:91) explains that if one discourse type becomes dominant and alternative discourses are "suppressed or contained", then it will come to be seen as legitimate and will be taken-for-granted, rather than being seen as one of a number of possible discourses. This situation means that such a naturalized discourse can appear to be neutral in power struggles (ibid:92). This is important because "discourse has effects upon social structures, as well as being determined by them, and so contributes to social continuity and social change" (ibid:17).

The discourses that surround the issue of the migration of young people from (and to) Tasmania have the potential to influence policy relating to ageing populations (and the related issue of health), economic development, education, and migration more generally (including international migration). Jacobs et al. (2003:317) note that for
any policies to be “durable”, policy makers must base their policies on “a convincing rationale or narrative ... that accords with popular sentiment”. This means that “competing definitions of what constitutes ‘a problem’ and its solutions [are crucial] in defining the policy agenda” (ibid:317). In short, dominant discourses (Fairclough 1995) surrounding an issue (such as the migration of young people) will determine the direction of policy. In this case, policy that reaches into the realms not only of population movements, but also into health, education and economic development. However, at the same time, there are other, less dominant, discourses surrounding these issues, which also have the potential to influence government policy (Jacobs et al. 1999:13), and some of these are outlined below.

The strength of particular discourses, however, is not arbitrary, as Kemeny (2002:186) notes:

Underneath the ebb and flow of the discourse supporting this or that specific social policy programme are to be found deeper and more stable definitions of reality that are, for all their apparently eternal truthfulness, just as much constructions of reality as the linguistic policy superstructures they support.

According to Kemeny (2002:186), there are three levels of discourse, which he terms ‘discourse’, ‘narratives’ and ‘the metanarrative’:

1. Discourse refers to “the study of the extent to which utterances and texts reflect an internally consistent rhetoric”.
2. Narratives are “the myths, saga, imagery and archetypes that are used to carry a discourse and give it positive emotive charge”.
3. The metanarrative is “the way social reality is constructed and defined such that certain social problems rather than others become identified, which in turn defines the concepts needed to understand them”.
Kemeny's typology is a useful tool for understanding the complexities of discourse and providing a clear framework through which normalized discourses can be examined. Such scrutiny of normalized and dominant discourses is important if people are to gain an awareness of the socio-structural conditions that have led to the domination of one discourse over others. Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992:2) even go so far as to claim that "if a critique of these conditions occurs widely, it may alter not only how individuals construe their own identities, but also how they talk to one another and indirectly the social order itself".

I do not claim to provide such revolutionary changes in this thesis. However, I do follow Tierney (2000:545) in arguing that researchers need to ensure that the individuals we study are not treated as the objects of our discourses, but rather as "agents of complex, partial and contradictory identities that help transform the world they and we inhabit". In this chapter, I expose some of the dominant discourses at work surrounding the issue of the migration of young people to and from Tasmania and provide a space for the recognition of alternative discourses.
1.3 Migration to and from Tasmania

The out-migration of young people has been identified by politicians and the media as a problem for Tasmania. This section outlines both the demography and discourse relating to the out-migration of young adults from Tasmania.

1.3.1 Demography

A distinctive feature of Tasmania’s post-war demography has been the sustained net migration losses to other parts of Australia. There were net gains from other states in the early post-war years but from 1954 continuous losses except for a small gain in the 1986-91 period.

(Hugo 2000:15)

Tasmania has, traditionally, recorded heavy net losses of population to other states for most of this century (Farmer 1980:213). It has also recorded low rates of inward migration from the other states and from other countries (Farmer 1980:211). This has meant that despite high rates of natural increase, the Tasmanian population growth rate “has often ranked lowest among the states” (Farmer 1980:211). As well as experiencing low or negative population growth, largely as a result of negative net interstate migration, Tasmania also has among the highest population turnover in

---

2 "As there is no reliable survey between the five-yearly population censuses of the number of people leaving or entering the State each year, the ABS estimates of interstate migration flows use Medicare records. However, this is an incomplete measure and the potential for error is significant. For this reason, quarterly ABS population estimates should be used as a guide, but not as an accurate measurement" (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:9). Further, while net interstate migration can be relatively small, it is the difference between two large amounts (interstate arrivals and interstate departures). "The large number of interstate movements both into and out of the State explains, combined with the relative inaccuracy of the measurement, why net interstate migration estimates tended to be quite volatile during the 1990s" (ibid:10).

3 "Tasmania only received a share of Australia’s international migration in proportion to its share of the national population in the early post-war years. Since then ... it has received less than one percent of the national intake in all but three of the last thirty years" (Hugo 2000:13).
Australia (Jackson 2005b), indicating that migration is even more significant for the Tasmanian population than the net migration figures may at first suggest.

Figure 1.2 shows that for much of the 1990s, the state experienced negative net interstate migration. However, in the early 1990s and again since 2003\(^4\), the state has experienced positive net interstate migration. The Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance (2002:35) explains these fluctuations with reference to employment growth, explaining that:

The increase in net interstate in-migration in 1990 was associated with relatively strong employment growth in Tasmania. Over the following decade employment growth was below that of the mainland and there was net interstate out-migration.

