Chapter 2. Migration research

The theoretical concepts now employed by social scientists to analyze and explain internal migration were forged primarily in the industrial era and reflect its particular economic arrangements, social institutions, technology, demography and politics ... Although fluid and creative when first derived, [these industrial-era theories] grew rigid over time and now appear ill-suited to the dramatically different conditions of the late twentieth century. With the passage of time, reality changed, but scientific thinking about ... migration remained mired in the past.

(Massey et al. 1998:3)

2.1 Introduction

Human migration, or the movement of people from one physical locality to another, can be short-term or long-term, temporary or permanent, one-way or circular. It can involve people traveling individually, in family groups, or as diasporas. However, no matter what 'form' migration takes, it is important to recognize that migration is always more than the movement of people to different physical locations. Migration is a social phenomenon that cannot be simply reduced to a statistical analysis of flows of people (seen as mathematical units) across space (seen as an absolute).

The geographical mobility of any population both reflects and affects broader social processes in society and the movement of people is "an integral aspect of social life" (Williams and McIntyre 2001:392). A better understanding of the processes of geographical mobility can enable more comprehensive insights into issues such as economic restructuring (e.g. Burke 1996 and Chepulis 1984), globalization (e.g. Glick Schiller et al. 1995), development (e.g. Ammassari & Black 2001 and Johnson et al. 2004) and social polarization (e.g. Gabriel 2002 and Jamieson 2000). As well as
its relationship with these ‘macro’ processes, human migration also reflects numerous interconnected ‘micro’ processes in society, such as changes in housing markets, family structures, work routines and less tangible changes in individuals’ experiences. As Newton and Bell (1996:1) have recognized, “shifts in patterns of mobility often represent the clearest indicators of underlying social change”. They also note that:

The shifting nature and balance of economic, social and demographic forces is not only altering the context within which migration occurs, it is also acting as a direct stimulus to migration, triggering new forms of mobility and new spatial outcomes.

(Newton and Bell 1996:11)

It is also important to recognize that not only is migration a social phenomenon, but that migration is itself a social construct. Williams and McIntyre (2001:392) point out that in much of the academic literature addressing the issues of home and identity, it is assumed “that our sense of home and identity are singularly rooted in a local place” and that this has been:

reinforced in fields such as demography, geography, and anthropology where the movement of peoples, rather than being seen as an integral aspect of social life, has been regarded as a special and temporary phenomenon classified under such headings as migration, refugee studies, and tourism.
Furthermore, the social labelling of another person or of oneself as a migrant is an act of power. The term ‘migrant’ is steeped with connotations of both the mobilization of group identities and the labelling of groups of people as ‘other’.

It is apparent that migration (and its social causes and consequences) is an extremely complex issue. In his book *The Turbulence of Migration*, Papastergiadis (2000) notes that when we look at migration around the world, the forms it takes are often turbulent. Many people around the world move, and even those people who do not leave are ‘moved’ by migration. Papastergiadis (ibid:4) explains:

> Turbulence is not just a useful noun for describing the unsettling effect of an unexpected force that alters your course of movement; it is also a metaphor for the broader levels of interconnection and interdependency between the various forces that are in play in the modern world. The flows of migration across the globe are not explicable by any general theory.

Similarly, DeSantis (2001:1), in a study of the writings of ‘exiles’ living in the US, argues that the “contradictions, simultaneities, and conflicts” in migrants’ stories should not be seen “as psychological flaws or illogical thinking, but as manifestations of the centripetal/centrifugal forces at work in their lives”.

This complexity has also been recognized specifically in the context of return migration by King (1978) who points to the complexity of people’s moves, their reasons for moving and the level of development in places of origin and destination. I would add that this complexity also stretches to the ways people experience (as noted

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20 In part for these reasons, and despite identifying this research as a study of migration, I was careful to ask people about their ‘moves’ in the interviews rather than their migrations. I did not wish to assume that all the returned young Tasmanians I spoke to would mobilize a group identity, neither did I want to unnecessarily separate or marginalize them from other people in Tasmania who had not left the state, or from people who had moved to the state for the first time. While I asked people about their ‘moves’ in the interviews and group discussions, I have chosen to use the terms ‘migration’ and ‘migrant’ in this written thesis largely because the bulk of the academic literature on the movements of people utilize these terms.
by McHugh 2000), negotiate and understand their return moves. Such complexity was certainly apparent in the migration stories of the young Tasmanians I interviewed. Multiple forces have affected their migrations and their experiences. Hence, following Barth (1989), I have started with the presumption of disorder with regards to the stories of these young Tasmanians, and have then attempted to explain the patterns I have discovered through my research. These patterns, or themes, are discussed in Chapter Four. In this chapter, however, I explore the issue of migration as a (necessarily complex and turbulent) social process and ask the questions: Why do people migrate? How do people experience migration? How do people negotiate their migrations? How do people understand their migrations? Beginning to answer these questions is difficult, and the answers must always be contextualized, because while large numbers of people around the world leave one area to live in another on a daily basis, for reasons ranging from work to war, these movements are not regular and their consequences are variable for those involved.

There is a significant body of literature on migration, in particular international migration, which addresses the four questions outlined above, although rarely does one researcher address all four questions. Much of this expansive literature is theoretically rich, introducing concepts such as:

- The influence of 'push and pull' factors on migration decisions (e.g. King 2000).
- The influence of migration on politics and rhetoric (e.g. Hage 1998).
- The impact of migration on economies and development (e.g. Bertram & Watters 1985) and the impact of migration on economies and development with regards to return migration (e.g. Bovenkerk 1974 and Ammassari & Black 2001).
- 'Brain drain' (e.g. Iredale 1999, Koser & Salt 1997, Liki 2001 and Meyer 2001). and 'brain drain' with regards to return migration (e.g. Lidgard 2001).
• The interrelationship between the movement of people and processes of globalization (e.g. Bailey 2001, Glick Schiller et al. 1995 and King 1995)

• Transnationalism and diasporic communities (e.g. Baldassar 2001 and Duval 2003).

• The interrelationship between migration and people's life courses (e.g. McHugh et al. 1995 and Ting & Chiu 2002).

• The relationship between migration and attachment to place (e.g. Shumaker & Conti 1985 and McHugh & Mings 1996), in particular home places (e.g. Baldassar 2001; Case 1996, Marshall & Foster 2002 and Uehling 2002).

• The relationship between migration and identity (e.g. Baldassar 2001, Christou 2002, Duval 2003 and Lawson 2000).

In this chapter, I bring together a number of these theories to provide an overview of some of the theoretical issues that must be faced by migration researchers when studying why people migrate and how they experience, understand and negotiate their migrations.
2.2 Why people migrate

In order to address the question of why people migrate, it is important to first ask the question of who migrates, before going on to consider reasons for migration. This is because people’s reasons for migrating often depend upon their own circumstances before migrating as well as their ideas about the utility and desirability of migration.

2.2.1 Who migrates?

For many individuals and families economic, social, technological and institutional change has provided new opportunities to meet emerging needs and aspirations. For others, however, such changes may reduce the range of options, either by inhibiting their ability to move, or by forcing a move which is unwelcome.

(Newton & Bell 1996:11)

People’s migrations are informed by their social situation, both in terms of their personal relationships with friends and families and in terms of their social position in society. This has lead some academics to study the migration of family groups, rather than individuals (e.g. Rossi 1980 and Wulff & Newton 1996), while others have focused on the relationship between migration, particularly the migration of young adults, and class. For these researchers, migration (and geographical location) is seen primarily as a means for social mobility, or improving one’s economic and social (and hence class) position (Shumaker & Conti 1985:240). This is especially the case in modern times as people are expected to move for jobs. Hence, migration is seen as a mechanism for maintaining or improving one’s class position. Such human capital models are based on the assumption that “those with the most social and economic resources are the most likely to migrate” (Garasky 2002:411). For example, in a study of the migration (or non-migration) of 45 young people in the Scottish Border region, Jamieson (2000) found that middle-class families often take migration for granted,
while working class children who do well at school might consider migrating at a later stage. Further, Jamieson also found that a family’s history of rootedness or migration could also have an effect on whether children were more socialized into migration, or into staying. However, Jamieson says “‘attachment’ to or ‘detachment’ from place cannot be simply read off family background” (2000:219), and that the migration of young people in a rural area is not a simple matter of “detached late-modern migrants” and “traditional backwater stay-at-homes” (ibid:203). Jamieson (ibid) then goes on to outline a typology of the young people in her study of “attached stayers”, “detached stayers”, “attached migrants” and “detached migrants”. This typology is interesting not only because it challenges the idea that a person’s migration (or non-migration) is primarily determined by class, but also because it accounts for the fact that people do not necessarily cut all ties to a place when they migrate and may remain attached to that place through social ties and involvement in the community. It also acknowledges that some young people stay in a place, not because they are attached to that place, but because they do not see any other options available to them. Gabriel’s (2002) discussions (in the Tasmanian context) of ‘desirable youth’ and ‘undesirable others’ also raise the issue of young people who do not have the opportunity to migrate. Gabriel (ibid) argues that in media and policy discourse, the discussion usually surrounds concern about the ‘loss’ of ‘desirable youth’ (attached and, in some cases, detached migrants). I would add that the media also tend to cover those young people who have the opportunity to migrate, but choose not to (attached stayers) (e.g. The Mercury 2004:4-5). Gabriel (2002:212, emphasis in original) then notes that the construction of desirable youth “inevitably entails the construction of undesirable others” who may not have the opportunity to migrate (detached stayers).

Jones (2000) also discusses class inequality in relation to the opportunities for migration for young adults. She problematizes simple relationships between class and opportunities for migration, but in a different way to Jamieson. Jones (ibid) argues that inequalities and conflicts within families can interfere with the class reproduction process. Furthermore, sometimes social change is so rapid that the parent may not
possess social and cultural capital that has value for their children (ibid:154). In the current climate, in which there is a flexible labour market and extended education and training, with a shift to the service industry and a decrease in full-time jobs, as well as an increase in marital breakdowns (ibid:155), the stability associated with class and family structures is threatened. However, Jones (ibid:156) argues that, while migration is an integral part of the changes occurring in our post-modern times, and people are increasingly expected to migrate to where there are jobs, “migration does not in itself inhibit the transition of social class from generation to generation, because a ‘culture of migration’ forms part of the cultural capital of some families”.

Jones (ibid) provides a typology to describe the migrations of young people based upon this idea of a culture of migration. She says that while some young people who are influenced by the culture of migration may be described as ‘path-followers’ when they migrate, “because they are following an established pattern of migration and social class”, others can be described as ‘trail blazers’, as they have no family history to help them with their migrations (ibid:156). McHugh (2000:83) also discusses this concept of a culture of migration, saying that one of the overarching themes for a research agenda in migration should be the “entrainment” of people in “migrant cultures”. That is, migration can be a part of one’s culture or sub-culture and hence a cultural expectation. This idea of a ‘culture of migration’ is explored further in Chapter Four.

What these studies of class and migration make clear is that migration is not an equal process. Some people have more opportunities for migration and more ‘cultural capital’ and family and social support to help them in their migrations. Others lack the economic, social and/or knowledge resources to migrate and therefore may find migration very difficult. In short, the reasons for migration, the opportunities to migrate, the experiences of migration, and the results of migration can differ quite considerably for different people, as may the extent to which they maintain ties with their place of origin.
It is, however, important to note that while some people may have more opportunities for migration than others, this does not mean that all of those with the opportunity to migrate will do so. People with high social, cultural and economic capital and with a family history of migration may choose not to migrate, while people with lower social, cultural and economic capital and no family history of migration may choose to migrate.

Furthermore, Papastergiadis (2000:11) notes that migration also affects people who do not actually change location, namely the people 'left behind' and the people in the areas those migrants move to. It also influences the ability of people to imagine movement. As Papastergiadis (ibid:11) says, “movement is not just the experience of shifting from place to place, it is also linked to our ability to imagine an alternative”. Appadurai (1991:198) has also made similar observations, pointing especially to the role of the media in opening up people’s imaginations, saying:

In the last two decades ... More persons throughout the world see their lives through the prisms of the possible lives offered by mass media in all their forms ... what is implied is that even the meanest and most hopeless of lives, the most brutal and dehumanizing of circumstances, the harshest of lived inequalities is now open to the play of the imagination.

He goes on to say that “it is in the grinding of gears between unfolding lives and their imagined counterparts that a variety of ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983) is formed” (Appadurai 1991:198). He claims that this situation means that at the current time, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus\(^2\) can prove useful, however:

the stress must be put on [Bourdieu’s] idea of improvisation, for improvisation no longer occurs within a relatively bounded set of thinkable postures, but is always skidding and taking off ... where

\(^2\) This term is defined in Appendix 1 and discussed further in Chapter Three.
once improvisation was snatched out of the glacial undertow of 
habitus, habitus now has to be painstakingly reinforced in the face 
of life-worlds that are frequently in flux.

(ibid:200)

Hence, the improvisations and imaginations of people with regards to mobility are 
very important and actual physical migrations of people can have implications that 
stretch well beyond their own individual lives to the lives of all those people who can 
Imagine migration.

2.2.2 Reasons for migration

Although we can sometimes work out the reasons for migration 
from the characteristics of the migrants, the characteristics rarely 
provide a complete explanation of why people move. An 
alternative is to ask questions directly of the migrants themselves.

(Bell 1996:22)

There are a multitude of potential reasons for migration. People may migrate for 
economic, political, social (e.g. lifestyle, family, social ties and education), cultural or 
environmental reasons. Furthermore, people’s reasons for migrating are usually of a 
complex nature, involving a number of factors.

The first distinction that needs to be made in discussing reasons to migrate is that 
between forced (or passive) migration and choice (or active) migration. In some 
instances, people are forced to migrate. For example, when people are deported and 
when they are dependant upon family members who migrate. However, the line 
between passive and active migration is blurred. For example, economic refugees 
may feel forced to migrate, but they must make the choice to migrate themselves.
This study concentrates on people who have chosen to migrate, although some may have felt that they did not have any (or many) other options.

It is important to recognize that the decision to migrate is informed by both reasons to leave the current place of residence, and reasons to go to the intended destination. The most popular theories of migration have taken this into account. For instance, econometric studies of migration, premised on a micro-economic, rational choice perspective, attempt to model (often quite comprehensively) the economic factors that influence the migrations of people (e.g. Clark 1982, Stark and Taylor 1991 and Straubhaar 1988; and with regards to return migration Klinthäll 1998, Klinthäll 1999 and Robolis & Xideas 1996). These studies assume that people will act as rational economic beings and will move where the market needs them. The models created as part of these econometric studies can be comprehensive in examining the economic factors that may influence a move and can also be used to make predictions about the future. However, such models seldom take into account social, cultural and environmental factors. While it is possible for these theorists to argue that economic factors can act as a proxy for these other factors (e.g. Klinthäll 1999), this approach still remains limited and economically determinist.

Push-pull theories of migration (e.g. Dorigo & Tobler 1983, King 2000 and Marshall et al. 2003) also take into account both reasons to leave a particular location and reasons to move to another. These studies may include an examination not only of economic factors that may influence the decision to migrate but also social, cultural and environmental factors. This approach treats migrants as rational actors and attempts to describe the reasons people may have to leave an area (the ‘push’) and reasons to go to another area (the ‘pull’). Push factors that are often discussed are unemployment, poor educational opportunities, lack of social opportunities (boredom) and poor public services. Pull factors may include better job opportunities, improved educational opportunities, the possibility of an exciting social life and superior public services.
These push-pull studies have been valuable for increasing our understanding of factors that may influence people’s decisions to migrate. In particular they are useful in recognizing two components of migration decisions – the decision to leave one place and the decision to move to another. However, there are some limitations to this approach to studying migration. These studies have a tendency to simply produce ‘lists’ of ‘factors’ that influence or ‘cause’ particular types of migrations. This approach means that these studies are unable to deal adequately with the interrelationships between multiple factors (Alvarez 1976:107). These studies also tend to rely on structural explanations for migration decisions, and neglect the agency of the people making the decisions. For example, Young (1994 in Jacobs 1999:14) says that people react to ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors in different ways depending on their place in the lifecycle, their role in the family and community and their level of education and technical knowledge. Jones (1999) also argues that it is not only structure that affects the decisions of young people to move away from rural communities (e.g. a lack of jobs and educational opportunities), but also agency, including an inherited sense of belonging and constructions of identity and community. The problem is that push-pull theories tend to assume that people are rational actors, that they have correct information about the particular situations they are leaving and going to and that they make their decisions regarding migration solely on this information. This assumption does not take into account the fact that different people have varying amounts of information pertinent to their migration decisions and that people do not act with complete knowledge of the situations they are moving between. Wierenga (2002:7) addresses this issue in her discussion of “known worlds”, saying that the aspirations of young people (including their aspirations to migrate) are influenced by what they know of the world outside their local community. Hence, push-pull theories of migration do not take into account the importance of the perceptions that people have about their current location and their migration destination. People act in response to their perceptions about particular places. This is where the concept of agency becomes useful, because it provides a model for explaining seemingly ‘irrational’ decisions. For example, while the out-migration of young adults may be understood as a response to unemployment and the
lure of better employment opportunities and the ‘big city lights’ elsewhere, the return migration of young people to areas where unemployment remains relatively high and there has been no significant increase in the ‘excitement’ offered, is harder to understand in these terms. However, if we discuss the agency of those people who return, as well as the structural factors that might have influenced their decisions, and we ask people about the way they perceive their migrations, then we can begin to address some of these issues.

Furthermore, ‘push-pull’ studies of migration tend to focus upon the place of departure and place of arrival and neglect the fact that the journey itself is also important. As stated in the introduction, mobility has been recognized by some academics as a fundamental aspect of social life (e.g. Urry 2000). For example, Sennett (1998:88) claims that passive people do not thrive in a dynamic society and that the destination of the migrant is not as important as the act of departing because the migrant “is not so much calculating, rationally choosing, but simply hoping that by making a break something will turn up”. Furthermore, the relationship between mobility and identity development (discussed further in Chapter Six) has also received a significant amount of attention among social theorists (e.g. Giddens 1991 and Bauman 2001).
2.3 Experiencing, understanding and negotiating migration

With the rise in popularity of feminist and post-colonial academic critiques (e.g. Silvey & Lawson 1999 and Silvey 2004) the assumption that migration studies should focus primarily on structural factors has been challenged and the issues of migrants' agency and the power imbalances evident in the various structures influencing migration have become more popular. That is, as well as asking why people migrate, migration researchers are beginning to look at “migration as process” (Silvey & Lawson 1999) and are seeking to understand the power relations that impact upon both people’s migrations and their experiences of those migrations. Such research also focuses on how people understand and actively negotiate their migrations. As Hardwick (2003:166) has noted:

Instead of viewing migration in a humanistic perspective that focuses on analyzing push-pull factors that ‘cause’ migration and settlement to happen in particular ways in particular places in one fixed moment in time, post-modern, post-positivist scholars have begun to see and to record migration processes as fluid intersections of multiplicity. In the latter view, as the experiences of individual migrants and the culture, people and place who create these experiences form, express and change, so too does migration and settlement decision-making. This change may happen through individuals or through their socially constructed communities, networks and values.

Hence, increasing numbers of migration researchers have begun to discuss the importance of “the realm of the common sense and taken-for-granted” (Halfacree and Boyle 1993:336 in McHugh 2000:74) as opposed to the “motivations and reasons actively thought about by ‘calculating’ subjects” (McHugh 2000:74). For example, drawing upon Giddens' (1984) notion of human agency and action operating at three
levels of consciousness (the unconscious, practical consciousness and discursive consciousness), Halfacree and Boyle (1993 in McHugh 2000:74) have argued that migration literature tends to emphasize discursive consciousness, or the “motivations and reasons actively thought about by ‘calculating’ subjects”, rather than practical consciousness (the realm of common-sense and the taken-for-granted). It is important therefore to ask not only why people migrate, a question addressed through the discursive consciousness, but also to ask what people take for granted in making sense of their mobile lives by examining how they experience, understand and negotiate their migrations.

In addressing the ways in which people experience, understand and negotiate their migrations I examine three different, yet mutually interacting concepts. In asking how people experience their migrations, I focus largely on their feelings and emotions in different situations. In asking how people understand their migrations, I consider their thoughts about migration, specifically what meanings they attribute to their migrations. In asking about how people negotiate their migrations, I explore how they deal with the problems and opportunities presented to them and hence how they choose to act given their understandings and experiences of migration. The three questions are linked. Experiences impact upon understandings, which impact upon negotiations, which impact upon actions, which impact upon experiences and so on in a circular manner. However, I have separated the three concepts here for the sake of explanation.