While interstate departures can be correlated with the relative percentage of the population employed in Tasmania compared with Australia as a whole (ibid:42), interstate arrivals can be correlated with relative housing affordability. The Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance found that “relative housing affordability was the only variable that appeared to be strongly correlated with interstate arrivals” (ibid:37, *my italics*)\(^5\). They found that “as Tasmania’s housing became relatively cheaper since 1995, interstate arrivals of all groups, except young adults and children, increased” (ibid:40).

---

\(^4\) In the year ending June 2003, the state experienced a net gain of 1,900 from interstate (ABS 2005b:3311.6.55.001).

\(^5\) Other variables tested for included employment, participation rates, unemployment rates, private investment, average weekly earnings and job vacancies (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:36).
Figure 1.2 shows that the state experienced positive net interstate migration in 2003, 2004 and the year ending March 2005 (Jackson 2006). However, the increased number of interstate arrivals have been mostly people in older age groups, while there has been a high proportion of 15-29 year olds amongst the state’s departures (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:v, see figures 1.3 and 1.4). In fact, “the median age of arrivals has been consistently above the median age of departures since at least the early 1980s” (ibid:14). Hence these interstate movements have had a significant impact on the age structure of the Tasmanian population.
Furthermore, these interstate migration gains and losses are not evenly spatially distributed across the state. Between 1991 and 2001 the major cities of Hobart (see Plate 1.1) and Launceston gained significant numbers of people from other parts of the state, but also lost significant numbers of people interstate (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:17). The other (more rural) areas of the Northern and Southern Divisions of the state lost people to the two large cities, but actually experienced net gains of people from interstate (ibid:17). Both the urban and rural areas of the North-West Division experienced a net loss of people to both other parts of Tasmania and interstate (ibid:17). What this indicates is that there is a pattern of migration within Tasmania to the Greater Hobart and Greater Launceston areas, and that most interstate losses have come from the Launceston and Hobart areas (ibid:17).

1.3.2 Discourse
Concern over the out-migrations of young adults from Tasmania is nothing new. In 1926 a report into the economic situation in Tasmania, referring to the out-migration of the working-age population, asserted “the state is losing its more valuable manhood, and if the drift be not soon arrested, the result to the state may be readily appreciated” (Lockyer 1926:11).
Seventy years later, another report into the economic situation in Tasmania (Nixon 1997:20) included similar comments:

High youth unemployment is also likely to lead to young Tasmanians being forced to leave the state to find employment ... Tasmania's young people are the key to a prosperous future for the state. As such, Tasmanians are justified in their concerns about the need to address this issue.

In 2001, a report was released as the result of extensive community consultation in Tasmania about the future that Tasmanians wanted for their state. One of the issues raised was the large proportion of young people leaving the state. It was stated in the report (Tasmania Together Community Leaders Group 2001:13) that:

Tasmanians told us ... we want ... meaningful education, employment, training and opportunities for young people that encourage them to stay in the state.

This concern amongst policy makers and within the community has been reflected in the Tasmanian media, especially since the 1990s. Media articles referring to the problematic nature of the out-migration of young adults have been common in Tasmanian newspapers. In a search of the major daily newspaper in southern Tasmania, The Mercury, 125 articles were found which related to this issue between July 1992 and July 2004. Some examples of article headlines from The Mercury appear below:

- Tassie Brain Drain (Fyfe 1992:3)
- More People Leaving State (The Mercury 1994:5)
• Number of Young People in State Declines (The Mercury 1998:9)
• Tasmanians Still Leaving the State in Record Numbers (The Mercury 1999:5)
• Exodus Key to Population Decline (The Mercury 2001:11)
• Tasmania’s Shifting Population: Towns Back From the Brink (Sayer 2002:8)
• Population Growth Boosts Economy but Call for Caution (Barbeliuk 2004:7)

The out-migration of young Tasmanians has been an issue for policy makers since the beginning of the twentieth century. This concern has been forcefully reflected in the Tasmanian media since the early 1990s. The apparent relationship between young people leaving the state and the poor economic performance of the state is an assumed relationship with roots that stretch back at least to the Lockyer report of 1926. So, what impact might those migrations actually have within the state? The following sections provide an overview of three issues that have been tied to the out-migration of young adults from Tasmania in public policy and discourse: population decline, an ageing population and brain drain.
1.4 Population growth and decline

As a result of an assumed relationship between population growth and economic growth, population decline, caused largely by net migration losses, has been seen as a threat to the state’s economy. This section outlines the demographic facts and the discourses surrounding population decline in Tasmania.

1.4.1 Demography

Tasmania’s population has grown steadily for much of the last century with the exception of early in the century, and again between 1996 and 2000, when the state actually experienced a declining population (Jackson 2005a, see Figure 1.4).