2.3.1 How do people experience their migrations?

Much has been written in the migration literature about the experience of migration. A great deal of this literature concentrates on negative feelings, and feelings of alienation feature prominently (e.g. Papastergiadis 2002). Also of importance are the emotions directed towards a ‘lost home’ (e.g. Ahmed et al. 2003, Hart & Ben-Yoseph 2005, Hay 2002 and Read 1996) and changed relationships with ‘home’ (e.g. Christou 2006, Constable 1999). Much has also been written about the feelings of the
people living in the place ‘receiving’ migrants, ethnic tension, and the people of the receiving culture viewing the migrant as ‘Other’ (e.g. Hage 1998). Such exclusion, in turn, contributes to feelings of alienation experienced by the migrant. These studies are interesting because they provide a way into discussions of ethnic tensions and warfare, multicultural government policies and the development of ‘ethnic enclaves’ within cities and countries. However, positive feelings can also surround the migration experience, such as feelings of freedom, adventure and self-discovery (Buttimer 1980; Gmelch 1992; Tuan 2001). While the various experiences of migration are numerous, perhaps even innumerable, what remain constant in the study of migration experience are the ambivalence, plurality and contingency of migration experiences (Ahmed et al. 2003; McHugh 2000; Uehling 2002). McHugh claims that one of the overarching themes for a research agenda in migration should be “the ambivalence of migration” (2000:84). By this he means that often a migrant can feel conflict between simultaneous feelings of excitement, challenge and freedom on the one hand and rootlessness, rupture and failure on the other (McHugh 2000:84). This ambivalence can be seen as one of the turbulent aspects of migration (Papastergiadis 2000).

It is important to note here that the strength of the emotions felt by migrants may be just as important as the particular emotion felt. Our emotional responses influence the way we act and the actions that people take are likely to be more extreme the stronger they feel about them. Furthermore, moving from the situation of individuals towards the possibility of group mobilization, what is important is the fact that groups of people all feel similar emotions at the same time in response to shared circumstances. It is this condition of shared emotions amongst individuals, which allows for group mobilization, whether that is the formation, maintenance, actions or disintegration of a group. It is the sense of shared emotion that is crucial, rather than the particular emotion that is shared. It is informative to examine the extent to which a particular group of migrants have felt similar emotions in similar situations, and the extent to which this has lead to forms of group mobilization and shared discourses.
A study of experiences and of emotions is not superfluous; it is not simply included to add 'colour' to descriptions of migrations. Rather, emotions, particularly strongly felt emotions, provide the will to act in a certain way. 'Understandings' may provide the motive for acting in a particular way, but emotions born from experiences provide the motivation. Together, experiences and understandings influence the negotiation of migration and hence the actions people take.

2.3.2 How do people understand their migrations?

People's experiences of migration influence (and are influenced by) their understandings of migration. People can understand situations in different ways depending on their past experiences. This is the core of Jamieson (2000) and Jones' (2000) argument when they recognize that people have different understandings with regards to the opportunities for migration as a result of their different backgrounds. Wierenga (1999), in her study of young rural Tasmanians, has also noted that different people have different 'imaginations' about possible futures, including future migrations, for themselves. She (ibid) recognizes that the choices people make can be informed by their imaginations.

In exploring the understandings of migrants, not only about the possibilities for future migrations (e.g. Wierenga 1999), but also for their understandings of the migrations they have already undertaken, there are numerous questions that can be addressed in discussions with migrants. For example, do they understand their migrations to be the result of a conscious choice, or as inevitable, necessary, or forced? Do they understand their migrations to be a response to economic forces and unemployment, a journey to 'see the world', a way towards 'self development', an influence on identity formation (Christou 2002), a reunion with missed friends and kin (Tiemoko 2003), a separation from a significant place (Christou 2002), a return home, the creation of a new home (Case 1996; Christou 2002; Shumaker and Conti 1985) or being between homes (Marshall and Foster 2002)? What can these understandings tell us? Do they help to explain the nature of the actual migrations of these people? What are the
dominant understandings or meanings attributed to the migrations amongst a particular migrant group? Do their different understandings appear to have any correlation to the different backgrounds of the migrants? If so, what is that correlation and why is it important? How do they understand the consequences of their migrations? What, if anything, can these understandings tell us about their future of migration decisions? These questions will be addressed in the following chapters.

2.3.3 How do people negotiate their migrations?

In asking how people negotiate their migrations, I explore how they come to bring together their understandings and experiences of migration in order to decide how to act in a particular situation. That is, I examine the decision-making processes that each migrant went through and the ways that they practically dealt with their migrations and problems and opportunities that arose as a result of those migrations. In a study of rural housing for “youth” in England, Burrows et al. (1998) asked what rural youth have, what they want, and what they are able to do with regards to housing. They divided their sample into four groups: committed leavers, reluctant stayers, reluctant leavers and committed stayers. Similar questions can be asked in other studies of migration, for example, what resources and capital do people have, what do they want and what are they able to do with regards to migration? In asking how people negotiate their migrations, I examine not only what they were able to do, but also how they were able to do it.

In this way, I address one of the major shortfalls of push-pull migration studies – the fact that these studies seldom address the way that different ‘forces’, which influence migration decisions, interact with one another and the ways that people negotiate these forces and their interactions. It is one thing to say that people leave because of a lack of employment and limited entertainment opportunities, go to other places that offer more opportunities for work and entertainment, and then return again for a quieter lifestyle. It is however, quite a challenge to explain how all of these processes inter-relate, how people deal with these competing and inter-connected processes in
making their migration decisions, and how they deal with their subsequent movements.

In asking how people experience, understand and negotiate their migrations, I am looking for more than simply a list of factors that may influence decisions to migrate. I am examining the ways in which a range of societal processes are experienced and interpreted by people and how this may influence people's mobility. Mobility that may in turn influence both those societal processes themselves and people's subsequent experiences and interpretations of them.
2.4 Conclusion

Mobility is an integral aspect of social life. Urry (2000) even goes so far as to say that sociology's focus on societies (understood as bounded units) is no longer relevant, and that sociology should instead focus on mobilities. Certainly the migrations of people can provide us with valuable insights into both macro social processes such as economic restructuring, social polarization and development, as well as micro social processes such as changes in housing markets, family structures and work routines.

The research literature on migration can be seen to have two discrete phases. In the first, which makes up the bulk of migration research to date, researchers considered migrations to be discrete events and have concentrated on the questions of who migrates and why people migrate. The most popular forms of such studies have been econometric and push-pull studies of migration. However, such studies, as well as failing to explicitly recognize the broader relevance of mobility to social life, have also tended to neglect both the interrelations between these structural factors as well as the influence of individual agency.

In the second phase of migration research, researchers have developed an interest in how people experience, understand and negotiate migration. This can be seen in the rise of post-colonial and feminist studies of migration, recognizing that people do not always act as rational, calculating subjects. Such studies recognize the ambivalence of migration experiences and the complexity of understandings and negotiations of migrations. A study of return migration is a particularly salient medium through which to address these issues. As Baldassar (2001:9) has argued in the context of her work on return visits:

An analysis of return visits ... calls for a focus on migrancy (the movement involved in migration). Surprisingly, this is seldom the focus of migration studies; rather, the effects of migration are given primacy.
Such ‘migrancy’, or mobility, is about more than simply geographical movement, it also refers to cultural and social movement and change (Baldassar 2001:10). My research on the return migrations of young adults sits clearly in this second phase. I consider mobility to be a fundamental aspect of social life and consider migration to be a complex and turbulent process. Therefore my focus is upon the ways in which young people experience, understand and negotiate migration.

In the next chapter I explain, given my research focus, how I conceptualized and understood the various methodological issues inherent in an interpretive approach and how, in practical terms, I set about contacting and eliciting young Tasmanian return migrants’ perceptions of their migration experiences, understandings and negotiations.
Chapter 3. Methodology and methods

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two, I outlined my theoretical approach to migration research and its implications for the study of migration more generally. In this Chapter, I provide an overview of the methodological implications of such an approach and the precise methods used in this research project.

First, I outline the methodological approach in relation to the major research questions. Since I am interested in understanding the experiences of migrants, I opt for an interpretive method but in doing so I do not deny the importance of structure. Here I draw upon Bourdieu’s work, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics and work on ‘flow’ to develop a methodology that keeps alive the tension between structure and agency.

In the following section, I describe the methods used, from research design to data analysis as well as the relationship between the choice of methods and the methodologies informing the research. The section concludes with a discussion of the role of the researcher and the need for reflexivity throughout the research process.
3.2 Methodology

While my methodological reach is broad, all of the methodologies and methods I utilize are qualitative. I have taken a qualitative approach because I am interested in understanding "the complexities of human actions in terms of meanings" (Ezzy 2002:29) and consider quantitative approaches inappropriate for this particular task. Throughout the research, I have asked the questions:

- Why do people migrate?
- How is migration experienced?
- How is migration negotiated?
- How is migration understood?

In asking these questions, I start from the theoretical supposition that migrants are active in negotiating their migration decisions and their migration experiences. This supposition points to a number of different relevant theoretical positions and debates, including: the debate over the relative importance of structure and agency; the arguments of phenomenologists regarding the nature of experience; the analysis of human action in terms of 'meaning' (Ezzy 2002:29) through symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics; and new criticisms of social research that claim that in our globalized and mobile world, where societies can no longer be seen as bounded (if they ever could), new forms of social analysis are needed.

3.2.1 Why do people migrate? The structure-agency debate

In sociology, and in the humanities generally, the debate over the relative importance of structure as opposed to agency has been both heated and extensive. On the one hand, the study of structures is seen as the most valid way to study particular social phenomenon in societies, which are often conceived of in an atomistic way. To give a simplistic example, the study of the return migration of Tasmanians may begin by determining the impact of a number of social institutions and systems (the education
system, the family, the workplace, the media, the judicial system, the political system, the economic system etc.) on particular people with different social characteristics (age, sex, ethnicity, class background etc.). In this way, predictive models of the migrations of different ‘categories’ of Tasmanians may be created. On the other hand, in response to such structure-focused studies, there have been calls to hear the voices of the individuals involved in social processes and to tell the stories of their ‘lived experiences’.

The problem faced by sociologists (in fact, by all researchers in the humanities) is that neither structure nor agency is enough. It is not enough to see human beings as ‘units’ impacted upon by social systems and institutions, acting in predictable ways. Humans are not simply rational beings acting with complete knowledge of a situation. However, neither is it enough to simply tell of the ‘lived experiences’ of individuals because while the structures and institutions of society do not determine our actions and experiences, they do influence us. What is needed then is recognition of the importance of incorporating both structure and agency, a recognition that acknowledges that our actions and experiences are influenced both by our social situation and by our individual free will and ingenuity. The structures of society impact upon the agency of individuals, just as the agency of individuals influences the structures of society.

Pierre Bourdieu (1979) provides such a theoretical framework. He argues that people act with agency within the confines of a particular structure. That is, they act with free will within their structural constraints. According to Bourdieu (ibid:78), it is the ‘habitus’ that informs these “regulated improvisations”. The ‘habitus’ is best described as “embodied rituals of everydayness by which a given culture produces and sustains belief in its own obviousness” (Butler 1997:152). In other words, the habitus informs us of the most appropriate way to act in a given situation. Our habitus is influenced by the structure of our society. At the same time it influences our behaviour and hence helps reproduce that society. However, Bourdieu’s argument is more complicated than this. As well as habitus and practice, he also includes the
concepts of capital and field in his theory of social process. Capital is understood to be anything that is thought to hold value and includes material things, symbolic capital (e.g. prestige and authority) and cultural capital ("culturally valued taste and consumption patterns") (Mahar et al. 1990:13). By 'field', Bourdieu is referring to a dynamic "field of forces" (ibid:9), particular areas of struggle in social life "for the realisation of interests and the acquisition of resources", such as the fields of economic production, intellectual life and political power. Interestingly, Bourdieu notes that the existence of such fields cannot be assumed a priori, but must be determined through ethnographic study (ibid:9). Bourdieu has explained his social theory in the following explanatory model:

\[(\text{Habitus} \times \text{Capital}) + \text{Field} = \text{Practice} \]


In other words, the action that I take (my practice) is determined by my habitus, my material, cultural and symbolic capital, and the context (the field) in which I am taking that action. While Bourdieu's social theory appears complicated, it is important in that it asserts that neither agency nor structure are sufficient in themselves to explain the actions of people. Rather, one's agency is informed by one's structure, just as one's structure is informed by one's agency. Because of this recursive relationship, studies which focus on agency to the detriment of structure and vice versa are insufficient for the study of social life.

So, how does Bourdieu's social theory inform this study? The questions of why people migrate and how they understand, experience and negotiate migration cannot be answered by reference solely to structural explanations or solely by reference to individual agency. Young Tasmanians are both constrained and enabled by structural considerations, such as unemployment, housing prices, educational opportunities, the availability of various services, various forms of entertainment, social networks, and the political policies that affect all of the above. Yet these structural considerations are not enough to explain why they are migrating and do not even come close to explaining how they experience and negotiate that migration. Within these structural
constraints, people make choices and act with a degree of agency. Their decisions to migrate are informed by their structural constraints, but not determined by them. The concept of 'habitus’ can provide a useful tool for examining how these migrations may be negotiated within a particular set of structural constraints (explained in part by the concepts of capital and field) to result in actual migrations (or non-migration).

At first glance, however, Bourdieu's theory does not appear to provide much support for an examination of the experiences of young Tasmanians. In fact, Bourdieu appears to be very critical of studies of 'lived experience'; stressing that his arguments should not be confused with “the critique that naive humanism levels at scientific objectification in the name of 'lived experience' and the rights of 'subjectivity'” (Bourdieu 1979:3-4). However, I contend that a study of the experiences of young Tasmanians does inform the questions of why they migrate and how they understand, experience and negotiate their migrations. A closer reading of Bourdieu indicates that he is not against studies of lived experience per se, but rather the position that such studies are sufficient in and of themselves. This position is as untenable for Bourdieu as the position of some empirical scientists that purely objective studies of ‘the truth’ are sufficient for examining a social situation. Hence, while questions of practice and processes of negotiation figure prominently in Bourdieu’s arguments, there is also a place for questions of experience within his framework, even if Bourdieu himself did not focus on these questions.

Bourdieu’s neglect of the question of lived experience may be partially explained by his equation of studies of lived experience with studies biased towards the subjective and his tendency to favour the objective over the subjective within his framework. I argue that Bourdieu’s application of his own theory is over-deterministic in that he favours analysis that emphasizes the reproduction of structures (particularly structures of oppression) over the agency of individuals and the possibilities for the transformation of social structures. Similar critiques have been made by Butler (1997), Baez (2002) and Angus et al. (2005). In the words of Baez (2002:63), in his desire to explain how structures of oppression are reproduced, Bourdieu “assumes too
much about class structures and too little about human agency”. Bourdieu “over-determines class structures, indicating that class structures are more static and stable over time than seems to be the case, thus, determining too completely individual action on the basis of social position” (ibid:63). Butler has also criticised Bourdieu for underestimating the importance of agency in his theory. Butler (1997:156) argues that Bourdieu does not explain how people can speak out against the norm and challenge ‘the system’ (or systems) “from the margins”.

In an excellent review of Bourdieu’s work, Crossley (2001) examines the relationship of Bourdieu’s work with phenomenology, recognizing that while Bourdieu’s theories have been influenced by phenomenology, Bourdieu remains critical of the phenomenological approach. Crossley (ibid) goes on to suggest how Bourdieu’s theory may be strengthened through the addition of phenomenological ideas. In a similar vein to the arguments of Butler and Baez, Crossley argues that “Bourdieu allows the concept of habitus, for the most part to pre-empt his conception of agency ... sometimes he substitutes the habitus for the agent” (ibid:94) and this creates problems because it is not habits that act, but agents (ibid:95). In saying this, Crossley (ibid:95, emphasis in original) is not denying that social agency is habitual, but rather that “the flux of both fields and the material conditions of life demand innovation and creation from social agents”.

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22 The sociologist Anthony Giddens also provides a tentative ‘solution’ to the structure-agency debate. I have chosen to use Bourdieu’s theory of habitus rather than Giddens’ structuration theory because Bourdieu’s theories, unlike Giddens’, are based on empirical work and because I believe Bourdieu’s theory provides a fuller description of the integration of structure and agency. Interestingly, Giddens’ structuration theory has been subject to the same criticisms as Bourdieu’s theory of habitus. For example, Sack (1992:14) argues that while Giddens recognized that forces (either outside ourselves as natural or social causes or inside ourselves as instincts and psychological forces) “are instantiated and perpetuated through behaviour and that these forces affect us by constraining our behaviour or by enabling us to act”, Giddens’ theory does not enable a distinction to be made between “agents as forces” and “agents as vehicles of other forces” (ibid:14). This means that the agent (the person) is not considered to make “choices based on free will or the ability to act otherwise” (ibid:14). In other words, free will or agency is neglected in Giddens’ work (ibid:14).

23 Bourdieu, who was born in 1930, was influenced by Sartre in the post-war years. Sartre “had responded to the repressive form of French Marxism by initiating neo-Hegelian phenomenology, derived from Husserl and Heidegger” (Fowler 2001:315).
Crossley (ibid:97) says that one cannot make choice an exception as Bourdieu “seems to want to do”, because individuals constantly have to make choices. Furthermore, Crossley (ibid:97) argues that reflective choice and reflexive analysis are not divorced from the realm of habit as Bourdieu implies. Rather, “our very capacity for reflexivity is rooted in the habitus” (ibid:113; see also Sweetman 2003). According to Sweetman (2003:528), people can possess a reflexive habitus, where reflexivity and flexibility is an integral part of one’s habitus, and “processes of self-refashioning may be ‘second-nature’ rather than difficult to achieve”.

In summary, Bourdieu provides a framework to explain the ways in which structure and agency interact through the concept of habitus. This framework provides a theoretical basis to inform my questions of why young Tasmanians migrate and how they experience, understand and negotiate these migrations. However, it is also important to keep in mind the context of Bourdieu’s work and his prioritization of structural explanations (especially regarding structures of oppression) at the expense of broader questions of experience and its possible impacts upon human agency, as well as towards structures of oppression at the expense of a broader understanding of agency as a means of challenging such structures.

3.2.2 How is migration experienced? The contribution of phenomenology

I have suggested … two underlying images in much of sociology: that of the conscious, cognitive actor and that of the unconscious, emotional actor. Between these two lie the missing image of the sentient actor, to which I tie the possibility for a sociological study of emotion and feeling.

(Hochschild 1976: 299)

In researching the return migrations of young Tasmanians, I am concerned to look not just at what is going on – who is moving where – but also at the meanings and
experiences attached to these movements. Phenomenology provides a useful framework for approaching the issues of meaning and experience in social research.

The phenomenological approach to social research holds that “social analysis must take into account the meaning that the social world has for the individual based on how the person understands and responds to their lived experience” (Schutz in Layder 1994:77-78, emphasis in original). Phenomenologists attempt to understand social phenomena “from the actor’s own frame of reference” and hold that “the important reality is what people imagine it to be” (Bogdan & Taylor 1975:2). Phenomenologists concentrate solely on experience or consciousness and argue that assumptions about subjective interaction and about the existence of physical objects in the world should be avoided. Phenomenologists have been especially concerned to show that the dominant scientific paradigm, which gives primacy to the study of ‘objects’ in the world, is insufficient for understanding the social world.

One of the major premises of phenomenology is the “intentionality of consciousness”, an idea explained by Husserl, one of the founding fathers of phenomenology. What this means is that “consciousness is always directed towards an object” (Stewart & Mickunas 1974:8). That is, in thinking, we are always thinking of something. This concept is important, because it recognizes that reality cannot be divided into “such mutually exclusive categories as minds and bodies, subjects and objects” (ibid:9). Furthermore, the intentionality of consciousness in phenomenology “shifts the emphasis from the question of the reality of the world to the meaning of that which appears to consciousness” (ibid:9)24.

An approach informed by phenomenology makes it possible to address the complexities of experience and of consciousness and I draw upon phenomenological ideas, particularly in my later discussions of place attachment (Chapters Five, Six and Seven). However, much of the phenomenological literature, in reaction to positivist approaches, appears to have swayed towards a prioritization of agency while

24 This idea of the intentionality of consciousness is further explored in a discussion of the concept of place and Heidegger’s phenomenological approach in Chapter Five.
downplaying the importance of structures in society. While it may be the case that societal structures can only be discerned through an examination of the actions individuals take as a result of their particular interpretations of a situation (their agency), social structures, thus identified, are no less important because they are socially constructed.

3.2.3 How do people understand and negotiate their migrations? Symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics

A number of qualitative methodologies deal with the question of how people understand and negotiate their experiences. I will address two here, symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics.