*Figure 1.4: Cumulative and annual population growth 1901-2004, Tasmania (source: ABS 3102.0, 3101.01)*

However, it is important to recognize that for much of the last century, significant net migration losses from the state were concealed (or offset) by natural increase (Jackson 2005a). Furthermore, the levels of population growth in Tasmania have been lower than the levels of growth in the nation as a whole (Nixon 1997:36). Hugo
notes “only in the 1947-54 period and briefly in 1975 did Tasmania have a more rapid rate of growth (2.65 percent) than Australia as a whole (2.47 percent)”. As a result, “the state’s share of the national population fell from 3.4 percent in 1954 to 2.8 percent in 1986 and 2.6 percent at the 1996 census” (ibid:3).

Net interstate migration is the most significant factor affecting changes in Tasmania’s population size, having a greater impact than either net overseas migration or natural growth rate (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:iii). Furthermore, while the population of Tasmania “has been growing for the past few years, the net loss of young people to interstate has continued” (ibid:3). The recent gains in population can be attributed to “an excess of births over deaths, along with small net gains from interstate migration of those in older age groups” (ibid:3). What this means is that if “current trends continue, Tasmania will eventually move to a situation where deaths exceed births, and will rely on net migration gains in order to maintain its population”, or else experience prolonged population decline (ibid:3).

In the late 1990s, Tasmania was the only state to have experienced a decrease in population since the Second World War (Hugo 2000:4) and it is important to note that it appears as though “the reasons for Tasmania’s low and sometimes negative population growth during the 1990s are particular to Tasmania” (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:20). Tasmania’s population decline was not simply a symptom of perceived Australia-wide rural population declines. In fact, between 1991 and 2001, the populations of many of the non-capital city areas of the mainland states actually grew (ibid:20). The Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance also note that “in addition to the population loss from the non-capital city areas of Tasmania, Hobart has the slowest capital city growth rate in Australia from 1991 to 2001” (ibid:20).
1.4.2 Discourse

Population decline is not only an issue facing relatively small areas like Tasmania, as Felmingham et al. (2002:96) have noted:

The most recent United Nations survey of population trends suggests that the twenty first century will not be far advanced before what remains of current population growth slows and much of the developed world shifts from natural population increase (the difference between births and deaths) to natural decline.

It is expected that, in Australia, Tasmania will be the first state to enter natural decline, followed shortly by South Australia, “but not for several years by the other states and territories” (Jackson 2002b:97).

Furthermore, what is particularly interesting about the Tasmanian case is that the immediate cause of population decline “is not the extremely low levels of fertility or birth rates that are evident in many counterpart countries, but rather, net out-migration to other Australian regions that, particularly in Tasmania, is ushering in a premature shift to natural decline” (Felmingham et al. 2002:96, emphasis in original). Of even more concern than the absolute loss of population, is the fact that this ‘loss’ has been disproportionally represented by a loss of 18 to 38 year olds:

In Tasmania’s case the immediate threat comes not from its moderately low birth rate, but from the premature loss of men and women of productive and reproductive age.

(Jackson and Kippen 2001:32, emphasis in original)

The fact that this out-migration is concentrated among the 18 to 38 age groups is “exacerbating the effects of the moderately low and still falling fertility” (Felmingham et al. 2002:96).
There has been significant concern over the impact of population decline upon the Tasmanian economy. One Australian academic, McKenzie (1994), has argued that population decline does not necessarily lead to economic decline, pointing out that there are regions in Australia that have experienced declining populations and maintained strong economies. However, McKenzie does not provide any examples of such regions. The issue may be "that population growth and economic development are completely unrelated, holding that whether or not a population grows as a society advances economically is entirely determined by the nature of social and political organization" (Jacobs 1999:18). As Jackson and Kippen (2001:27) note, the loss of population from Tasmania "poses a massive threat to Tasmania's future" because the system of capitalism and the welfare state as we know them are based on increasing labour supplies. Furthermore, when the Tasmanian population declines, Felmingham et al. (2002:98) explain that the implications may include a reduction in Commonwealth Government Financial Assistance Grants, because "declining population shares may mean less absolute funding from the Commonwealth". A declining population also means that the councils may lose income from rates, which would make it more difficult for local governments to provide local services and may lead to a reduction of local government's current contribution to the Tasmanian economy (ibid:98-100). Also, smaller populations in local government areas may mean that they are not operating at optimal levels, that is, keeping expenditures at a minimum to "achieve current service levels" (ibid:100). Hence, the problem here is not population decline per se, but rather the fact that population growth is rewarded by increased government funding. This problem relates to a past era when the local population determined the size of the local economy. As a result, funding structures were based upon this assumption. However this connection between local population and local economy is no longer necessary and the issue therefore is not the size of the population, but rather the ways in which populations are funded.
1.5 An ageing population

The out-migration of young people has been linked with a concern about the ageing of the population in Tasmania and an assumed link to economic decline. This section outlines the demographic facts and discourses relating to the ageing population in Tasmania.

1.5.1 Demography

The Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance (2003.ix) note that “while population growth is desirable, of equal, or perhaps even greater, importance is the composition of the population”. Tasmania has an hourglass age structure (see Figure 1.5). That is, the proportion of 18-38 year olds is small in comparison with both the proportion of younger and older people in the state. Hugo (2000:27) explains that this age structure is due to the fact that “there was a net influx of people from interstate and overseas in the 1947-54 period”, most of whom were young and have since aged as well as the subsequent continuous net loss of young adults. Migration has a large impact upon regional age structures, and hence upon the dependency ratio of the state. The Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance (2003:52) have reported that for every four interstate departures of working age, only one dependent person departs the state. This hourglass structure can be contrasted against the more rounded age structure for Australia as a whole (see Figure 1.6).
Figure 1.5: Age-sex structure 2004, Tasmania (source: ABS 3101.0)

(Jackson 2005a)

Figure 1.6: Age-sex structure 2004, Australia (source: ABS 3101.0)

(Jackson 2006)
1.5.2 Discourse

This hourglass age structure has caused much concern amongst economists and demographers, given that people between the ages of 18 and 38 are in their key "productive and reproductive" years (Jackson and Kippen 2001:32). This is particularly significant because it means that not only are these young adults leaving, they are also taking with them their existing children, and the children they would have had, further accelerating the ageing of the population. An hourglass age structure means that a smaller number of people of working age are carrying the burden of support for a larger number of dependents. Discussions of the structural ageing of the population are therefore strongly tied to these concerns over the hourglass age structure of the state.

Population ageing, Jackson (2002a:4) notes, affects all age groups. The real concern is with structural ageing (i.e. the increased proportion of old people in the state), rather than numerical ageing (i.e. the increased numbers of old people). While numerical ageing increases the "demand for age pensions, age-related health care, housing [and] transport", structural ageing "is the constraining factor" (ibid:5-6). Not only is the Tasmanian population experiencing structural ageing, welfare support from the government has also been scaled back (as it has in the rest of the country).

Add this to the fact that not only are there "an unexpectedly large number of older people surviving but the survivors are 'sicker' than in the past ... the incidence of illness and disability among the elderly population has increased" (Hugo 2000:8) and the combination of structural ageing and decreasing welfare support from the State is a worrying trend in Tasmania.

However, Jackson (2002b) has speculated about the impact of structural ageing in Tasmania for people of working age and says that the outlook need not be so bleak. She suggests that as a result of structural ageing there may be an increase "in competition between the labour market and educational institutions for the same young participants" (ibid:114). Such increased competition for young people in the labour force may lead to improved wages and conditions, making Tasmania a net
attractor of young people in the long run. Jackson (2002a:14) also suggests that population ageing may prove to be an emerging "industry" in Tasmania, providing further employment for young people. However, increased competition for labour may see costs increasing for employers and the reduction in some jobs (ibid:13). As yet, however, the unemployment rate in Tasmania remains relatively high⁶ (6.7% in April 2004 compared to the national rate of 5.7% in April 2004- trend estimates, ABS 2004:1303.6) and it has been suggested that recent increases in university enrolment may reflect further hidden unemployment in the state (Jackson 2002a:11).

⁶ Although it has decreased significantly since the mid-1990s (ABS 2006b:6202.0).
1.6 Brain drain
The out-migration of young Tasmanians has also been linked to concern over an alleged brain drain. This section addresses the demographic facts and discourses relating to this alleged brain drain from Tasmania.

1.6.1 Demography
The extent to which the net out-migration of young adults from the state actually constitutes a brain drain is difficult to determine. Besides the difficulties of determining and measuring the factors that should constitute a brain drain (e.g. education, training, skill), accurate records are not kept on the various qualifications of people moving interstate. However, two reports have attempted to determine the extent of brain drain from Tasmania. Measuring brain drain largely by those who had qualifications of a bachelor degree and above and those who did not, and analyzing data sets from the 1991 and 1996 censuses, Rumley (2002) found that a brain drain was not occurring in Tasmania. However, of the brain gains made by Tasmania (the qualified people coming in), a large proportion of them were not in the workforce, indicating that many were older and had retired (ibid). Hugo (2000:23), however, came to a different conclusion, also looking at data from 1991-1996, finding that “the high level of education of the net loss indicates that the net migration does have some of the characteristics of a ‘brain drain’”.