**Symbolic interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism appears particularly useful in recognizing that people act on their understandings and interpretations of a situation, and that such understandings and interpretations vary from individual to individual and from one moment to the next. Symbolic interactionism is primarily interested in the sorts of meanings or interpretations individuals give to their environment, that is, how people make sense of the world (Osborn & Van Loon 2004:78). This is not simply an individual act, however. As Osborn and Van Loon (2004:79) note with reference to the work of Mead, “as we develop as individuals, we learn to use the symbols of our immediate group and to give them meaning”. This means that the self can only develop in its interactions with other people (Osborn & Van Loon 2004:81). Furthermore, “as we and society develop, these symbols and their meanings can change. Thus we symbolically interact with our environment” (ibid:79). Symbolic interactionism, then, provides a useful framework for examining the experiences and negotiations of young returned Tasmanians.
So, how can we begin to step beyond individual experiences to explain the actions and understandings of people within a particular social situation? Symbolic interactionism addresses these questions. Symbolic interactionists understand people to be:

costantly in a process of interpretation and definition as they move from one situation to another ... All situations consist of the actor, others and their actions, and physical objects ... a situation has meaning only through people's interpretations and definitions of it. Their actions, in turn, stem from this meaning. Thus, this process of interpretation acts as the intermediary between any predisposition to act and the action itself.

(Bogdan & Taylor 1975:14)

In other words, people act on their understandings or interpretations of a situation. Hence, it is important to understand people's interpretations of particular situations to understand their actions. This becomes complex because people understand situations in different ways. Each actor has a unique past, which will influence their interpretations, and people can fill different subject 'positions' (“socially defined place[s] in a setting or an organization”) in a situation (ibid:14-15). Hence:

While people may act within the framework of an organization, it is the interpretation and not the organization which determines action. Social roles, norms, values, and goals may set conditions and consequences for action, but do not determine what a person will do.

(ibid:15)

These insights by symbolic interactionists are useful for this research. In attempting to understand the experiences of the people I spoke to and to understand their agency,
it is important to recognize that people interpret social situations differently and this informs the actions that they take. In other words, how people understand their migrations will influence how they negotiate those migrations.

Hermeneutics

While symbolic interactionism points to the connection between the interpretations and actions of people, or between people’s understandings and negotiations of a situation, the question of how I, as a social researcher, can come to understand these relationships is still pertinent. In focusing on these issues of interpretation, I have drawn upon hermeneutics as a methodology to guide my analysis of data. Following a hermeneutic approach:

theory is developed through a continuous movement between pre-existing interpretive frameworks, both theoretical and popular, and the data of observation, collected both during intentional observation and in everyday life.

(Ezzy 2002:25)

This process of interpretation, a circular movement between pre-existing frameworks and the data of observation, “between one’s own perspective and the perspective of the other person” (ibid:27) is utilized in my analysis of the ‘data’ of my research.

In summary, in asking how people understand and negotiate their experiences, symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics are both useful in recognizing the complexities associated with the production of meanings and interpretations (ibid:29).
3.2.4 New forms of social analysis: Turbulent migration

In Ghosh’s [1986] account, fieldwork is less a matter of localised dwelling and more a series of travel encounters. Everyone’s on the move and has been for centuries.

(Clifford 1997:2)

Up to this point, in addressing relevant methodologies to use in this research, I have not explicitly addressed the issue of the context of the research. In fact, a number of methodological approaches in the humanities implicitly assume that research is undertaken in a ‘society’ or ‘group’ that is bounded in some way. This is particularly the case for the work of Bourdieu. In fact, Urry (2000:15) argues that the structure-agency debate itself is not useful given the need to deal with:

- the complex consequences of diverse mobilities;
- the intersecting sensuous relations of humans with diverse mobilities;
- the intersecting sensuous relations of humans with diverse objects;
- the timed and spaced quality of relations stretching across societal borders; and
- the complex and unpredictable intersections of many ‘regions, networks and flows’.

Urry’s (ibid:17) argument is that societies are no longer (if they ever were) bounded or “functionally integrated” and that therefore sociological theories based on the premise of bounded societies are no longer relevant. Urry (ibid:18) argues instead that societies “can only be understood through their relations with other ‘societies’”, that societies are “constructed through objects as well as through subjects” and that it is hard to identify what constitutes the edge of any society because “their borders are porous”. Urry’s comments are important in that they recognize the ‘turbulence’ (Papastergiadis 2000) and mobility of the modern world. This recognition is especially important for studies of migration. However, Urry’s arguments do not
render Bourdieu’s attempt to reconcile the structure-agency debate obsolete. On the contrary, an important aspect of Bourdieu’s theory of habitus is that his ‘fields’ are ‘dynamic’. That is, while most of Bourdieu’s empirical work focuses on particular societies or groups, his theories do not rest on the supposition that societies and cultures are fixed, bounded units. In trying to make sense of my research findings I follow Bourdieu’s lead in this respect and take heed of the arguments of a number of social researchers who argue that cultures and societies are not fixed, bounded units, but are malleable and constantly undergoing flux (e.g. Barth 1989, Hannerz 1992 and Friedman 1992). This assumption is implicit in my choice to study return migrants, a group who are only defined as a group because of their movements. It is, however, important to make this presupposition on my part explicit, because if this analysis of culture (and of social groups) is correct, then methods and methodologies based on the assumption of fixed, bounded cultures and social groupings are not entirely adequate.

A number of researchers have recognized this ‘inadequacy’ and have suggested alternative approaches to studying cultures and societies that are malleable and in flux. Barth (1989) suggests that given that societies and cultures are not fixed, bounded units, we should start with the presumption of disorder and then explain any order that occurs. Hannerz (1992) points to the need to study flows between cultures and societies. Friedman (1992) uses the ideas of centre and periphery to explain the interrelationship between economic systems and exchange and the relative positions of, and interactions between, different cultures.

The functionalist Robert Merton asked two fundamental questions that “ultimately undermined the whole enterprise” of functionalism (Osborne & Van Loon 2004:95). First, “why should we view society as a whole”; and second, “why should we assume a tendency towards conformity and integration?” (ibid:95). Following on from these questions, Barth argues that instead of presuming that there is some fundamental order to culture and looking for “underlying logical premises and principles for the patterns we discover” (1989:132), we should start with the presumption of disorder.
and then try to explain "the trend towards some partial order" (ibid:133). In trying to explain such trends towards partial order in his fieldwork in Bali, Barth (ibid:133) identifies "streams" of discourse. Barth's approach to social research is adopted in this research and in analyzing my research results I attempt to start with the presumption of disorder and then try to explain the trend towards some kind of order through an identification of streams of meaning and the relationships between those streams (see the discussion on grounded theory below).

While Barth is interested in studying the cultural dynamics within a specific area (Bali), Hannerz (1992) points out that increasingly there are cultures that are not related to a particular territory. Hannerz is interested in 'trans-national cultural flow' (ibid:234), and says that instead of looking at culture as 'bounded units' which come together in modern society to form a mosaic, anthropologists should study 'flows' between cultures as the boundaries of cultures become more and more 'fuzzy' (ibid:218, 225). He studies the flows themselves, their direction and how the flows are mediated. He combines this with the study of centres and peripheries and the 'creolization' of culture. Such concentration on the flows of culture forms an important part of my research. I am concerned to look at the flows of young people to and from Tasmania (both from interstate and overseas) and how these flows are mediated. Such concentration on flows is accorded particular attention when discussing the concept of 'place' in Chapter Five, and is paralleled in the work of cultural geographers such as Massey (1995).

Friedman combines the study of flows with the study of centres and peripheries. He examines the flows of wealth between centre and periphery and argues that this relationship of wealth influences how people construct their identities. Unstable economic relations between the centre and the periphery can lead to 'the dissolution of the self' (Friedman 1992:358), or a crisis of identity. Cultural responses to such a crisis take a variety of forms. Friedman thus relates trans-national studies of culture back to the individual and to cultural movements. Friedman's arguments are...

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25 Such flows may include, for example, flows of people, capital, cultural practices and ideas.
particularly pertinent for this study because they address economic flows between centre and periphery, one of the issues often brought up in public discourse surrounding the out-migration of young Tasmanians, seen to be moving from an economic periphery (Tasmania) to economic centres (areas of higher employment, major cities). Further, his recognition of the impact of flows upon identity is of particular interest and is referred to again in Chapter Six.

The arguments of Barth, Hannerz and Friedman suggest that social researchers should not begin fieldwork with the assumption that cultures (or social groups) are bounded wholes with a single fundamental ontology. Instead of looking for static and bounded cultural or social 'structures', we should look for flows of meaning. We should undertake fieldwork at all levels where possible, from the individual to the transnational. Furthermore, we should be aware that individuals are constantly challenging the borders of cultures and societies by transcending, changing and negotiating them.

The implications of this approach for social research are important and are recognized in the choice of methods and analytical techniques employed in this research. First, fieldwork can make use of interviews with individual informants, but must acknowledge that 'actors [and hence informants] are positioned', that people occupy different positions between the streams and flows, and that there is no 'true informant' (Barth 1989:139). Second, events do not always reflect our intentions, which means that talking to people about how they see the world will not provide a full and correct view of how the world actually is (ibid:134). Finally, "meanings are negotiated" and informants may challenge their own conceptions in the near future (ibid:135; see also Bauman 1997). Fieldwork can also include participant observation to try to discover where informants and other actors are positioned in regards to streams of discourse and flows of meaning. Participant observation can help the researcher to map different streams of discourse and flows of meaning, to analyze the flows themselves, and to address how they are mediated and in which direction they are flowing (Hannerz 1992). This may be combined with a study of centers and

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26 When I refer to the centre and periphery, I refer not to a static structure, but to shifting points on a sliding scale. I employ centre and periphery as relative concepts.
peripheries (Friedman 1992; Hannerz 1992). A study of the positioning of people within these maps of meaning may enable the researcher to theorize about cultural creation and cultural movements (Friedman 1992; Hannerz 1992).

3.2.5 Summary

This research sits within the arguments surrounding the relative importance of structure and agency in social research and social understanding. It draws from Bourdieu’s attempts to reconcile structure and agency and phenomenological theories that focus on the meanings attached to people’s actions, rather than to the actions themselves. I occupy a precarious position, finding that while Bourdieu has tended to prioritize structural influences at the expense of agency, phenomenologists have tended to prioritize agency at the expense of structure. This tension between structure and agency is one that recurs in this thesis, and I have attempted to keep this precarious tension alive and relevant throughout. I hold that migrants are not simply subjects whose activities are determined by macrostructural processes; rather, they are active in negotiating their migration decisions and experiences. Yet, their agency and their actions are also influenced by the structures of society, which are in turn influenced by their agency and actions. Structure and agency do not exist independently.