1.6.2 Discourse
Not only has there been concern over the absolute numbers of people leaving the state, and the age of those leaving, concern over the ‘quality’ of people leaving has also been expressed. As noted earlier, Gabriel (2002:221) found that discussions in the Tasmanian media highlight the concern that it is the “best and brightest” who are leaving the state. Hence, the concern in Tasmania over a loss of young people is actually concern for the loss of particular types of young people. Gabriel has noted this distinction in her study of the out-migration of young people from the North West Coast of Tasmania. As a result of extensive discourse analysis of Tasmanian
government publications and media, Gabriel (ibid:221) identified what she saw as a split in discourses of youth migration between ‘desirable youth’ and ‘undesirable others’. She found that discourses concentrating on the negative impacts of youth migration often focus on the out-migration of ‘desirable youth’, Tasmania’s “most educated” young people (ibid:211). This concern about the ‘loss’ of talented, skilled and educated young people from Tasmania is sometimes expressed in comments about a ‘brain drain’ from the state. The following headlines from The Mercury provide some examples:

• Tassie Brain Drain (Fyfe 1992:3)
• $5m Bid to Stop Brain Drain (Clark 1994:11)
• Brain Drain Halting Just Pipe Dream (Kearney 1996:5)
• Concern Over Brain Drain (The Mercury 2000:13)
• Bacon Says Jobs Boost Eases the Brain Drain (Haley 2000)
• Brain Drain Changes the School Equation (Milford 2000:25)
• Computer Firm Helping to Plug Tassie’s Brain Drain (Stevenson 2001:2)
• Fund Helps Battle our Brain Drain (Wood 2001:35)
• Brain Drain Part of Globalisation (Bevilacqua 2001:4)
• Exhibitors Have Designs on Stopping Brain Drain (Young 2003:15)

The term ‘brain drain’ is usually employed to discuss the migration of highly skilled professionals between countries. However, the discourse of brain drain has been adopted in public discussions of the out-migrations of young adults from Tasmania. Indeed, the issues raised in the international ‘brain drain’ literatures are highly relevant for an examination of the out-migration of young Tasmanians.
International brain drain has been “the subject of highly controversial debates since the 1960s” (Ammassiri and Black 2001:11). Two major contrasting views have emerged in the international ‘brain drain’ literature, which have been called the nationalist and internationalist perspectives (Liki 2001), or the divergence and convergence theories (Ammassiri and Black 2001). Proponents of the nationalist (or divergence) perspective point to social, cultural and economic problems caused by emigration, including: the loss of working-age population, resulting in an increasing number of dependants; a drain of people with “good educational training” (UNESCO 1985:10) at some monetary cost to their government (Mohanty 2001:69); the loss of skilled workers requiring the importation of foreign workers who demand higher wages; a reduction of foreign exchange earnings because of increased reliance on imported products including food (UNESCO 1985:10); the loss of a migrant’s indigenous culture, identity and heritage and the introduction of foreign (and often detrimental) “behavioural norms” by returning migrants (ibid:10). Suggestions are then made of ways to stem such an ‘exodus’, for example tightening immigration policies in receiving countries and providing incentives for professionals to stay in their home countries (Liki 2001:69). Parallels can be seen in public debate over the ‘brain drain’ from Tasmania. Just as the nationalist brain drain approach points to the social, economic and cultural problems caused by the out-migrations of skilled professionals and makes suggestions on how to reduce these losses, discussions of brain drain in Tasmania have focused on concern over “human capital losses” (Farmer 1980:25-226) and ways of “keeping youth at home” (Gabriel 2002:210-211).

In contrast, the ‘internationalist’ (or convergence) view sees migration “as an equilibrating response to spatial inequalities, as essentially voluntary in nature and as a rational attempt by migrants to maximize utility” (Liki 2001:69). Proponents of the internationalist view argue that less developed countries are exaggerating the problem, that only a few professionals are migrating at any one time, and that these

---

7 This discussion on the nationalist and internationalist perspectives on brain drain builds upon arguments made in Easthope, H. (2002) Migration, Education and Health in Kiribati, thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Bachelor of Arts (Honours), School of Geosciences, University of Sydney.
less developed countries are often unable to employ all of their graduates in appropriate jobs, and hence the migrants are 'surplus' workers (Oommen 1989:411). Furthermore, the internationalist view argues that skilled migration is “beneficial to both the global community and individual migrants” (Liki 2001:69). Similarly, discussions on brain drain from Tasmania often take an economic determinist approach, arguing that young people are leaving because they are excess workers and that once the economy improves, they will stop leaving:

Mr. Bacon [Tasmanian Premier] said as jobs growth improved the population drain would further decline and eventually reverse.  
(Haley 2000:7)

Both approaches have received criticism. The nationalist brain drain approach neglects to address those aspects of international migration that may actually benefit a society, such as remittances (money sent home), the creation of beneficial social networks and return migration. On the other hand, the internationalist approach neglects to acknowledge that while migration may be beneficial to individual migrants and some members of the “global community”, others suffer. It fails to address the consequences of emigration on those people ‘left behind’. Both approaches have also been criticised for portraying migration as a one-way flow and migrants “as people detaching themselves physically and socially from the homeland and from cultural values” (Liki 2001:67-68). That is, both approaches tend to ignore the possibility that social, economic and political ties can be forged between migrants and those people who remain behind. Such ties can be beneficial in creating trans-state and trans-national economic and social networks, which can be utilized to the advantage of the home economy and society. The Chief Economist of the ANZ Bank (Eslake8 2002) identified these possibilities in the Tasmanian context:

---

8 Himself Tasmanian born.
Over the past two decades, some 250,000 Tasmanians have left to live on the mainland (an unknown number have also moved overseas). Assuming most of them are still alive, their number is equivalent to about 50% of the current Tasmanian population (a proportionally larger expatriate population than that of any other state). Many of these expatriate Tasmanians are in senior or influential roles in mainland companies or governments (and yet retain considerable affection for their home State). Tasmanians tend to view those who leave as a permanent loss, rather than as a network, which can potentially be ‘exploited’ for Tasmania’s benefit; who may be responsive to appeals to ‘put something back’ into Tasmania – financially, or by using access and influence.

The possibilities for developing such networks and the existence of young return migrants in Tasmania are ignored by ‘brain drain’ discourses, which view migrants “as people detaching themselves physically and socially from the homeland and from cultural values” (Liki 2001:67-68). However, there is evidence of an increasing recognition of the potential benefits to be gained by nurturing networks with ‘expatriate’ Tasmanians. Not only did the Chief Economist of the ANZ bank stress precisely that, but in 2004 the State Government released an initiative aimed at providing support for such networks. As part of the State Government’s report, *Response to the Competition Index* (Tasmanian Department of Economic Development 2004a), the benefits of reconnecting with expatriate Tasmanians were recognized. Economic Development Minister, Lara Giddings said in a media report that “the Department of Economic Development would build on the existing

---

9 A report produced by the Department of Economic Development that addresses the ways in Tasmania can become more economically competitive. It is a response to *The Competition Index* (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2004), a report that assesses the relative competitiveness of various sectors of the Tasmanian economy as compared to other states and territories.
networks established by Brand Tasmania\textsuperscript{10} to reconnect with Tasmanians who are living and working outside the state" (Tasmanian Department of Economic Development 2004b). A plan was also underway to “reduce the loss of graduates to mainland states and overseas by connecting students with employers” (Giddings quoted in Tasmanian Department of Economic Development 2004b). However, despite this significant step, the existence of young returned Tasmanians\textsuperscript{11} already in the state and the skills and experience that they may bring to the state still does not appear to have received much attention.

\textsuperscript{10} Brand Tasmania is an organization set up in 1999 “to formulate and promote a place-of-origin branding initiative for Tasmania” (Brand Tasmania 2005). As one of its initiatives, Brand Tasmania has set up an online network of “Tasmanian eFriends”; expatriate Tasmanians who remain interested in what is happening in Tasmanian business (ibid).

\textsuperscript{11} By the term ‘young returned Tasmanians’ I am referring to those people who grew up in Tasmania, moved away from the state and then returned. I do not wish to imply that these people necessarily identify themselves as ‘Tasmanian’.
1.7 Changing times?

1.7.1 Demography

Over the last few years, some significant changes to the Tasmanian population and economy have taken place with the state experiencing population growth, net migration gains and economic growth, albeit now slowing.

The state has been experiencing population growth since 2000, with population growth peaking at 5,512 people in the year ending March 2004, but slowing to 3,027 people in the year ending June 2005 (Jackson 2006). The state has also been experiencing net interstate migration gains since 2003 when the state experienced a net interstate migration gain of 1,900 people (ABS 2005b:3311.6.55.001)\(^{12}\). This increased to a gain of 2,750 people in the year ending March 2004. However, the migration gains in Tasmania appear to be slowing (as can be seen in Figure 1.2) with a net interstate migration gain of only 187 people for the year ending June 2005 (Jackson 2006).

The economic situation in Tasmania has also improved with the housing 'boom' experienced by the state in late 2003 and lower unemployment rates in the last few years (down to 6.9% in 2003-04 [ABS 2005c:1384.6]). However, it is important to recognize that economic growth leads to uneven consequences. For example, while decreasing unemployment rates might be expected to reduce the number of young people leaving the state, the housing boom (which affects housing affordability) may be paralleled by a drop in migration into the state, given the ties between migration and housing affordability cited above.

\(^{12}\) This constituted a gain of 0.40%. All other states and territories with the exception of Victoria (0% gain) and Queensland (1.06% gain) experienced net interstate losses (ABS 2005d:1301.0)
1.7.2 Discourse

The total population of the state has stopped declining, the state is currently experiencing net interstate migration gains and the economy of the state is improving. However, while the population appears to have ceased its decline in absolute terms and the state is experiencing net migration gains, the state is still losing more young people than it is gaining in the 18-29 year old age group (although the state did experience net interstate gains amongst the 30-38 age group). Hence, the structural ageing of the population remains an issue. In fact, Jackson has argued that the age distribution of migrants to Tasmania has actually “accelerated [Tasmania’s] ‘premature structural population ageing’ and sent it hurtling even faster towards natural decline” (Jackson 2005b:1). Jackson (ibid:11) goes on to argue that given this situation, “the state should cease to look at migration as ‘the answer’”. The move to a net migration gain also does not necessarily mean that there is any less of a ‘brain drain’. Just because the issue of young people leaving the state has been overshadowed by news of an improving economy and growing population, does not mean it has gone away.
1.8 Another way of looking at the issue

The (fluctuating) concern surrounding the out-migrations of young adults has consistently been tied to fears over the future of Tasmania more generally, but particularly to fears of the economic future of Tasmania. Economic growth has been posited as an important and desirable aim and concerns surrounding population size and structure are couched in concern about the economic future of the state. The dominant discourse appears to be that a declining population, especially a decline in the numbers of skilled people and young people, will lead to a weakened economy.

The exact nature of the relationship between the out-migration of young people and economic decline is unclear. It is difficult to determine whether the outward migration of young Tasmanians has contributed to economic decline; has been a response to economic decline, or a combination of both. This uncertainty has been reflected in the different positions of the two major parties in Tasmania, the Liberal and Labour parties. Both parties have explicitly recognized the ‘issue’ of the out-migration of young people and the relationship of these movements to economic decline. The Liberal party, who were in power between 1993 and 1997, tried to implement a number of population policies aimed at addressing this issue directly and set up a ‘Population Task Force’ in the mid-90s. Policies under this taskforce included a resettlement program (The Mercury 1996:7), asking current Tasmanian residents to identify people interstate who may wish to move to Tasmania (Lester 1996:5); a $65,000 real estate draw for new settlers; a promotional tour around the rest of Australia; and an advertising campaign: “isn’t this the way life should be” (Gillard 1997:1)\(^\text{13}\).

---

\(^{13}\)This is not the only media campaign to have advertised the benefits of living in Tasmania. The Tasmania Committee, a group community and business leaders established in 2002 with the stated aim of building the “level of confidence and optimism in Tasmania” also released a media campaign: “Tasmania: love this place”. Interestingly, on their website, they state that: “Through this uplifting campaign and with real examples as evidence we feel the leaders of the state will be reminded to consider Tasmania when expanding and making the very important decisions that may impact on the economy of Tasmania. In turn, more jobs will be available and less of our young, highly trained and enthusiastic people will be tempted to leave” (The Tasmania Committee 2005, my italics).
On the other hand, the Labor party, which has been in power for seventeen of the last thirty years,\textsuperscript{14} criticised the Liberal party's policies\textsuperscript{15} when the employment spokesman for Labor said that the Population Task Force was “doomed” because people would not come when they found out there were no opportunities for employment (Carrigg 1997:3). Similar sentiments were repeated by the Deputy Premier (Labor) in 1999 (Dally 1999:5). Hence, the Labor party took the stance that population issues can only be ‘fixed’ by improvements in the state’s economy. In fact, in 1999, a spokesman for the Treasurer said “Tasmania won’t have population growth until we have economic growth” (The Mercury 1999:5). The Liberal (opposition) party, however, continued to release population plans in 2000 (see Jackson 2005b), 2001 (see Haley 2001:7) and 2002 (see Ribbon 2002:2). In 2001, the Labor government did release a report called Population: An Information Paper on State Government Policy in response to the Liberal party’s 2000 population strategy. This report outlines the actions that the government is taking to tackle population decline in the state. These include measures aimed at decreasing interstate departures, such as an industry development plan and financial strategy to restore business confidence (State Government of Tasmania 2001a:19-20); as well as measures aimed at increasing interstate arrivals, such as the promotion of tourism and the arts, business migration, a competitiveness strategy and marketing strategies and publications (ibid:20-23). In addition, the report points to the desire of the government to increase the number of international migrants settling in the state (ibid:24-27).\textsuperscript{18} The report also includes measures aimed at natural population change.

\textsuperscript{14} The Labor party have been in power 1975-1982; 1989-1992; and 1998 until the present (Parliament of Tasmania 2005).
\textsuperscript{15} The Liberal party have been in power 1982-1989 and 1992-1998 (Parliament of Tasmania 2005).
\textsuperscript{16} In a sense, these different positions held by the two major parties regarding population issues correspond to the two brain drain theories outlined above. While the nationalist brain drain approach argues that we must do something to stop the ‘exodus’ of skilled migrants, the Tasmanian Liberal party have argued that we should actively do something to increase the population of the state. Similarly, while the internationalist brain drain approach argues that migrants are simply excess workers, the Tasmanian Labour party argues that the only way to increase the population is to improve the economy.
\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, the State Government, especially through Tourism Tasmania, has heavily promoted the 'clean green' view of Tasmania as a place of natural beauty.
\textsuperscript{18} The Regional Migration Scheme recently launched by the Federal Government may provide a useful avenue for such promotion.
including more job security and increased maternity leave in the government sector (ibid:23-24).