In asking not only why people migrate, but also how they experience, understand and negotiate migration, I have drawn upon phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and hermeneutics. I have also drawn upon the analyses of culture offered by Barth, Hannerz and Friedman, which imply new methods for doing ethnographic fieldwork. When undertaking fieldwork, we should acknowledge that culture is constantly negotiated and subjects are always ‘positioned’. We should begin with an assumption of incoherence, and then analyze the reasons for any coherence we may discover. Hence, we should try to map streams of discourse and flows of meaning and to analyze the positions of individuals in relation to these maps of meaning. Often, this
will require an understanding of flows of culture at different scales, from the individual to the trans-national.
3.3 Methods

The major methods utilized in this research were:

1. The use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, conducted and analyzed using a grounded theory approach.
2. Group discussions with informants.
3. A form of participant-observation utilized to aid in situating the stories of the interviews in their wider context.
4. A review of relevant academic literature and reviews of Tasmanian newspaper articles and economic reports.

All of the research was conducted in Tasmania in and around the capital city of Hobart (see plate 3.1). This situated approach to research has both benefits and drawbacks. On the one hand, it enables a thorough investigation and “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of the context in which these migrations are taking place. This includes an examination of structural factors that may influence migration decisions, an understanding of the various public, media and policy discourses regarding the consequences of these migrations and a solid understanding of the social, economic and political context in which these young people were moving and which may impact upon their experiences, understandings and negotiations of migration. On the other hand, my focus on Tasmania has meant that I have spent less time considering the other places the young people have moved to and returned from. However, the focus on return migration to Tasmania has allowed me to look at both internal and international migration as well as in- and out-migration in the same case study, an opportunity seldom afforded to migration researchers.
Since social research such as this is very much dependent upon context and cannot be replicated, a standard scientific test of reliability and validity\textsuperscript{27} is not possible. Anfara et al. (2002:33) argue that in such research, it must therefore be possible to have enough information about the research process to be able to refute a researcher's findings. This section, therefore, aims to clearly outline the methods used throughout the research project.

3.3.1 Grounded theory

Given my methodological focus on the turbulence of migration and the importance of flows of meaning, grounded theory provides a useful and practical method for analyzing the research data and this research project is strongly influenced by debates taking place around the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Strauss and Corbin 1994). Grounded theory aims to generate theory from the data in a structured manner, rather than testing preconceived

\textsuperscript{27} Whether the experiment can be repeated in the same way and produce the same results.
hypotheses. There is however some debate as to the extent to which the researcher should be ‘untouched’ by preconceived hypotheses. On the one hand Glaser argues that “the first step in gaining theoretical sensitivity is to enter the research setting with as few predetermined ideas as possible” (1978:3) and thereby “seems to suggest that researchers shouldn’t read the literature or develop hypotheses before entering the field” (Ezzy 2002:10). On the other hand, drawing on the work of Strauss and Corbin (1990), Ezzy (2002:10) writes that there is a need to recognize the influence of preconceptions on the research process and to be explicit about this influence:

The point is not to pretend that they [preconceptions] are not [influencing the research], or to force the data into the theory. Rather, the researcher should enter into an ongoing simultaneous process of deduction and induction, of theory building, testing and rebuilding.

This is the approach I have taken, making explicit my preconceived ideas and theoretical interests throughout the thesis, particularly my conviction that migrants are not simply pushed and pulled by various ‘factors’ into their decisions to migrate. However, although the theories presented in this thesis were shaped by my main research questions and prior interests, they arose out of the data I collected in the interviews and focus groups, as well as through observation and written materials.

In carrying out this research then, I have attempted to be careful not to fall into either of the two ‘dangers’ identified by Ezzy (2002) in undertaking research using grounded theory:

1. “Overemphasizing theoretical deductions”, making the researcher unprepared “to reformulate theories in response to new evidence” (ibid:11, emphasis in original).
2. Overemphasizing "inductive theory grounded in ‘data’", which results “in a failure to be explicit about the theoretical sources of ideas” (ibid:11, emphasis in original).

Rather, the grounded theorist, according to Ezzy (2002:14-15), ought to embrace "abductive theories" in which the researcher constantly moves back and forth between theory and empirical data. Theory building and data collection therefore occur simultaneously throughout the research process. Hence, using a grounded theory approach, the data collected is compared and analyzed until a theory that is consistent with the data ‘emerges’. This theory is then coupled with further data to test its validity. Grounded theories are hence “systematic statements of plausible relationships” (Strauss and Corbin 1994:279).

There are a number of research methods commonly used by grounded theorists, including purposeful sampling, open, axial and selective coding and writing memos and journals. These methods are discussed further below.

3.3.2 Interviews

As part of my research, I conducted thirty interviews with young people who had returned to Tasmania. The methods used for sampling and contacting informants and designing, carrying out and analyzing these interviews are outlined below.

Sampling of informants

The total population of returned Tasmanians is not known. No organization collects this data. The ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) collect data on the numbers of Tasmanians who leave the state, but there are no reliable statistics on return moves to the state. The ABS estimate the extent of interstate return migration based on Medicare records. These, however, can be quite unreliable, not least because people may take some time to update their address with Medicare after a move. Some researchers have also attempted to estimate return migrations by using answers to
census questions about place of current residence, place of residence one year prior to
the census and place of residence five years prior to the census (Rumley 2002). However, this data has shortcomings because it does not include information on the
moves made in-between those three points in time. Thus, given that the numbers and
characteristics of the total population are not known, it would not be possible to
provide a representative sample of the total population.

Furthermore, this study is not a quantitative study presenting findings for a
representative sample of the population. The aim of the study is to provide rich
descriptions of the experiences of a group of returned young Tasmanians, rather than
presenting statistically significant results on certain factors influencing their
migration decisions. Having a representative sample of the total population is not
necessary. It is, however, important to recognize that when the informants tell me of
their experiences, they are not speaking for all young returned Tasmanians, but rather
for themselves.

While the interview sample may not be representative of the total population, all
informants met a number of conditions:

1. *Have previously lived in Tasmania for at least five years* – I
   wanted to speak with people who had lived in the state for a
   significant proportion of their childhood.

2. *Have previously lived outside the state for one year or more
   since they turned sixteen* – one year was chosen as a time frame
to eliminate seasonal workers and tourists. Informants who
   were outside of the state for a ‘year out’ from school for travel

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28 The capture-recapture technique (or Lincoln-Petersen estimator) (Laska 2002; Williams 1999) is not
suitable for this population. This method is based upon four assumptions: “The population is closed,
individuals captured on both occasions can be matched, capture in the second sample is independent of
capture in the first, and the probabilities of capture are homogenous across individuals” (Laska
2002:845). In this study the first and fourth conditions cannot be realistically met. Another alternative
is to take a representative sample from the total population of the state. However, it is unlikely that the
total population of returned Tasmanians would parallel the total population of the state as people with
different economic, residential and educational backgrounds, for example, have differing opportunities
for migration.
purposes were not considered. Sixteen was chosen as the year from which to measure living outside of the state because at sixteen people may be living independently from a parent or guardian and therefore the choice to leave the state is more likely to have been their own, and not that of their parent or guardian.

3. *Currently live in Tasmania (and have lived or expect to live in the state for one year or more)* – again, one year was chosen as a time frame to eliminate seasonal workers and tourists.

4. *Are currently living in or around Hobart* – a specific area in Tasmania was chosen for the study because the issues raised are so place-sensitive. In comparing the responses of informants in different areas, I would have had to sacrifice depth of description for breadth of explanation. Hobart was chosen as the area for study because it is the capital of the state, the largest population centre, gains significant numbers of people from other parts of the state and looses significant numbers of people interstate (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003:17).

5. *Were between the ages on eighteen and thirty-eight on 1 January 2004* – I chose this age group because these are the key productive and reproductive ages (Jackson & Kippen 2001). While much public discourse concentrates on the ‘loss’ of people of these ages from the state, little attention is paid to their return.

In addition to these necessary conditions, the sample group was also refined through theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling occurs where questions raised in the

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29 There were two cases in which I accepted people who had left the state for less that one year. However, I accepted both cases as they had both intended to leave for significantly longer period (i.e. they were not tourists or seasonal workers) and had both been living elsewhere for almost a whole year.
course of the research lead to the need to speak to people with specific characteristics of interest. The total sample is not defined prior to the research beginning, but is recruited during the course of the research. Theoretical sampling continues until "the researcher decides the study has reached saturation" (Ezzy 2002:75), that is, the research is not finding anything new of significance. The following entry from my research journal provides an example of the process of theoretical sampling:

*Journal entry, 28 October 2004*

After interviewing everyone I could after first contacts, I asked one of my initial contacts (a colleague) if he could find me any more men to interview (because I had interviewed 10 women and 5 men) and anyone who hasn’t been to university. He then had to go through some of his own contacts and try to find people. At the same time, I made another contact (another colleague) and he agreed to put me in contact with more people and to be interviewed himself. He said he would find me more men to talk to and also would look for people who haven’t been to university.

The reason I wished to speak to more men was because up to that point, I had found that the narratives of the men I had spoken to had been much more factual and less descriptive than those of the women, with one exception. As it turned out, a number of the men I subsequently spoke with provided very descriptive accounts of their experiences and the trend was not confirmed. I found that the experiences of the people who had been to university were significantly influenced by their university experiences and their career aspirations (as a result of their qualifications) and I therefore wanted to speak with people who had not been to university. I spoke to four women who did not have any university education. However, I did not manage to contact as many males without university qualifications as I would have liked. My attempts to get in touch with men in this group through my contacts was unfortunately rather unsuccessful. I only spoke to two men without any university qualifications (who were not currently studying at university), and both had
undertaken some university education, but had not finished their degrees. That I could only find two such men may reflect the numbers of men in non-academic professions who return, or be explained by the lack of interest of that group in helping a university researcher, or most likely be a consequence of the limitations of my network of contacts.

As well as gender and qualifications, I also undertook theoretical sampling for people of different ages and people in different occupations. At the beginning of the interviewing process, I spoke to many people in their early twenties and people who had been away for relatively short periods. I also spoke to two people in their late thirties who had been away for longer periods. These people had some significant differences in their understandings and experiences of migration. After this, I tried to contact people of all ages within the spectrum of 18-38 years old to determine if these differences in experience in relation to age and time away were mirrored with additional people. The ages of informants at the time of interview, the time they first left the state and the time they last returned are presented in Figure 3.1. Unfortunately, I was unable to contact any informants between the ages of 18 and 21. It is possible that this is because less people in that age group will have had time to leave and return to the state. However, it is also possible that this merely reflects my social networks and the networks of those people who helped me contact informants. However, many of the people I spoke with had moved around those ages (18-21) and were able to reflect back upon their experiences (albeit with hindsight).
In terms of occupation, I was able to speak to people in a range of occupations and professions, people in part- and full-time employment, unemployed people and students. This was important because I suspected employment would feature prominently in my discussions with informants. This ‘spread’ in occupations was largely a result of strategic sampling. In particular, an advert on a large employer’s internal mail enabled me to recruit people in different professions within that organization.