What is constant in both of these governmental approaches, however, is that the concern over the relationship between the migrations of young people and the economic situation in the state is manifest first and foremost in concern with the well-being of the state’s economy, not with the well-being of the young people concerned. The dominant ‘message’ in both the media and in government policy is that young people are leaving and this is bad for Tasmania’s [economic] future. While those who promote the economic growth scenario probably think that this will improve the lives of young people too, the focus is firmly upon the economy as a whole, not the young people themselves. However, it is also important to recognize, as Jones (1995:5) has, that “the focus tends to be on the problems young people appear to pose for society, rather than on the problems society creates for the young”.

Gabriel (2000) addresses these issues through her study of the out-migrations of young people from the rural Northwest coast of Tasmania. Gabriel (ibid:1) questions the belief that if we could keep things the same, “curb population loss, preserve regional communities, and keep young people at home then everything would be alright”, because in many respects, these communities are not working for young people. Furthermore, Gabriel (ibid:3) argues that a distinction has been made by many ‘community managers’ between ‘desirable youth’ and ‘undesirable others’ and that the media tend to concentrate on “what to do about the regional youth crisis”, rather than on “what to do about young people disadvantaged by the new spatial and economic demands of globalisation”.

In short, the ‘concern’ about the out-migration of young adults from Tasmania is predominantly a concern for the economic future of Tasmania and not a concern for the well being of young Tasmanians. Hay (2002:127, emphasis in original), a prominent Tasmanian academic, has posited that the common argument that:
it is Tasmania's great tragedy that its best and brightest leave the island for places distant ... is not a tragedy. To be brutal about this, our young people should leave. The tragedy lies in them not coming back, in never feeling that they can bring their skills, their worldly-wisdom, their new insights and their energies back home.
1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an introduction to the demographic and discursive context in which this research took place. In terms of demography, I explained that Tasmania has experienced a reduction in the number and proportion of 18 to 38 year olds in the state due to out-migration for much of the last century, which has even contributed to absolute population decline in the state early in the twentieth century and again between 1996 and 2000. This has meant that Tasmania now has an hour glass age structure, which has lead to concerns about:

- the ageing of the population (the second oldest and fastest ageing in Australia) and associated concerns about service provision;
- the loss of a highly educated and skilled pool of young people who could potentially participate in the workforce (with one of the highest levels of unemployment in Australia);
- and hence the economic viability of the state (one of the poorest in Australia).

Following Kemeny’s (2002) three levels of discourse, the dominant discourses in Tasmania regarding the migration of young people can be identified as:

1. Young people leaving is a problem for Tasmania.
2. a) Young people leaving is both a cause, and a result, of economic decline because population growth is required for economic growth and vice versa.
   b) An ageing population is detrimental for economic growth.
   c) When skilled and educated young people leave this negatively impacts upon the economy.
3. Economic growth is important and desirable.
These discourses have a significant impact upon people’s thoughts about the issue of the migration of young adults and upon government policies, which directly address, or indirectly affect, these migrations. The public debate surrounding the migration of young adults has involved a significant degree of fear-mongering and political posturing. In particular, the migrations of young adults out of the state have been directly tied to economic decline through discourses surrounding population decline, an ageing population and an alleged brain drain. Furthermore, the level of debate in Tasmanian media and politics regarding these issues has been unsophisticated in the sense that it has constantly focused upon what the state is losing, and not on what the state is gaining. Indeed, the focus on out-migration is part of the problem and the media in particular seldom note the net effect of migration.

If it is the case that the smaller proportion of young people in the state has a negative impact upon the state’s economy, it is important to recognize that this is not simply a result of young people leaving the state, rather it is a result of more young people leaving than arriving in the state. The concern over the out-migration of young people from the state has seen the spotlight placed on those young people leaving the state, while the significant (yet smaller) numbers of young people moving to the state, including those young people returning to the state, have been largely ignored. Hence, leaving aside arguments about the extent to which a smaller proportion of young adults affects the economy, the important issue ought to be not just why young people are leaving Tasmania, but why fewer young people are moving into the state to replace them, and to find out what motivates those young people who do move into the state. Such questions have been neglected in public discourse in Tasmania because the focus upon the out-migration of young adults and the economic fears that accompany it have meant that the needs and experiences of the young people themselves have received significantly less attention. This is the point from which my research begins. I focus upon the needs and experiences of young people and ask what motivated them to move into the state.

19 This connection has much to do with Commonwealth Government policies that reward population growth.
It is important to recognize that the situation in Tasmania seems to have shown some ‘improvement’ recently with regards to both population and economic growth and that these improvements have meant that less attention has been focused on the issue of young people leaving (or returning to) the state over the past few years. However, this growth in the state’s population size and economy has not eliminated any of the structural issues facing the state’s population. The state is still losing more young adults than it is gaining and this out-migration is in fact leading to an acceleration of the structural ageing of the population. Therefore the issues relating to the migration of young adults remain salient in Tasmania, even though they may have been temporarily buried under good news stories of population growth.