I did not undertake theoretical sampling to include whether people had moved interstate or overseas as I found that I had sufficient numbers of people in both groups (and also some who had undertaken both kinds of moves). I also did not sample for ethnicity. In part, this was because Tasmania has quite a homogenous population, with the majority of people being of western-European descent. Furthermore, amongst those people interviewed, ethnicity was only raised as an issue.
in the sense that some people had visited their 'countries of origin' during their time away. Ethnicity did not seem to have any further impact upon the understandings or experiences of informants. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that this sample is not representative and does not allow for a full analysis of the impact of either class or ethnicity on the migration experience.

Table 3.1 provides an overview of some of the characteristics of the informants.
Table 3.1: Characteristics of informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Partner co-habiting</th>
<th>Completed education</th>
<th>Current employment</th>
<th>Number of return moves</th>
<th>Years away (most recent)</th>
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<th>Children</th>
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<th>Completed education</th>
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<th>Years away (most recent)</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In summary, of the thirty people I spoke with:

- 12 were born in Hobart, 8 were born in other parts of Tasmania, 4 were born in other parts of Australia and 6 were born overseas.
- 16 had a partner living with them, while 14 did not.
- 7 had children, while 23 did not.
- The highest level of education completed for 9 people was high school, 19 people had completed a university degree (including one graduate diploma and one postgraduate qualification) and 2 people had trade qualifications.
- 14 were employed full-time (including 1 person also studying), 8 were employed part-time (including 4 people also studying), 6 people were studying (but not working) and 2 people were unemployed or under-employed.
- 23 had returned to Tasmania once, 6 had returned twice and 1 had returned three times.
- During their most recent time away, 9 people had been away for 0-2 years, 15 had been away for 2-5 years, 5 had been away for 5-10 years and 1 had been away more than 10 years.
- The most recent date of return was between 1990-1995 for 4 people, between 1996-2000 for 6 people and between 2001-2004 for 20 people.

Contacting informants

Initially, a number of people were recruited through personal contacts. In addition, some of the people I interviewed also suggested contacts. An interesting development was interviewing partners and siblings who had both left and returned to the state (either together or separately). These interviews were particularly intriguing because of the ways in which their stories overlapped, and yet provided different perspectives.
on similar situations. Rice and Ezzy (2004:45) have noted that ‘snowballing’ can lead to the homogenization of informants. While I recognize that there was likely to be some homogeneity amongst my sample, I was concerned to also make sure that I selected informants with divergent backgrounds and characteristics. As I conducted more interviews, I undertook theoretical sampling. In addition, one contact posted an advertisement for my research on his workplace’s intranet, which meant that people who had not met any of my initial contacts directly volunteered to participate in the research. Some of my ‘gaps’ in sampling were filled by the people who responded to this advertisement. In particular, I was able to interview more males and more people who did not have a university education. This snowballing and theoretical sampling resulted in my ‘total population’ of informants presented in Table 2.1 above.

**Interview questions**

During the interviews, I asked people about their migration histories and discussed in-depth their reasons for migrating, experiences of migration, the meanings they gave to these experiences and the ways they negotiated problems and opportunities. These questions reflect my concern with issues of experience, meaning and interpretation evident in my utilization of phenomenological and hermeneutic methodologies. I asked the informants to provide a list of all the places they had lived for six months or more since they turned sixteen and I also asked them about their experiences of migrating in chronological order (from first departure to latest return).

Interviews with informants were in-depth and semi-structured (see Appendix 2). I conducted them as “focused” interviews (Merton and Kendall 1946:541-542):

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30 ‘Snowballing’ is a term to describe the situation where existing participants suggest further contacts.

31 Despite this focus on time, I chose not to take an oral history approach. I chose interviews over oral histories because the interviews allowed me to focus on migration. I also found that in many cases, my informants did not recount their stories in a linear time frame, but ‘jumped around’ as they were explaining their experiences and ideas.
in which certain types of information are desired from all
respondents but the particular phrasing of questions and their order
is redefined to fit the characteristics of each respondent.

(Denzin 1973:125)

I chose this approach to help the interviews flow and the informants to feel
comfortable talking about their experiences.

The interview outline is structured into seven sections (see Appendix 2). Section A
includes simple background questions about the informant (e.g. age, employment,
and current living arrangements). Section B asks about the migration histories of the
informants, beginning with simple questions about where and when people have
moved and then progresses onto more in-depth questions about people’s reasons for
moving. When asking questions about the reasons for migrating, in each instance
informants were not simply asked why they moved, but were asked what encouraged
them to leave one area, what encouraged them to move to another area, and whether it
was their decision to move. As Rossi (1980:175, emphasis in original) has pointed
out in his discussion of the methodologies used in researching why families move:

a general “why” question usually produces a congeries of answers,
each kind of answer corresponding to a different interpretation of
the general “why” question by the respondent … Some
respondents will answer in terms of the event which “triggered”
the move; others will tell us why they moved here; still others will
tell us about changes that took place within their households, and
so on.

Section C asks informants to discuss their experiences of migration, including how it
felt to leave and how it felt to arrive back in Tasmania, while section D explores how
informants dealt with both the problems and opportunities that arose during the
course of their migrations. Section E asks informants about their ideas of home and
whether they felt at home in the places they migrated to or from. This section was included towards the end of the interview because I hoped that the concept of ‘home’ would have been raised by informants in the course of the interview (and in most cases it had been), making it a natural progression of the interview. Section F asks informants for their views on the out-migration of young Tasmanians, requiring a further level of abstraction from the informants, but also tying up the discussion. Finally, section G asks informants where they would choose to live if there were no constraints on their movement. This was added because I hoped it would provide some insight into informants’ ideas about places. In addition, I thought it would lead to further discussion on the constraints that influence migration. This question was also an effective way to tie up the interview, so that the interviews did not end abruptly.

The interview process

I again stress that I used the interview schedule and questions as a guide, rather than as a strict set of questions to be answered in order. Furthermore, the issues brought up in early interviews shaped the questions that I asked in later interviews. A note from my research journal written after one of my first interviews provides an example of this process. This note actually led to changes being made in the interview schedule (as well as to significant developments to my theoretical work):

Journal entry regarding interview with Katherine, 2 March 2004

Her answers are causing me to rethink my approach. I need to think more about my use of the concept of ‘place’ and how to draw that concept out more in the interviews. For Katherine, location is not important, but ‘place’ does seem to be – especially with regards to situated social networks.

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32 This section was included because of my interest in the concept of home (as it relates to migration research), developed from a review of relevant academic literature.
Later in the interview process, developments in the interviews did not lead me to change the interview schedule itself, but did encourage me to ask more probing questions about particular issues that had been raised in earlier interviews, and to ask additional questions about various issues of theoretical relevance that had emerged in earlier interviews.

Interview analysis

All of the interviews were recorded. Once completed, I transcribed the tape verbatim. Transcribing the interviews myself was important both because it enabled me to reflect on my interview technique and because during the considerable time it took to transcribe each interview, I was able to mull over the major research issues. Once I had transcribed a tape, I began analyzing and coding the interview. Hence, data analysis began at the same time as data collection. As Ezzy (2002:60) notes, "this practice is consistent with [a theory of data analysis that emphasizes] the dialectical, or hermeneutic, relationship between theory and data". During this process, I kept a journal with notes about each interview, new issues that arose, developing theories and hypothesis and coding notes.

With the help of the CAQDAS (computer aided qualitative data analysis software) package NVivo

I coded each interview using a grounded theory approach. Following the approaches of Glaser, Strauss and Corbin (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Strauss and Corbin 1994), I conducted three types of coding in analyzing my data:

1. Open coding – "finding conceptual categories in the data". I asked the question "what is this piece of data an example of?" (Kent 2001:5).

33 NVivo is a software package designed as an aid for qualitative social researchers. It allows researchers to code documents, record hierarchical and non-hierarchical connections between codes and then to electronically search for particular segments of coded text and for relationships between codes.
2. Axial coding – “finding relationships between categories”. These relationships can be causal, intervening, reciprocal or conditional (Kent 2001:5). It is in this stage in the coding process that major themes are discovered (Ezzy 2002:91).  

3. Selective (Strauss and Corbin 1990) or theoretical (Glaser 1978) coding – “identification of the core category or story around which the analysis focuses” (Ezzy 2002:92), thereby “accounting for the relationships at a higher level of abstraction” (Kent 2001:5).

At all stages of coding, I undertook a process of ‘constant comparison’, comparing each piece of data against others for similarities and differences. These comparisons enabled me to group and differentiate the data (Ezzy 2002:90). I finished coding when I was satisfied that the theory was ‘saturated’ because I was no longer discovering any new issues for which to code.

There is some disagreement among the ‘founding fathers’ of grounded theory as to the value of axial coding. Strauss and Corbin (1990) argue that it is a valuable enterprise, while Glaser (1978) believes that it “restricts the grounded nature of theory building” because the researcher “might decide to focus on issues related to his or her interests rather than on issues that concern participants” (Ezzy 2002:91). However, I follow Ezzy (ibid:93) in his assertion that “a sophisticated approach to coding during grounded theory mixes both inductive and deductive methods. Codes do not emerge from the data uninfluenced by pre-existing theory”.

After I had imported the interview transcripts into NVivo, I began open coding. That is, I carefully went through my interview transcripts, asking “what is this piece of data an example of?” (Kent 2001:5). As I continued the coding process, I found that there were relationships between some of my codes. At the most basic level, I found that some codes were ‘types of’ other codes. For example, ‘buying a house’, ‘problems with flat mates’ and ‘losing a lease’ were all types of ‘housing issues’. As such, I was able to group some of my codes together in a hierarchical relationship. As I continued coding, I also discovered other relationships between codes that were not of a hierarchical nature, and these I recorded in concept maps inside the NVivo program. I was able to use NVivo to conduct searches on the coded segments of my interviews, and I searched for all instances in which certain issues (which were coded for) arose. I was also able to search for “negative instances”, which “may contradict, or help to develop, an emerging theory” (Seale & Kelly 1998:153). As I continued this process of coding and analyzing the interview transcripts, I found that I was able to reduce the number of codes periodically by combining two or more codes. For example, one code which I had coded ‘insular community’ I was able to incorporate into a code for ‘closed mindedness’, because having read all of the text coded under ‘insular community’, they all related to the potential for the Tasmanian community to be closed minded. I continued this process of refining my codes until I was left with six core ‘parent’ codes.
3.3.3 Group discussions

I decided to run group discussions (with the same informants) after the interviews for a number of reasons. First, they enabled me to check my interpretations with the informants. I was particularly concerned with comments that supported or negated my existing coding for the interviews and especially with comments that would provide a deeper understanding and more detailed information. Second, I hoped that the group discussions would help clarify any disagreements between individuals, inconsistencies in the data and negative instances. Third, the group discussions would provide a forum for people to discuss their experiences. I considered this particularly important because a number of people had mentioned in the interviews that they had not been able to speak about their experiences of living elsewhere in any depth because people generally were not interested.

After the initial interviews, I asked informants if they would mind if I contacted them again for a group discussion on my preliminary findings to make sure that I had properly understood what they have said and to tie up any loose ends. All informants agreed initially, but at the time of the discussions, three had left the state (since their interviews), two did not respond, and eight were unable to make it to the discussions. Seventeen of the thirty interview informants participated in the discussions. I also conducted private meetings with three informants who could not make it to the discussions, but were interested to hear how I was analyzing the interview results. On these occasions I ran through the major themes I had identified and asked them how well those themes reflected their own experiences.

I ran four group discussions, each with between three and five informants. The discussions were video recorded to enable me to see who was talking and to view the body language of the informants. After making sure everyone had been introduced, I explained that I had asked them to come to the discussion so that I could present my findings to date and they could provide me with some feedback. I also stressed that people should feel free to talk to each other, rather than only to me. After this introduction, I briefly presented the six major themes (i.e. the six parent codes) I had
come to as a result of analyzing all thirty interview transcripts using a grounded
theory approach. For each theme, I provided an explanation and some quotes from
interviews (using pseudonyms) (see Appendix 3).

The discussions went well, with informants helping me to refine my themes and some
new data emerging. Indeed, one of my six major themes developed as a result of the
group discussions. Before these discussions, I had called this theme ‘a culture of
migration’. However, the discussions indicated that ‘a culture of migration’ was not a
concept that was applicable to all informants and that it was, in fact, only one part of
a more encompassing theme, which I termed ‘flexible identity’.

I chose not to transcribe the group discussions or to analyze them using CAQDAS
software. Instead, I watched the tapes of the discussions numerous times, taking notes
and concentrating on specific issues each time I watched the tapes. I was particularly
interested in what the discussions could add to the issues I had coded for in the
interviews. I looked especially for comments that both supported and opposed my
coding structure and analysis of the issues that arose in the interviews.

3.3.4 Participant observation

Participant observation enables the researcher to better position their informants
within their wider contexts. For example, it enables the comments made by
informants in interviews to be put in context. However, participant observation “has
not enjoyed a clear definition in the social sciences” (Bogdan & Taylor 1975:5). I
contend that this study involved a form of participant observation, a claim that
requires clarification. Participant observation is a term often used to “refer to research
characterized by a period of intense social interaction between the researcher and the
subjects, in the milieu of the latter”, during which time “data are unobtrusively and
systematically collected” (ibid:5). Furthermore, researchers undertaking participant
observation “usually have no direct personal stake” in the situations in which they
conduct their research (ibid:5). In contrast, I conducted my research in a situation in
which I did have some personal stake, because I am a young returned Tasmanian. Furthermore, there is no specific identifiable ‘milieu’ for returned young Tasmanians within which to conduct my research, there is no institutionalized or social setting which exists solely or even in the majority for returned young Tasmanians.

I do, however, consider myself to have been a participant observer during my research period in the sense that I, as a return migrant myself, am a participant in the act and experience of return migration, and as a social researcher, I was observing the phenomenon of return migration and systematically collecting and recording data regarding young returned migrants in Tasmania. During my daily activities, in my meetings with other return migrants, as well as with people who had an opinion on return migration, I kept notes of their experiences and thoughts. I also wrote notes after each of the interviews and the focus groups. This process helped me to contextualize the responses that my informants gave me during the interviews.

3.3.5 Review of documents

A large proportion of my research work involved the review of documents of various types. The largest proportion of my time was taken up by reviewing academic literature relating to the development of my own theories. However, I also analyzed economic reports and newspaper articles. I thought this was important because during my childhood in Tasmania, and especially in my late teens, I had the impression that Tasmania was a place that young people left. I was also aware that some people thought this was a problem for the state, particularly in an economic sense, but also in a social sense. My experience of growing up in a place that young people left is one of the reasons why I chose to examine this phenomenon more deeply. I discussed these issues with other young returned Tasmanians during the interviews and focus groups. However, I also considered it important to assess the extent to which such a discourse of a ‘loss’ of young people was reflected in official reports and in the media.
Review of academic literature

Throughout the research process, I read and reviewed academic literature relating to my research. The literature that I read at the beginning of my research influenced my research design and particularly the questions I chose to ask in the interviews. I was particularly influenced by literature on home and place. However, as I looked more deeply at my interview transcripts and began coding the interviews, I was able to engage more fully in these literatures. I also read other literature that related to new issues that arose in the interviews, including the vast literature on identity construction as well as recent migration literature, especially that influenced by phenomenology. This iterative approach enabled me to simultaneously develop my understandings of the issues in relation to both the practical world of my informants and the theoretical developments in the academic literature.

Review of economic reports

There have been a number of reports on the economic situation in Tasmania over the last century. I chose to concentrate on two reports: the Lockyer Report of 1926 and the Nixon report of 1997. I read these reports to provide a context in which to understand my research. I thought that this was particularly important because I predicted that economic issues would influence the migrations of the young people I was speaking to, either directly or indirectly. Furthermore, those studies that have been undertaken on the population of Tasmania and the out-migrations of Tasmanians stress the importance of employment opportunities as a reason for leaving the state (State Government of Tasmania 2001b; Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance 2003). I was also interested to note the prominent place that the concern for the out-migration of young people received in both reports. The findings of these reports are discussed in the next chapter.

Review of newspaper articles

Because my study was focused around Hobart, I chose to concentrate on the major Hobart daily newspaper, The Mercury. Using an online search engine provided by the
State Library of Tasmania (TALIS) I searched *The Mercury* and *The Sunday Tasmanian* (the Sunday edition of *The Mercury*) between July 1992 and July 2004 for article\textsuperscript{36} headlines that contained the following words or phrases:

- Brain drain
- Population
- Exodus
- Migration
- Population decline
- Coming back
- Returning
- Leaving the state
- Young people

I found 152 articles. I then read all of them and eliminated 27, because they were not related to the movements of young adults (e.g. articles relating to animal populations). I used the content of the remaining 125 articles to demonstrate the extent of the popular interest in the issue of young people leaving the state (see Chapter One).

3.3.6 Reflexivity

In conducting qualitative research, researchers strive to go into the ‘field’ to gain an understanding of the situation they are studying and then relay this information in textual form to readers. Throughout this process, they are confronted with the issues of reflexivity and field-authority. During the research, I grappled with the questions of whether I should be more participant or observer in the participant-observer paradox and whether my authority as a researcher would be compromised if I participated or identified too much with the people or situations I was studying.

\textsuperscript{36} I included editorials and letters to the editor in this search.
Participant or observer?

As a participant observer, my aim was not to remain detached from the people I was interviewing. Some of them I knew before the interviews, others I see at university, or at various social occasions. In addition, these people told me quite intimate things about themselves during the interview. One woman said to me after an interview that I now know more about her life than most people she knows. When entrusted with so much personal information, it is virtually impossible (and not necessarily desirable) to act in a detached manner towards them. Furthermore, I am sure that if I had acted in a detached manner the interviews would not have been nearly so rich and detailed as they were. In many cases, I also told the informants about my own experiences, about the places I had been, why I went there and about the problems and opportunities I have had since my return. However, having said this, in analyzing my interview transcripts, I had to constantly remind myself that I must not take the things I was being told for granted. I attempted to critically engage with all of the themes that arose during the interviews, constantly trying to find a balance between my own knowledge and experience, and a critical academic 'gaze' in analyzing my data.

Field authority

Malinowski stressed in Argonauts of the Western Pacific (1922) that an anthropologist should spend a long time in 'the field' living with the people she is studying in order to build their trust and delve deeper into the culture being studied. That is, time spent in the field and living in the field are both very important for field-authority. The questions of how long one should spend in 'the field' and how long one should live with one's subjects are not entirely relevant to my research because I could not leave the 'field' of returned young Tasmanians without leaving Tasmania, and this 'field' was so dispersed there was no single place I could go to 'immerse' myself in it. However, I thought that it would be a benefit for me to be living in Tasmania and to have left and returned to the state. I did get the impression that being a young Tasmanian who had left and returned to the state meant that the people I
spoke to took me more seriously, particularly because I was able to share my own experiences during the interviews.

During the research process, I ‘wore many hats’ besides that of a returned young Tasmanian. I found that I played many roles during the interviews, often simultaneously. I played the role of social researcher primarily, which also gave me a degree of field-authority, being seen as ‘an expert’ in the issue of migration to and from Tasmania. I also played the roles of fellow returned migrant, university student, friend and acquaintance. In regards to these roles, I found that by moving between the role of ‘social researcher’ and my other roles in my interviews, I managed to make my informants feel more comfortable in telling me about their experiences. In particular, I found that by sharing my own experiences of leaving and returning to the state I created a rapport with my informants. Furthermore, when the informants were telling a story that involved other people, I sometimes knew the people to whom they were referring, which made it easier for them to tell me the story.

However, I do not claim that my unique biography necessarily enhanced the moral authority of my accounts in any way. Rather, following Harraway (1991), I simply recognize that my own ‘situated knowledge’ about the issue of the migration of young people to and from Tasmania formed part of dialectical relations between myself and the people I spoke to as part of the research and thereby informed the outcomes of the research.

3.3.7 Summary

In summary, the main methods utilized in this research were in-depth semi-structured interviews analyzed using a grounded theory approach, group discussions, participant observation and a review of media, policy and academic literature. Throughout the research, I have also recognized my own role in the research and have attempted to maintain a degree of self-awareness.
3.4 Conclusion

Since I am interested in understanding the negotiations, experiences and understandings of migrants, I have opted for an interpretive research approach. However, I also recognize the duality of structure and agency. To keep this duality alive, I draw upon Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics and recent academic theories on ‘flows’ between societies. My interest in symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics is reflected in my utilization of an interpretive approach that draws upon grounded theory and methods of data collection including semi-structured interviews, group discussions and participant observation, as well as reviews of economic reports, newspaper articles and academic literature to help provide some context for my research findings. The following chapter provides an overview of my research findings.